

Peircean Animism and the End of Civilization

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Charles Peirce claimed that logically “every true universal, every continuum, is a living and conscious being.” Such a claim is precisely what hunter-gatherers believe: a world-view depicted as animism. Suppose animism represents a sophisticated world-view, ineradicably embodied in our physical bodies, and that Peirce’s philosophy points toward a new kind of civilization, inclusive of what I term *animate mind*. We are wired to marvel in nature, and this reverencing attunement does not require a concept of God. Marveling in nature proves to be not only a motive source of human evolution, but key to continued development.

“Our intelligence cannot wall itself up alive, like a pupa in its chrysalis. It must at any cost keep on speaking terms with the universe that engendered it.”

William James¹

1. Of Evolutionary Love and Devolutionary Hate

Charles Peirce opens his 1893 essay “Evolutionary Love” with the sentence: “Philosophy, when just escaping from its golden pupa-skin, mythology, proclaimed the great evolutionary agency of the universe to be Love.” Now this is the common understanding of philosophy as a transformation of the wisdom of mythology into a more self-conscious endeavor. It is a statement that I suspect Peirce scholars take at face value, ignoring its Hegelian implication that the earlier stage is *aufgehoben*, “overcome,” and now a discarded husk of history. Mythologists might think otherwise. What if the statement is true, but in a regressive sense? What if philosophy was born as caterpillar, not butterfly?

Why is it that the progress of the modern west and its philosophy involved an inversion of that first insight of philosophy, seeing the great evolutionary agency of the universe to be Hate, that Hobbesian state of nature, that “war of every one against every one,” that Darwinian “struggle for existence?” How did that living Evolutionary Love come to be seen as unreal, as that nominalistic

fiction that, as Peirce put it, almost drove John Stuart Mill mad? How did it become unreal and replaced by dead mechanistic Hate? Was it progress, as commonly assumed, or regress?

I claim that the progress in the development of consciousness alluded to by Peirce and taken more broadly as historical development, was a progress in precision embedded within a regression of consciousness. The free butterfly of winged thought awoke in its bed, like Kafka's Gregor Samsa, to find itself transformed into a caterpillar. It dreamed of transforming itself back into a butterfly, but that dream, which is called history, was a lie that it told itself, because it neglected the golden pupa-skin necessary to the transformation, the golden pupa-skin that remained ingredient in its very body. That golden pupa-skin was not simply "mythology," but a consciousness that I will call *animate mind*.

Perhaps Socrates is that philosophical Gregor Samsa, his brooding, breathing, bodily-aware warrior and stone-cutting self transforming into the critical thinker whose muse shows him the negative, the doubting consciousness. Socrates is that pivot of critical consciousness who yet learns from Diotima, as Plato tells us in *The Symposium*, that love is the child of poverty and plenty, and philosophy is the loving pursuit of wisdom.

The course of Charles Peirce's philosophical development is the story that begins with the modern caterpillar rediscovering its golden pupa-skin and ends with the butterfly of animate mind recovered, but now transformed from its regressive descent. I wish to show that Peirce's religious writings and late philosophy coalesce with ideas of religious animism, and that these ideas have profound import for contemporary life, delineating a new philosophical anthropology in pragmatic perspective. Suppose animism, far from being a belief of "primitives" and an opinion of the obscurantist founder of semeiotic, represents a sophisticated world-view, one literally and ineradicably embodied in our physical bodies, and that Peirce's philosophy points toward a new kind of civilization, inclusive of animism.

I claim that the modern way of seeing things, the nominalistic myth of the machine that has dominated the modern outlook, is suicidal, and needs to be supplanted by one that rediscovers the living nature of the universe — the inner subjectivity of nature, and general relation as a reality. I mean by this also that the continued growth of science itself will involve coming to terms with mind-like or soul-like qualities in nature and not solely in us. Such a view will be semeiotic realism, in Peirce's terms, reconnecting us as children of the earth attuned to that larger community of interpretation which is the community of life on which we depend.

The history of religion is a subarea of history in general. Peirce sees history as one of what he termed "idioscopic" or special sciences, and as a branch of "psychognosy." But there is another view of history, given by Paul Shepard:

history is a lie. Perhaps I am wrong, but I suspect that most of you are living in that lie, the lie of history. This matrix involves beliefs that civilization represents progress over pre-agricultural ways of hunter-gatherers, that this progress shows itself in the Greco-Judaic-Christian roots of the West, that this progress achieves new footing in the rise of the modern scientific world-view, that civilization is itself that process whose chief end has been the progressive development of reasonableness.

This sounds pretty good. But let's suppose another story. Suppose that civilization represents a regressive de-maturing of consciousness. And suppose that modern life represents a mechanical infantilization of consciousness, and that modern nominalistic civilization can be taken as a regressive "primitivism," one itself built on the very foundations of civilization itself.

2. A Neglected Argument for the Unreality of God

With the Indians it is different. There is strictly no god. The Indian does not consider himself as created, and therefore external to God, or the creature of God. To the Indian there is no conception of a defined God. Creation is a great flood, forever flowing, in lovely and terrible waves. In everything, the shimmer of creation, and never the finality of the created. Never the distinction between God and God's creation, or between Spirit and Matter. Everything, everything is the wonderful shimmer of creation.... — D. H. Lawrence²

I would like to outline a neglected argument for the unreality of the concept of God. My argument by no means rejects Peirce's well-known essay, "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God." Rather, I am in complete agreement with his conclusion, as I hope you will see.

Let me begin with one of Peirce's definitions of God: "If a pragmatist is asked what he means by the word 'God,' he can only say that ... if contemplation and study of the physico-psychical universe can imbue a man with principles of conduct analogous to the influence of a great man's works or conversation, then that analogue of a mind — for it is impossible to say that *any* human attribute is *literally* applicable — is what he means by 'God'..." Peirce's view here suffers from anthropomorphism, though he admits this himself. But he goes on:

Now such being the pragmatist's answer to the question what he means by the word "God," the question whether there really *is* such a being is the question whether all physical science is merely the figment — the arbitrary figment — of the students of nature, and further whether the *one* lesson the Gautama Boodha, Confucius, Socrates, and all who from any point of view

have had their ways of conduct determined by meditation upon the physico-psychical universe, be only their arbitrary notion or be the Truth behind the appearances which the frivolous man does not think of; and whether the superhuman courage which such contemplation has conferred upon priests who go to pass their lives with lepers and refuse all offers of rescue is silly fanaticism, the passion of a baby, or whether it is a strength derived from the power of truth. Now the only guide to the answer to this question lies in the power of the passion of love which more or less overmasters every agnostic scientist and everybody who seriously and deeply considers the universe. But whatever there may be of *argument* in all this is as nothing, the merest nothing, in comparison to its force as an appeal to one's own instinct, which is to argument what substance is to shadow, what bed-rock is to the built foundations of a cathedral.³

That same instinct to which Peirce appeals in his neglected argument is also the basis for his claim for a third form of logical inference, which he termed abductive inference, a largely unconscious and instinctive but valid mode of inference. Without abductive inference, science would be impossible in Peirce's view. Abductive inference, or the human capacity for making good guesses or hypotheses, is an extrarational form of inference. It is what we call "intuition" in everyday language, inferring even though one may not yet have the reason why. And it is an irreducible modality of logical inference, along with deductive and inductive inference.

Peirce claimed that through abductive inference, new information validly enters into scientific reasoning. Without it, as in Popper's view that hypothesis is not itself logical, a lucky but not logical guess, science is reduced to a calculating machine or knowledge system operating solely through deductive and inductive inferences; with it, science is a life, rooted in the desire to learn. Knowledge, in Peirce's view of science, is not the big thing it is for many other theories of science. Rather, it is the desire to learn, rooted in inquiry.

Peirce's appeals to instinct have troubled philosophers, especially those who believe that all human beliefs are social constructions, including human nature. Yet I claim that the evolutionary record reveals that human nature results from a fascinating bio-social process of development that required the exercise of one's instinctive inferencing, which remains embedded in the human body today, though repressed by the rational-mechanical outlook of modern consciousness.

We need to look to the conditions of hunter-gatherer life for the most direct picture of how a human propensity for abductive inferencing evolved, a better view, in my opinion, than that afforded by machine models of human consciousness. I am also claiming that the historical conception of God itself marks the moment of human alienation from participation in the conditions through

which human abductive inference evolved. Pygmies in Africa, who with Australian aboriginals constitute the oldest continuous culture on earth, going back 40,000 to 50,000 or more years, do not use a “concept” of God, despite their deep religiousness and highly sophisticated forms of intuitive awareness. The closest they come to it, perhaps, is with the idea of “mother forest,” which is not a concept but a palpable and variegated presence. The question is what is meant by the concept of God, and whether conceptual intelligence is the proper “center of gravity” for such a question.

I once attended a Pueblo corn dance with Alfonso Ortiz, an anthropologist and a Pueblo. He told me, “White people think we pray to make it rain, but that’s not it. The rain does its part, and we must do ours.” This is non-causal reasoning, participation consciousness.

As L  vy-Bruhl put it, using the unfortunate term “prelogical,” “The prelogical mind does not objectify nature thus [by logical classification].... It lives it rather, by feeling itself participate in it, and feeling these participations everywhere; and it interprets this complexity of participations by social forms.”⁴ When one considers oneself participating in creation, as hunter-gatherers and the later Peirce did, creation’s continuous beginning remains a palpable presence, not a remote abstraction. Only one need not consider such participation as prelogical, as L  vy-Bruhl did, but as the bodily-felt source of abductive inference. Being “participate in it” is literally the center of gravity of animate mind.

In another key definition, Peirce says: “‘Do you believe this Supreme Being to have been the creator of the universe?’ Not so much *to have been* as to be now creating the universe...”⁵ Now this definition of God as Creator creating seems to me to signal a break with the foundational God story of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic “World” religion.

Though Peirce was a practicing Christian, and though his religious writings can be read as a defense of Christianity, I claim that his philosophical ideas go further, toward animism, as when he says that “...every true universal, every continuum, is a living and conscious being.”⁶ This is a semeiotic radicalism that causes even some Peirceans to shy away. Elsewhere Peirce says, “When we gaze upon the multifariousness of nature we are looking straight into the face of a living spontaneity. A day’s ramble in the country ought to bring that home to us.”⁷

Peirce’s understanding of signs allows intelligence its full embodiment in the body and out of the body: “The psychologists undertake to locate various mental powers in the brain; and above all consider it as quite certain that the faculty of language resides in a certain lobe; but I believe it comes decidedly nearer the truth (though not really true) that language resides in the tongue. In my opinion, it is much more true that the thoughts of a living writer are in any printed copy of his book than that they are in his brain.”⁸ If a living writer’s thoughts are more in his book than in his brain, can we not say by analogy that the Creator is to

be found in each act of creation rather than in something apart?

There is no spectator God, apart, isolate from Creation. That God is an unreal social construction, mirror of the advent of civilization, when humanity separated itself from the primordial matrix of variegated life as the original Other in which it participated, an act that could be called de-animalization, for animals are largely the first other of the mind's eye, as Paul Shepard has noted. With agriculture and civilization humankind began to behold itself as Other, narcissistically projecting its alienation from original participation to separate spectator in its mirror world of the community of gods. And the community of gods eventually gave way through "focal vision" to Jewish monotheism, a further rationalization and alienation from variegated earth.

Christianity is an anthropocentric religion, seeing divinity incarnated in a single human being, a divine representative, a focal point. From a historical perspective, Jesus was an aspect of a collective incarnation, the birth of a new order of being, which Karl Jaspers termed the *axial age*. Buddha, Socrates, and Jesus were births, among others, of social transformation described by Jaspers and Lewis Mumford, an age which bodied forth the power of the person — as against the civilizational structures with their centralized armies, bureaucracies, and writing. Writers recorded their living acts, and we know them from these records. But what about those who did not have an enlightened and literate Plato? To what extent were Buddha and Jesus re-eruptions of ancient shamanic awareness into civilizational structure, but now axialized? If we consider, even partially, what the unrecorded shamans lived from, the Plato-less shamans, we might be able to see to what extent civilization has been a march of progress one step forward, two steps backward.

Consider that fusion of Jewish monotheism, which deserted myth and the cycles of life for otherworldly transcendence and for history, with Greek idealism. In Paul Shepard's words:

Is *mythos* really more immature than *logos*? Is there not some doubt that a rationally ordered system, regardless of how supremely logical...is the end of wisdom?

... The Greek ideal of youthfulness and intellectual skepticism are celebrated roots of Western consciousness, but their price is high. The destruction of living myth was undertaken in Hellenistic times with the best intentions.... But the new logic could not provide a world of purpose, lively with spiritual activity, its ceremonial celebrations deserving of deep fidelity; it was not an alternative to a mythic, ritual foundation for passage-making in the life stages of the individual.

With the translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek to create the Septuagint Bible and the interaction of Jewish and Greek cultures

beginning in the third century B.C., two roots of the modern West were joined, sharing goals of spiritual and intellectual abstraction and asceticism.⁹

Greek idealizing met with Jewish rationalizing monotheism and its conception of desert as empty, as “tohu bohu” rather than living habitat. Out of this turn from mythology to logos, philosophy emerged backwards, as it were, from its golden pupa-skin, a caterpillar in the contraction of consciousness.

The “religions of the book,” so crucial to the development of modern consciousness, are hooked on the horns of Plato’s dilemma: Can one communicate in writing the living spontaneity of life that so moved Socrates that he refused to inscribe it? Or Jesus? Or Mohammed? Or Buddha? Or Anonymous? Socrates said that the only true writing is face-to-face, soul-to-soul, “graven in the soul” (we know this because Plato wrote it down: the contradiction of the wound that heals). In other words, the only true writing is with *living text*, treated as living communication. Socrates’s point was that fixing thought to script is a retreat from living thinking, as Joseph Ransdell has reminded me. Hence elocution by rhetoricians, by the sophists, using the art of memory (memorizing speeches by using public symbols in the place of the speech) is false, despite its Olympic-like performative appeal, in not being fully alive to the moment. And hence the “religions of the book,” by analogy, are false in their fixing of the ongoing creation of all things to ideal histories inscribed in “sacred” texts, fixed to past places and special people.

Music, when once played, as Eric Dolphy noted, is gone, in the air. Books are but leaves, meant to hold beauties and truths. But as leaves fall and are reborn, so are books mere stopping places of the living quick of creation. The book is but a congealed form of conduct, a temporary resting place of ideas. It was never meant to be a terminus and it is a vast mistake as a basis for consciousness. To live “by the book” is to be a mere recipe, cut from the chorus of creation. Consider the text when it is most alive, say, in Shakespeare. The words breathe off the page, awaiting incarnation in action. They are there to be breathed, voiced, enacted anew.

The axial religions tend to claim that one needs the “gyroscope” of another, of a Holy One-for-All, to find one’s way to the Creator. This is a bottleneck view of divinity. But the pre-civilizational peoples were aware of something more, something simple that became lost as common practice, something preserved in mysticism, in my opinion, but as “secret,” more complicated and cryptic. They were aware that what we term “religion” is the living effort to connect to and participate in the all-surrounding life of ongoing creation, which touches all things, including us.

What is more primitive: the view that all things are living signs, to whom it is our highest duty to attune our biologically neotenus selves to the wisdom they

hold for us, or that all matter is ultimately mechanism, and we ourselves but spawning machines — Cartesian water-statues, neural-net computers? Our foraging ancestors lived in an animate universe, perfused with living signs. We proud moderns live in a dead universe, a tick-tock universe to which life is ultimately reducible. We live in the ghost in the machine legacy of nominalism; they lived in a fantastic realism. They, and the other aboriginal peoples, indeed lived in a paradise, eating far better and working far less than their civilizational counterparts, as the anthropological and archaeological evidence indicates.¹⁰

The pygmies have sacreds and secrets, localized in streams and stones and plants and animals, in living mother forest, and when things go wrong, she has fallen asleep, and they awaken her through ritual and song: divinity as a forest of symbols, as heaven on earth. The Judeo-Christian-Islamic “World” religion, by contrast, says that heaven is a place to go to and that it is not to be found on earth. Though humankind originated in paradise, in the Garden of Eden, it was expelled for acquiring knowledge of good and evil, perhaps an accurate metaphor for the radically changed way of life brought about by agriculturally-based civilization.

Civilization changed bodies, but by and large for the worse: it caused people to become 4 to 6 inches shorter on average (which only was offset in the last 100 or so years in industrial countries), to suffer increase in diseases, to reduce spacing between childbirths, affecting the crucial early mother-infant interactions, to radically increase amount of work time, to devastate the landscape (as the “fertile crescent” remains devastated even today). It even changed dominant blood types. Biology is not limited to genetics, and even there, agricultural peoples exploded populations of bioregions with their frequencies.

The book of Genesis maintains that a man was created by God from the earth, that a woman was created from the body of a man, and that both partook of the forbidden tree of knowledge of good and evil. Seduced by the serpent, the woman, Eve, in turn seduced the man, Adam, to eat the forbidden fruit. Patriarchal monotheism viewed the animal other and the woman as causes for separation from participation in paradise, in effect, it devalued the animality of humankind. These carnal seductions doomed humankind henceforth to exile from its true home, Eden, the bountiful garden of paradise.

Wandering humankind would work and struggle its entire life, cut off from its direct connection to the Creator. Life became an ideal struggle, especially in the Christian-Islamic traditions, to gain re-admittance to paradise — but only for the afterlife. And only through the ways Jesus and Mohammed independently offered.

The gulf between humankind and paradise grew. Though expelled from Eden for eating of the tree of knowledge, it was now knowledge, that is, the belief in the teachings of Jesus or Mohammed, which paradoxically would provide re-entry to heaven’s fruits. Only by following the way of another could one follow the way for oneself, and only by dying could one find “eternal life.” Death marked

the way to re-connect to the Creator; heaven became a disembodied afterlife, disconnected from living being, from mortal existence.

In the idealization of life a schism exists between material and spiritual being. Life on earth is but a wandering from humanity's true home, the dematerialized perfection of ethereal paradise. In heaven, to put it in earthy terms, shit does not happen. Or so the story goes. But what if the story is a vast fabrication that the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religion tells itself? A fabrication connected to its conception of the Creator as radically separate from its creation? What if life itself is paradise, is heaven on earth? What if life itself is the living duality of flesh and spirit, of carnal semeiosis? What if life itself is the dreaming into being of creation itself?

3. Sink or Swim?

Latin *mergere*: dip, plunge, sink

The gospel of Christ says that progress comes from every individual merging his individuality in sympathy with his neighbors. On the other side, the conviction of the nineteenth century is that progress takes place by virtue of every individual's striving for himself with all his might and trampling his neighbor under foot whenever he gets a chance to do so. This may accurately be called the Gospel of Greed. — Charles Peirce¹¹

Understanding Peirce's ideas involves understanding his rejection of nominalism as a basis of the modern mind — in effect, a rejection of modern mind itself, though growing out of it. In "Evolutionary Love" he criticized Darwinism as over-expanding the place of competition to produce the anti-social Gospel of Greed philosophy. He also argued against egoism, or rugged individualism, as denying the social nature of reality, and juxtaposed the Christian view, cited above, as exemplifying "evolutionary love."

In "Evolutionary Love" Peirce claimed that Darwin's theory is evolution by Firstness, a crucial yet incomplete view. Peirce attempted to incorporate it into a three-modality approach inclusive of Secondness and Thirdness, using Clarence King's catastrophe theory — sudden shifts of population — as evolution by Secondness, and what he termed *agapasm*, or evolutionary love, as evolution by Thirdness.

He framed his argument for evolution by Thirdness through habit as a kind of Lamarckian evolution:

Habit is mere inertia, a resting on one's oars, not a propulsion. Now it is energetic projaculation (lucky there is such a word, or this untried hand

might have been put to inventing one) by which in the typical instances of Lamarckian evolution the new elements of form are first created. Habit, however, forces them to take practical shapes, compatible with the structures they affect, and, in the form of heredity and otherwise, gradually replaces the spontaneous energy that sustains them. Thus, habit plays a double part; it serves to establish the new features, and also to bring them into harmony with the general morphology and function of the animals and plants to which they belong. But if the reader will now kindly give himself the trouble of turning back a page or two, he will see that this account of Lamarckian evolution coincides with the general description of the action of love, to which, I suppose, he yielded his assent.¹²

Hence Thirdness, as semeiosis, general relation, habit-making and taking, is the stuff of evolutionary love. Mind is Thirdness, which may involve brain, though not reducible to it. Peirce took the position that the human brain is an adaptation to mind, considered as Thirdness, not the reverse, and that there is a “reasonableness energizing in the universe.”¹³

I do not disagree with the idea of evolutionary love, only with the idea of “merging his individuality in sympathy with his neighbors,” as Peirce expresses it. It depends on how he means “merging.” It seems to me to undervalue the place of spontaneous, bodying forth social soul as the real source of individuality, not reducible to “egoism.” The Christian outlook would also view this merging process as mediated by Christ, viewed as a divine human of a different order from the rest of the community: in effect, one specially designated individual who retains individuality as something more than a “neighbor.”

My criticism of Peirce’s statement, more succinctly, is that I think one should *live* one’s individuality, one’s spontaneous being, “in sympathy with one’s neighbors” rather than “merge” it away. Perhaps the difference seems trivial; perhaps it is, depending on just what Peirce meant by “merging.” But in my opinion it makes a profound difference. Elsewhere Peirce too easily describes the individual self as something that is nothing in the larger scheme of things. Take his statement from 1891: “Everybody will admit a personal self exists in the same sense in which a snark exists; that is, there is a phenomenon to which that name is given. It is an illusory phenomenon; but still it is a phenomenon. It is not quite *purely* illusory, but only *mainly* so. It is true, for instance, that men are *selfish*, that is, that they are really deluded into supposing themselves to have some isolated existence; and in so far, they *have* it. To deny the reality of the personality is not anti-spiritualistic; it is only anti-nominalistic.”¹⁴

Denying the reality of personality seems to me to be nominalistic, if one accepts that being a person involves the bodying forth of one’s qualitatively unique being. That is why I prefer *to live my individuality in sympathy* rather than

merge it. The fallacy is to assume that one must merge one's individuality in order to realize sympathy with one's neighbors. Yet we are already "in the swim," immersed in the social, in and through our very individuality, our spontaneous being (as, metaphorically speaking, sperm and eggs are well aware from the start).

Consider too Peirce's statement: "... the supreme commandment of the Buddhisto-Christian religion is, to generalize, to complete the whole system even until continuity results and the distinct individuals weld together. Thus it is, that while reasoning and the science of reasoning strenuously proclaim the subordination of reasoning to sentiment, the very supreme commandment of sentiment is that man should generalize, or what the logic of relatives shows to be the same thing, should become welded into the universal continuum, which is what true reasoning consists in..."¹⁵

Peirce's idea of a "buddhisto-Christian religion" is striking, and I speculate that it would be atheistic, would be a form of religious atheism. More to the point, however, is that the welding approach seems problematic. What would a stone-cutter, say a Socrates or Jesus, considered in their day jobs as cutters and hence sensitive to the qualities of each stone joined in an edifice, say to the jolly welder of all things? After all, Jesus said, "Show me the stone that the builders rejected: that is the keystone" (Gospel of Thomas, 66), suggesting that each individual matters in the continuum of being. Does welding allow joining, genuinely continuous yet involving the variegation of that joined? Or does this view see the forest but not the trees?

Each and every being involves a bubbling forth of an unfathomable individuality which is a real element of creation, not to be "merged" away. To merge away one's individuality is ideal love, the Christ's mistake: the idealized-passion of the Christ, merging with the all. To *live* one's spontaneous being in sympathy with one's neighbors in life, human and non-human, marks a key difference. For we are wired to marvel in nature.

In my opinion D. H. Lawrence punctured the human pretension "to be any bursting Infinite, or swollen One Identity," the pretension of the king-god through possession, or of the victim-god, through identification of will and consciousness with all things.

The way of Alexander, of Power and dominion over things, results in materialism. But Lawrence understood more deeply than Peirce, it seems to me, that the way of Christianity, of merging with all things, also results ultimately, however unintended, in materialism: unattainable idealized love eventually gives way to its opposite, materialized hate. Humankind must live with ideals, but can never live by them, for to do so is to live from mental consciousness rather than from the fullness of being. This is precisely analogous to Peirce's criticisms of attempts to make science practical as undervaluing the place of mature sentiment as a better guide to everyday life.

I additionally argue that the cultural nominalism that marks the consciousness of the modern era, of the “flesh and blood” of the average modern mind, as Peirce put it, embodies the destructive trajectory of mentalized consciousness. Somewhere along the line that idealized love grown out of Judeo-Greco-Christian roots transformed itself into the mechanical world-picture, with its “philosophy of greed.” Idealized love gave way to devolutionary hate.

It is said that love conquers all, that Christianity is a religion of love, and that such love begets progress. Yet consider idealized love, that bitter fruit of Christianity which withers sensuous presence in the Name of the Ideal. What growth does it lead to? To the growth of the imperialist West? To the growth of Hobbesworld, wherein all that is natural is imbued with competitive Hate? Where Love is merely a fiction?

Why did philosophy emerge out of a sense of love as the great evolutionary agency of the universe, as Peirce put it, and yet “grow” to a view that competitive invidious advantage — or anti-love — is the sole evolutionary agency, and that general relation is unreal? Is this progress, or is it possible that “devolutionary” better describes this undevelopment? I view the spirit of modern life as one whose end is devolutionary hate, murderously-suicidal hate, and that end as the legacy of the idealization of life.

Lawrence punctures the bubble of pretension of identifying with “swollen One Identity,” through a victim-god savior or a king-god of worldly power, by recognizing the necessity to live from the minute particulars, not from abstractions. Lawrence: “Every single living creature is a single creative unit, a unique, incommutable self. Primarily, in its own spontaneous reality, it knows no law. It is a law unto itself. Secondarily, in its material reality, it submits to all the laws of the material universe. But the primal, spontaneous self in any creature has ascendance, truly, over the material laws of the universe; it uses these laws and converts them in the mystery of creation.” Lawrence’s philosophy of living spontaneity is of a piece with Peirce’s outlook on this one point — despite Peirce’s antipathy to the “literary” mind — each allowing qualitative uniqueness. Yet Peirce would merge it away, if I understand him correctly, as though it were a community of theoretical inquiry rather than an incommutable element of the vital community.

Melville saw this problem clearly in *Moby Dick*, where Ishmael experiences the epiphany of the continuity of humankind and life while squeezing spermaceti with his shipmates, shattering his Isolatoism, biblically embedded in his very name: “...let us squeeze hands all round; let us all squeeze ourselves into each other; let us squeeze ourselves universally into the very milk and sperm of kindness.”

It is said of Ishmael in Genesis 16:12, “He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man’s hand against him.” Yet he rejoins the community of humankind through friendship with Polynesian hunter-gatherer

harpooner Queequeg, literally joining hands with shipmates in the inexpressible milk and sperm of human kindness, the vat of spermicetti taken from the whale's head, whiteness of communion. And after the catastrophe, he emerges from the death-void, bouyed by Queequeg's casket, itself birthed from "the button-like black bubble at the axis of that slowly wheeling circle," the death-abyss of the sunk world-ship.

Yet Ishmael's experience of merging with the All was not enough. For his grasp of the social nature of reality required his concrete relations with the individual others in his life. He continues: "Would that I could keep squeezing that sperm for ever! For now, since by many prolonged, repeated experiences, I have perceived that man must eventually lower, or at least shift, his conceit of attainable felicity, not placing it anywhere in the intellect or fancy; but in the wife, the heart, the bed, the table, the saddle, the fireside, the country; now that I have perceived all this, I am ready to squeeze case eternally...."

The idealization of the passions seems to me to be a key issue in considering modern consciousness, one dealt with by the deepest critics of modern life, a community that would include William Blake, Herman Melville, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Nietzsche, Lawrence, and Milan Kundera, among others. The modern error, as I see it, is rooted in a longer idealizing tradition of the West: in the monotheizing of Judaism, in the idealizing forms of Plato (even though he himself shows the problem through Socrates), in the resulting fusion of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religion: passions by the book.

Sentimentalizing the passions — what Kundera calls "*homo sentimentalis*" in his novel *Immortality* — means treating the passions as an ideal, a value. To see its terrible aspect, consider Captain Ahab when he emerges on deck in *Moby Dick*, avatar of rational madness:

But as the mind does not exist unless leagued with the soul, therefore it must have been that, in Ahab's case, yielding up all his thoughts and fancies to his own supreme purpose; that purpose, by its own sheer inveteracy of will, forced itself against gods and devils into a kind of self-assumed, independent being of its own. (chap. 44)

In Ahab one sees the ultimate trajectory of idealized love. Melville is saying that despite the monomaniacal madness of the Isolato consciousness, of its isolation from and attempt to possess the world community of life and the world community of humankind (and we might say its mad quest for oil!), despite its endgame of murderous suicide, that it too weeps the same salt water tears as the rest of humanity. The Isolato consciousness must die; it is foredoomed. We are its endgame.

When philosophy emerged from mythology, it proclaimed the great evolutionary agency of the universe to be Love. When modern materialism emerged from post-Medieval Christendom, it proclaimed the great evolutionary agency of the universe to be self-maximizing Hate, Hobbes's perpetual war, a veritable hand of Ishmael, raised against all others.

As the great rational-mechanical machine of modernity perfected itself, in our time, it sought to possess the "phantom of life" itself, as Melville called the great white whale. Captain Ahab: "All my means are sane, my motive and my object mad."

Captain Ahab: "To the last I grapple with thee; from hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee! Ye damned whale!"

Ahab hurls his harpoon for hate's sake, and, entangled in it, merges in antipathy with the object of his quest, the great white whale, the "phantom of life" itself. Pure subject meets pure object, devoid of soul, of community, of love, in a fusion of the would-be power-god and victim-god "holding the bubble of the all" in ultimate realization of devolutionary hate: murderous suicide.

Modern consciousness, believing itself freed from fate, from nature, from any limitations whatsoever, seals its fate in the very act of so thinking. Ahab's quest, the legacy of Ockham, culminates in its total self-undoing. Instead of freedom, the mad quest to arrive at a thing-in-itself, stripped of mediation, results in Ahab, pure Cartesian-Kantian subject, bound to the "pure object," Moby Dick, by his umbilicus of Hate, the line of his own flame-baptized harpoon. His final attainment of unity with the Phantom of Life itself is his own murderous suicide.

Modern nominalism would treat triadic mediation as a fiction, yet mediation is the very reality without which the *via moderna* leads to one destination and one destination only and once for all time: Death, murderous suicide, the final toll of the fiction of nominalism.

In Ahab's end the eviction of purport from the modern world-view is revealed as a tragic flaw, for indeed, the nominalistic mechanical world-picture is a false Idol, which retains a crypto-religious telos: the perfection of that human self-alienation that began with agricultural civilizing, with the very invention of the concept of God. God was not banished by modern materialism, quite the contrary. Secretly, though visibly, the concept of God is perfected *sub-rosa* through it. I am speaking, of course, about the one, true God of our time, to whom all here, myself included, are fated to pay obeisance to, namely: *Deus ex Machina*.

From Lawrence's view — which I think offers an interesting perspective on Peirce's — both the way of the king-god and that of the victim-god would hold the bubble of the All in their hands, while ignoring the lesson of their fingers, the last lesson, as Lawrence puts it: "The last lesson? — Ah, the lesson of his own fingers: himself: the identity; little, but real. Better, far better, to be oneself than to be any bursting Infinite, or swollen One Identity."

The lesson of one's own fingers, I would agree, holds far more than all the gaseous galaxies, spinning by rules according to the great modern timepiece, far more than saviors and prophets and kings, bottlenecking our awareness, even more than Peirce's "supreme commandment." If the deepest purpose in life is nothing less than to become the ongoing creation of the universe in the myriad ways of one's life, then, it seems to me, one does this best not by identifying with the All through a savior or prophet or swollen ideal of a God or gods — even that of science, but by attuning to and laboring well the minute particulars in the path of one's life. From this living from one's "little, but real" identity bubbling into being and doing, flows Peirce's "universal continuum," it seems to me, as motive source and consequence rather than abstract focal point of conduct. This, to my understanding, is what is meant by the Native American idea "to walk in beauty" and by Peirce's understanding of the aesthetic basis of conduct, of Beauty as the intrinsically admirable.

We are wired to marvel in nature, and this reverencing attunement does not require a concept of God. Quite the reverse. The development of concepts of God, especially with the rise of agriculturally-based civilizations, represent the development of human alienation from what could be called the divine presence of the living universe. That is, the concept of God is the peeling away from direct, felt participation in the creation of the universe, from participation in the Creator, considered as felt presence rather than concept.

If, as Peirce claimed, religion is poetry completed, then marveling in nature, without and within, is the completion of religion. The religions of the book are rooted in an alienated conception of nature (and landscape), as though the living desert, in particular, could be "tohu bohu," and as though a particular human and written history could provide a better basis for belief than marveling in nature, without and within.

Such anthropocentrism is inadequate as a basis for religion in the long run, in my opinion. Worse, in the disconnect from animate mind, from hunter-gatherer consciousness as participatory inquisitive awareness of the living land, the civilized religions, particularly those of the book, by and large embarked on a regressive bottlenecking of consciousness, a kind of devolutionary infantilization at odds with our human neotenic nature.

The king-god and the victim-god scenarios that mark the Judaeo-Christian-Muslim tradition and its civilizational origins converge today in the literal perfection of the *deus ex machina*, grand electro-inquisitor, the avatar of devolutionary hate. It will not save us from the fate of the global house of cards we are perfecting, quite the opposite: it is turning the biosphere into it.

We are participant in creation all the time, not mere spectators occasionally merging into it — that would assume our individuality to be a separate existence rather than as continuous with the bubbling into being. Our individuality, the

living quick as Lawrence puts it, is itself a reality of the universe actively pouring forth creation.

In Peirce's terminology, I am viewing the question from the Firstness of it, and from the viewpoint of practice. From that point of view, Peirce's scientists are merging away at the all of truth, in theory, as well they should. But from the perspective of practice, science is in our time a frail little child's boat, and that merging is a kind of sub-human activity, insufficient for full-bodied practical life, as Peirce saw so well. As science grows to maturity, it realizes that its ultimate port is Beauty, which involves Goodness and Truth. And in Beauty each and every being is, in its individuality — not apart from it — participant in ongoing creation.

4. Children of the Earth

One of these days, perhaps, there will come a writer of opinions less humdrum than those of Dr. (Alfred Russel) Wallace, and less in awe of the learned and official world ... who will argue, like a new Bernard Mandeville, that man is but a degenerate monkey, with a paranoid talent for self-satisfaction, no matter what scrapes he may get himself into, calling them 'civilization', and who, in place of the unerring instincts of other races, has an unhappy faculty for occupying himself with words and abstractions, and for going wrong in a hundred ways before he is driven, willy-nilly, into the right one. Dr. Wallace would condemn such an extravagant paradoxer.

— Charles Peirce¹⁶

I propose that the universe is a vast cosmic fantasia, dreaming into being, which we perceive as the Spirit-That-Moves-In-And-Through-All-Things. And I claim that we do truly perceive this in our bodily being, that our bodily being is an incarnation of this cosmic fantasia, dreaming into being. Humans are Pleistocene de-matured primates, whose de-maturity shows itself in adaptability and reliance on cultural learning. In fact humans may be excessively and dangerously adaptable.

Suppose us to be that "degenerate monkey," whose instincts are more plastic than those of other animals. I take this to mean that the native American expression for humans as "children of the earth" is literally true, in an evolutionary sense, and that to be human means to be more dependent on the inpouring signs from all-surrounding life, indeed, to find our maturity in attuning ourselves to what David Abram, in defining animism, has happily called the relation of the human to the-greater-than-human.

Consider Peirce's example of how rational mind, being newer and progressive, is also more infantile than instinctive mind:

I doubt very much whether the Instinctive mind could ever develop into a Rational mind. I should expect the reverse process sooner. The Rational mind is the Progressive mind, and as such, by its very capacity for growth, seems more infantile than the Instinctive mind. Still, it would seem that Progressive minds must have, in some mysterious way, probably by arrested development, grown from Instinctive minds; and they are certainly enormously higher. The Deity of the *Théodicée* of Leibniz is as high an Instinctive mind as can well be imagined; but it impresses a scientific reader as distinctly inferior to the human mind. It reminds one of the views of the Greeks that Infinitude is a defect; for although Leibniz imagines that he is making the Divine Mind infinite, by making its knowledge Perfect and Complete, he fails to see that in thus refusing it the powers of thought and the possibility of improvement he is in fact taking away something far higher than knowledge. It is the human mind that is infinite. One of the most remarkable distinctions between the Instinctive mind of animals and the Rational mind of man is that animals rarely make mistakes, while the human mind almost invariably blunders at first, and repeatedly, where it is really exercised in the manner that is distinctive of it. If you look upon this as a defect, you ought to find an Instinctive mind higher than a Rational one, and probably, if you cross-examine yourself, you will find you do. The greatness of the human mind lies in its ability to discover truth notwithstanding its not having Instincts strong enough to exempt it from error. This is the marvel and admirable in it; and this essentially supposes a generous portion of the capacity for blundering....

The conception of the Rational Mind as an Unmatured Instinctive Mind which takes another development precisely because of its childlike character is confirmed, not only by the prolonged childhood of men, but also by the fact that all systems of rational performances have had instinct for their first germ. Not only has instinct been the first germ, but every step in the development of those systems of performances comes from instinct. It is precisely because this Instinct is a weak, uncertain Instinct that it becomes infinitely plastic, and never reaches an ultimate state beyond which it cannot progress. Uncertain tendencies, unstable states of equilibrium are conditions *sine qua non* for the manifestation of Mind.¹⁷

To say that Rational mind is an immature, “more infantile” capacity than Instinctive mind suggests to me that a rational civilization, far from being enlightened — or simply mature, is more likely to be infantile: subject to the unbearable enlightenment of being. By contrast, our hunter-gatherer, neotenized bodies evolved to find their maturity as “children of the earth” omnivorously attending to the signs of surrounding life, to the instinctive intelligence of the

environment, and nurturing their “degenerate monkey” nature by cultivating the twenty year course of prolonged development in appropriate care and ritual.

The human brain evolved through foragers who practiced subtle attunement to surrounding life as their way of life. Sensing the forest of symbols and savannah of signs was what literally grew Big Brain, and perhaps eventually gave it its linguistic syntax; and to “read” and ruminate upon prey and food and all the omens of life involved a dramatic participation in the entrancement that is life. To hunt and gather involves both hyper-attuning activity as well as meditative quieting of the body, especially if you don’t want to be some other predator’s prey. This is by no means “primitive.”

It is primarily the living Others, especially the animal and plant Others, who guided us to the discovery of the symbol, as we hunted, gathered, tracked, danced, dreamed, played, revered, ruminated over and became them, incorporating them into our emergent souls (and stomachs!) and finding resonance with them in the mammalian and reptilian parts of our brains. Their intelligible grammars became the basis of human language, in my view.

Imagine that you could be profoundly aware in detail of events a couple of kilometers away in a natural setting, by listening to the ripples of non-human calls signifying a disturbance. Imagine being profoundly aware in detail of everything about a creature, non-human or human: its bodily state, including functioning of its internal organs, its emotional state, even its intentions, by reading the over 5,000 potential signs found in its tracks. These are but two real “primitive skills” wherein close attunement to grammars of nature provide highly sophisticated practices with articulated “grammars” to be internalized, and practical wisdom to be generalized in ritual life. These are the living things of which symbols were originally made, in my view.

In *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* Shepard argues that the traditional hunter-gatherer hunter is the one who most reveres animals, and that we remain inescapably entwined in “the sacred game,” a play on prey and the ritual play of the hunt.¹⁸ Animals nourish us in ways deeper than material food, they nourish our souls and are a primary means through which we became human. Perhaps that is why 30 to 40 percent of characters in young children’s dreams are animals. Interestingly, hunter-gatherers continue populating about 30 percent of the characters of their dreams with animals, where the number drops to 6 percent for men and 4 percent for women in American society, suggesting another indicator of anthropocentric consciousness.¹⁹

Consider anthropologist Richard Nelson’s statement: “I believe the expert Inupiaq hunter possesses as much knowledge as a highly trained scientist in our own society, although the information may be of a different sort. Volumes could be written on the behavior, ecology, and utilization of Arctic animals — polar bear, walrus, bowhead whale, beluga, bearded seal, ringed seal, caribou, musk ox,

and others — based entirely on Eskimo knowledge.... A Koyukon elder, who took it upon himself to be my teacher, was fond of telling me: Each animal knows way more than you do.... This statement epitomizes relationships to the natural world among many Native American people. And it goes far in explaining the diversity and fecundity of life on our continent when the first sailing ship approached these shores.”²⁰

From this view, which gives greater weight to instinctive intelligence, we are not superior to animals, but must attune ourselves to their instinctive intelligence to find our own maturity as genetically de-matured apes. Again, from one of Richard Nelson’s Koyukan teachers: “The bear can outmind you.” And respectful attunement is due not only to the animals, but also the plant beings and landscape. From this perspective, it is a human conceit to deny the sacredness of all life forms, whose deaths give us life. To communion-practicing Christians, the sacred game is narrowed to eating the Christ divinity figure — sacred game awareness is narrowed to the sacrificial consciousness of agricultural civilization — but to hunter-gatherers all eating is holy communion. Our brains remain the living manifestation of the fantastic reality that was the world of the foragers — human and prehuman, for we carry the achievements of the mammals and even their reptilian ancestors in us, in the limbic system and brain stem. All this becomes particularly evident in hypnotic phenomena, it seems to me, and also in dreaming.²¹

Hence full awareness of human instinctive intelligence involves the broader living community of instinctive reasonableness. Without that attunement, the ongoing observation of nature, mind contracts to mirroring its immature self, signified in its abstracted concept of God.

When philosophy escaped “from its golden pupa-skin, mythology, [and] proclaimed the great evolutionary agency of the universe to be Love,” it was in the process of idealizing love, of creating an abstracted understanding of love that was a contraction of consciousness. That idealization found its abstracted underside in the modern era, which proclaimed the great evolutionary agency of the universe to be Hate, that great ticking clock of loveless mechanism.

Peirce’s philosophy of consciousness reveals parallels in many ways closer to that of hunter-gatherers than to that of the civilized scientist or philosopher of the modern era. I view it as an element of a final participation consciousness in the making, from a most unlikely source: a physicist-mathematician-logician-scientist.

We are neotenic or newborn-like creatures, literally “children of the earth,” in our very physiology. Peirce’s discussion of humankind as a “degenerate monkey, with a paranoic talent for self-satisfaction,” whose rationality is an immature capacity, suggests that there was a maturity in hunter-gatherer consciousness which consisted in acknowledging the immaturity of the human ego and rationality, and in seeing the need to attune ourselves to the greater environmental intelligence.

The “agricultural revolution” of 10,000 to 12,000 years ago on which cities are based never ended, nor did the expulsion from Eden, which we act out today. Civilization marches onward, devouring the earth in its unlimited population and power expansion.

Civilization, or city-fication, not only introduced many positive fruits, but also introduced an anthropocentric consciousness that marked a radical departure from the animate mind of the hunter-gatherer, a consciousness unhinged from its relation to the greater surrounding world of life. It created new forms: of social inequality, mass-killing warfare, shorter, nutritionally debased people, kingship, “world religions” with religious dependence focused on prophets, and a sense that human power could expand without limit. Human power pretty much has, until our time, when it bumped into the limits of organic life brought about through consequences of human overpopulation, environmental degradation, and “the Gospel of Greed.”

In short, civilization was the creation of what Lewis Mumford termed a *Megamachine*. As Mumford expressed it in his book, *The Myth of the Machine*:

Conceptually the instruments of mechanization five thousand years ago were already detached from other human functions and purposes than the constant increase of order, power, predictability, and, above all, control. With this proto-scientific ideology went a corresponding regimentation and degradation of once-autonomous human activities: ‘mass culture’ and mass control’ made their first appearance. With mordant symbolism, the ultimate products of the megamachine in Egypt were colossal tombs, inhabited by mummified corpses; while later in Assyria, as repeatedly in every other expanding empire, the chief testimony to its technical efficiency was a waste of destroyed villages and cities, and poisoned soils: the prototype of similar ‘civilized’ atrocities today. As for the Egyptian pyramids, what are they but the precise static equivalents of our own space rockets? Both devices for securing, at an extravagant cost, a passage to Heaven for the favored few.²²

What if civilization, as megamachine, systematically distorted the process of human development, *replacing neoteny with deliberate infantilization?*

5. Infantilization

The first fruit of the scientific spirit must have been a Theology, and some confused Cosmogony; for it is man’s way to attack the most difficult questions first, and attempt detailed answers to them. What the first religion was like one would give something to know. To tell us would be a suitable

task for a Shakespeare and a Browning, in collaboration with a Darwin, a Spencer, and a Hegel. — Charles Peirce²³

Civilization can be considered as a rational-historical process of progressive infantilization. Domestication involved generalizing neoteny out to the edible environment, through breeding de-matured grasses and animals, co-dependent on human cultivation, and separation from wildness through encapsulation within the “caretaking” institutions of the village. The facts that time between childbirths contracted greatly, average nutrition deteriorated, leisure time drastically reduced, and an anthropocentric consciousness emerged all suggest radical changes to the ways children became socialized.²⁴

Individual awareness was relieved by specialized institutions, so that one person could attend to more specialized functions, but this benefit can also be viewed as a form of awareness deprivation, of de-attuning to the general living habitat. When we separated ourselves from direct participatory musement with the wild plants and animals, when we settled into domestication and civilization and walled ourselves into the city, we began to mirror ourselves as Other and to lose the wild plants and animals as other. We began to lose the community of instinctive intelligence that was our passage to maturity.

Modern mechanical civilization can be viewed as devolving yet further, toward a total fetalized environment perhaps best symbolized by the earth-escaping, encapsulated astronaut. Consciousness becomes a ghost in the womb of the machine, a virtual astronaut escaping the earth, attached through institutional umbilicals to the machine, as though that matrix were not itself a social construction. The rational-mechanical system of modern life is indeed a social construction, the projection of a schizoid, fetalizing consciousness which has lost touch with creation. Imagine a diagram of concentric circles, depicting what I am calling the contraction of consciousness. The outer one is Animate Mind, the middle one is Anthropocentric Mind, and the inner one is Mechanicocentric Mind.

The direct perception of the Creator is diminished in the contraction from animate mind. For animate mind, attuned to and involved in surrounding life, perceives through the instinctive intelligence of its living environment as well as its own instinctive intelligence. Our neotenous nature not only involves, but in my view *requires* abductive attunement, whose original object are wild animals and plants and the general signs of life, as Shepard has pointed out — as one expression of our instinctive intelligence.

Though we humans are domesticators of the earth, we yet retain wild bodies, and, in my opinion, wild needs. If one would like to tap into one’s wild heritage today, one could eat Paleolithic instead of the Neolithic diet which is the basis of modern eating. The Paleolithic or hunter-gatherer diet is what shaped the development of the human body, and the popular Atkins and South Beach diets of

today seem to me to be diminished variations of it. Eating Paleolithic typically involves a wide range of greens, fruits, nuts, berries, legumes, roots, and about 30 percent protein, derived mainly from lean meat, and no domesticated grains or refined sugars.

Or try seeing from peripheral vision instead of focus vision — put your hands out to the sides and wiggle fingers, then move hands back while viewing both left and right until you reach your limit of visual range. Then do this vertically. Then see in “wide-angle” vision. You will feel as though you are in the picture rather than a spectator of it. Movement is easier to detect in natural surroundings. You will also have improved night vision. In my opinion, even something as simple as seeing the world most of the time through wide-angle vision marks a radical shift in consciousness. Reliance on focalized vision in cityscape and especially in literacy seems to me one physiological correlate of the “spectator consciousness,” displaced from participation in being.

As William Blake put it, “He who sees the Infinite in all things sees God. He who sees the ratio only sees himself.” With the increased rationalism of anthropocentric, and especially mechanocentric mind, we close the doors of perception to narrow chinks, losing that circumambient perception that is the natural legacy of our hunter-gatherer bodies. From this perspective, religion cannot develop separated from an ongoing attunement to nature in the long run. Instead, it becomes infantilized, as the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition illustrates, in my opinion. The living spontaneity of creation is abstracted to a distant father-figure who created the universe in a foundational past and who is reachable through the institutional filter of the “world religion” and its special intermediaries. From my perspective, Peirce offers the possibility of a genuine reconnection of religion to the attunement to nature and of science to living spirit in his philosophies of science and religion.

Cities mark the de-attuning to nature and the turn toward power-centered human social organizations. Modernity marks the mythic idealization of the machine, furthering its separation from the reality of life, from outpouring, overflowing, exuberant, variegated life, as that which comprises the body of concrete reasonableness. I earlier termed this “progression” a contraction of consciousness. Another way of putting it is that it is a process of *Infantilization*, a systematic reversal of the requirements of our neotenic species to attune itself to the greater surrounding environmental intelligence of concrete reasonableness. And unless we can undergo a radical re-attunement fairly quickly, it will spell death for global civilization. The past 10,000 to 12,000 years have been a diminution of consciousness into ever-increasing “mind-forg’d manacles” of civilized life. But those 10,000 to 12,000 years are but a veneer on our hunter-gatherer bodies, which indeed are truly “the stuff of which dreams are made,” but real dreams. Our continued attempt to live on that veneer is murderously suicidal.

We are living in the endgame of the idealizing consciousness, by which I mean that the expansion of rational-mechanical civilization, brought about through the contraction of consciousness, has reached a dangerous and terminal crisis in relation to the outer resources of the earth and the inner resources of humanity. Without a thoroughgoing transformation of global civilization, it is likely to self-destruct within a couple of decades.

To return to my earlier thesis: the concept of God is the moment of human alienation from the divine presence of the living universe, from the cosmic fantasia of life. In this perspective the universe is an act of self-creation and self-renewal, and the purport of life is not simply to reproduce genes and species, but to further living reasonableness. Material evolution is more than a Darwinian Gospel of Greed, it also involves genuine social relation as a dynamic, what Peirce termed evolutionary love. Material evolution is in this sense involved in general evolution, in the development of real generals. Therefore all life arrives in potential, if it is not destroyed first or if it does not destroy itself, at the developmental point where it begins to take control of its destiny.

To take one example, consider the idea, associated with Teilhard de Chardin but also developed earlier by Vladimir Vernadsky, that evolution is in the process of building a life-saving “noosphere” (like the atmosphere, stratosphere, etc.), a planetary film of intelligence, in which “life’s domain” would be ruled by reason. Chardin thought that the liberation of rational mind would free the body and soul as well, producing a universal, nature-mastering intelligence in harmony with Christian ideals. But he was ruinously naive, in my opinion. Perhaps those Christian ideals are as well; life cannot be lived by ideals for long, as ideals need to be lived by life, and tempered by life. What could be worse than the perfection of the rule of rationalized reason over life’s domain, as though “life’s domain” is not reasonable in itself!

The ethereal “noosphere” of mind is indeed a globalizing power today, but not in the buoyant way that they conceived it; a noose-sphere would be more accurate. A planetary film of intelligence is precisely what we already have been installing: a vast, rational-mechanical, anti-body system whose ultimate goal is to eradicate fully incarnate human being and variegated life. This is the legacy of modern nominalism and its ethereal ghost in the machine. It severs spirit from living embodiment, and mind from earth.

Ockham’s philosophy of nominalism attempted to slice the throat of the living, general nature of things, splitting them into individual particulars and conventions, which stood for or “named” the particulars, but were in themselves unreal. In order to perfect that project — the “modern road” or *via moderna* as Ockham’s nominalism was called — the philosophical basis for modernity, eventually one comes to the point where, as a living, general thing, one must slice one’s own throat: Ockham’s razor as Ahab’s end. That, as I see it, is where the *via*

moderna has taken us.²⁵

Each and every day the throat of nature is being sliced globally, not only the outer devastation of forests and species and air and sea and climate, but the inner nature of humanity as well, unable to stand the nominalistic ideology that all that can be loved is a fiction, that only anti-social hate is a reality of nature, and that nature is a kind of machine. To dramatize it further: humankind, the greatest killer of the biosphere, is itself an endangered species, endangered not only by the outer consequences of global Power culture on the life of the earth, but also by its “deforestation” of its inner life. We are the legacy of the Sumerian Gilgamesh, who would “ascend to the heavens” through power, who would kill the forest spirit Humbaba and “cut down the Cedar,” who would defy and defame the gods, who would “establish fame for eternity,” who would nevertheless die.

For the first time since civilizational being developed, we have reached the limits of civilization, globally. Thin-blooded scientific-technical civilization cannot match the thick-blooded fountain of life as a basis for living unless it gives up its enlightenment pretensions, and the unbearable enlightenment of being which they have already produced. We need to conceive a new civilizational structure that can, for the first time, incorporate limits in alignment with nature, globally. Why do people naively assume that the same modern, rational human consciousness — and its science and technology and economics — which produced the dying global sewer we are increasingly living in, is alone capable of reversing the deadly forces it released? As though, for example, simply increasing agricultural productivity on the same amount of land won’t also continue to increase population somewhere?

Until contemporary science-techno-culture can put “mater” back in “materialism,” and can rediscover that indeed the universe is a perfusion of living signs, not a dead tick-tock machine, we will live out this murderous-suicidal endgame of nominalism, increasingly removed from self-originated experience by a veil of machines. That is, of course, the secret teleology of anti-teleological modern clock culture.

6. Animate Mind and Newton’s Sleep

I turn my eyes to the schools and universities of Europe
 And there behold the Loom of Locke, whose Woof rages dire,
 Wash’d by the Water-wheels of Newton: black the cloth
 In heavy wreaths folds over every nation: cruel works
 Of many Wheels I view, wheel without wheel, with cogs tyrannic
 Moving by compulsion each other, not as those in Eden, which,
 Wheel within wheel, in freedom revolve in harmony and peace.

— William Blake, from *Jerusalem*

Participation consciousness was sacrificed in the long road of civilization and modern life, sacrificed for the development of critical reason, of abstract thought. The modern age has had as its task the perfection of this process. That perfection is now in its endgame, and we have utterly divorced ourselves from creation in the growth of spectatorial “camera-consciousness,” as Owen Barfield put it.²⁶

Nominalism and clocks arose in the fourteenth century. Over the next few centuries the normal mechanical world-view mythically projected clock-culture onto the universe and made it the basis of science, and Peirce’s philosophy involves a rejection of its nominalistic premisses. Peirce sees the universe as in a process of genuine creation, in which life and intelligence are real emergent properties of that universe, not freakish accidents.²⁷

Peirce’s outlook shows the possibility for a new civilizational framework, involving a broadened conception of science which finds no contradictions between its investigations and the soul of the Creator. What if reverence is not something God or the gods “want,” but is simply the tone of participating in creation? For hundreds of millennia our ancestors attuned themselves through passionate awareness to the circumambient voices and visions of life. We evolved that instinctive reverence that is the basis of Peirce’s Neglected Argument. Tracking, foraging, hunting and gathering, and the clan-based rites accompanying these practices were all passages in the pursuit of wisdom. All of these practices proclaimed the great evolutionary agency of the universe to be love, and it is to these practices and the bodies they produced, that philosophy owes its origins — and perhaps a clue to its destiny.

In viewing musement as the opening through which the God idea plays forth, Peirce found a way out of the contest between doubt and belief that characterizes modern culture.²⁸ Modern consciousness can be characterized as involving a negation of the traditional world-view of the West, and as the age of rational-mechanical consciousness. Aristotle was not only overturned by Galileo, but one sees perhaps more obviously in the doubting, nominalistic spirit of Thomas Hobbes the need of the age to “just say no” to received beliefs.

Consciousness has not “expanded” in a “progress” of history; quite the contrary, it has contracted. Modern science, despite its precision and seeming enlargement of our understanding of the universe, represents the contracted, nominalistic view, denying the reality of generals. Evolution is not devoid of general reasonableness, as though it were only a competitive calculus machine. That Darwinian model of evolution is fundamentally flawed, taking one modality of general evolution as the whole picture, as Peirce argued. As such, it is part of the matrix of modern mind, contracted to precision in understanding those aspects of things which conform to the requirements of the megamachine.

The ongoing creation of the universe, a crucial idea in Peirce, is not allowed in Darwinism, because there is no CREATION, in the genuine sense of this word, no spontaneous intelligence as ingredient in the development of the living universe. In the Darwinian view, change is through chance adaptive variations, and reasonableness itself is an “adaptive” strategy humans evolved. Darwinians combine justified fear of religious fundamentalism by so-called “creation science” believers, who are Christian ideologues seeking biblical legitimation, with a dogmatic phobia of the possibility of Thirdness as operative in evolution (to use Peircean shorthand). Neither the Darwinian side nor the “creation science” side allow for creation in Peirce’s sense, though a thorough-going “intelligent design” argument — perhaps more of a Gaia perspective — should at least be open to it.

The Darwinian/Hobbesean account of nature is an aspect of “single vision, and Newton’s sleep!” as William Blake termed it. Consider William Blake’s painting of Newton, which depicts him as supple, leaning over with compass, figuring out the ratio of things. That rational “ratio” of Newton’s genius may be true in its precision, but it is still “the spectre of reason,” a secondary emanation of the Poetic Imagination, blind to awareness of circumambient life, a fundamentally incomplete, abstracted vision of the universe. It is also an accurate, literal depiction of the “focus vision” of the civilized peoples, fallen from the wide-angle perception of circumambient life, of what Ortega y Gasset called the “universal attention” of the hunter, who is aware that seeing from the full range of visual field allows greater sensing of movement and better night vision.

The romantic movement was, in my opinion, the instinctive life’s attempt to survive in the face of infantilizing rationality. The twentieth-century was an incarnation of precise, accurate, infantilism, as far as thought was concerned: Intellectual Kaliyuga. Isaac Newton’s world-machine, in which, despite Einstein, we still live, represents an unloved child. Newton was himself an incarnation of intellectual Kaliyuga: he was born “posthumously,” meaning that his father died before his birth, and his mother remarried soon after and infant Isaac was jettisoned to maids and servants; unfathered, unmothered, uncared for. Newton strikes me as a brilliant incarnation of the schizoid personality, who found relief through shaping a precise abstract world in which emotion and empathy are unreal, in which mechanism is all: our tick-tock world. In my view this scientific mega-machine needs to grow up, and to do so will involve beginning with triadic semeiosis, which involves the dyadicism of mechanism but is not reducible to it. Our projection of our humanity into the infant-machine consciousness, far from excluding telos, embodies the crypto-teleology of suicide.

Consider, by contrast to his painting of Newton, how Blake’s image of God enclosed in a sphere is one of the Poetic Imagination as primary, and the hand of God, reaching out from the sphere in an inverted “V” is the “compass” of the ratio, correctly proportioned as secondary emanation. Something like this is how our

very bodies are made, attuned as hunter-gatherers over hundreds of millennia in reverence to all-surrounding life. We are competitive creatures, to be sure, but competitive in the sacred game of life, ritual predators and game, gatherers of plants and mates and songs, ever-attuning in awareness and Poetic Imagination, while evolving our symbol-using forebrain.

In opening the door of musement, Peirce allowed that *il lume naturale* its valid place in human consciousness, one virtually denied by critical so-called Enlightenment. More, he re-opened the door of inner vision that the contraction of consciousness, originally brought about through domesticating civilization, had progressively closed. For modern mechanico-centric nominal mind is nothing less than the infantilization of human reason: the Endarklement.

The conditions for what Peirce termed *Musement*, the play of mind, might be at odds with that greater requirement for work first introduced with agricultural civilization, and re-sharpened in the culture of rationalized capitalism. Consider that the average workweek for hunter-gatherers was about 17 hours, far less than the average required by agriculturally-based societies. Hunter-gatherer working conditions seem ripe for the play of musement, and indeed, the descriptions of participation consciousness one reads in ethnographies suggest to me that musement is a more valued practice for this way of life. Not musement on neglected arguments for the reality of God, which would seem beside the point I suspect, but musements and ruminations on the animal others, on the various omens of life, on the all-surrounding presence of the Creator, manifest in the minute particulars of variegated life. To be a hunter-gatherer is to be a sophisticated naturalist, expert in plant life and animal ethology, the sophisticated art and science of tracking, and numerous other “occupations.”

There are innumerable ways in which contemporary life could be informed by prehistoric life. Indeed, if history is, as Lewis Mumford put it, a “fibrous structure,” being informed by whatever might be valuable is preferable to a Hegelian-style jettisoning of the past. Re-animating contemporary life is no impossible return to a golden age. In fact, “primitive skills” of hunting, gathering, tracking are already informing contemporary life, ranging from the pharmaceutical industry to US special forces.

Contemporary culture has much to learn from such “simple” ways of being. Turning to a “simple” way of being may be preferable to the complex primitivism that marks the being of our time. Consider, for example, the tactile and empathic devotion typical of hunter-gatherers toward their young in comparison with typical child-rearing attitudes in megatechnic America.

The end of human development is not to see through the design of things, as perfected critical consciousness, and it is certainly not to preside over it like a God, like the spectator God concepts spawned by the Judeo-Greco-Christian-Islamic tradition. For what could be worse than the “degenerate monkey, with a

paranoic talent for self-satisfaction,” as Peirce depicted homo sapiens sapiens, whose rationality is an immature capacity, presuming to preside over the design of life — and from intellect of all things! — as though intellect is the basis of reasonableness, and as though life in itself lacks reasonableness. In my view, the goal of human development is to become the design, designing, to become participant in the self-designing design. In this sense intellect’s purport would be to become instinct with life. As William Blake said, “Imagination is spiritual sensation” and “energy is eternal delight” and “Energy is the only life and is from the body” and “We are put on earth for a little space that we may learn to bear the beams of love.”

Poetic Imagination, spontaneous creative soul, is a real aspect of evolution not reducible to the machine-matrix of modern mind. But the modern mind is typically disabled by cultural nominalism, unable to see how those mind capacities of humans and of life more generally are realities that are outside its ghost-in-the-machine rules.

Peirce is the philosopher who first identified both the pervasiveness and falsity of nominalism, against which he posed his triadic, semeiotic realism. I take his critique of the philosophy of nominalism to apply to the broader culture of modern life as well, as cultural nominalism. A central feature of cultural nominalism is modern science. Although a critic of nominalism, Peirce also championed modern science and its genuine achievements, while yet arguing in different ways that it would outgrow its false nominalistic premisses.

In describing science Peirce says, “by science we all habitually mean a living and growing body of truth.”²⁹ And his view of the end of science is: “The only end of science, as such, is to learn the lesson that the universe has to teach it. In induction it simply surrenders itself to the force of facts. But it finds, at once, — I am partially inverting the historical order, in order to state the process in its logical order, — it finds I say that this is not enough. It is driven in desperation to call upon its inward sympathy with nature, its instinct for aid, just as we find Galileo at the dawn of modern science making his appeal to *il lume naturale*.... The value of *facts to it*, lies only in this, that they belong to Nature; and Nature is something great, and beautiful, and sacred, and eternal, and real, — the object of its worship and its aspiration. It therefore takes an entirely different attitude toward facts from that which Practice takes.”³⁰ Here one sees the breadth of Peirce’s understanding of science, and a view of its relation to Nature strikingly similar to that of the religious views of hunter-gatherers. Still, William Blake gives a quite different view worth considering, saying,

Art is the Tree of Life...
Science is the Tree of Death.

Despite Peirce's allowance of abductive inference and his critique of nominalism, his idea of completely unfettered inquiry, remote from "vitaly important topics," seems to me problematic. Science and its practical sibling technology are and have been involved in capitalism from early on. Peirce saw capitalism as a "Philosophy of Greed," but idealized science such that he ignored its actual involvement not only in capitalism, but in the building of the megamachine of modern life, which is the purport of nominalism. His views may be accurate for a long run, but thanks to science and its wedding to technology, consummated perhaps in the Manhattan Project, humanity and earthly, variegated life may not be around for a long run.

Normal science, along with normal technology, normal economics, and the whole normal modern world-view, as practiced thus far, are proving to be "precise mechanisms" of death. Further, they are involved in the crypto-teleology of cultural nominalism, namely the unacknowledged goal of replacing those organs by which life comes to awareness with mechanisms of the megamachine, to the point of ultimately replacing life itself: a world of smart bombs and insensate people, of unlimited consumptive possessiveness, even unto the soul of creation.

When Peirce claimed "Do not block the road of inquiry" as prime directive for science, he little knew how twisted this maxim would become in the twentieth-century, when its variants would be used as excuses to open Pandora's box over and over. Even inquiries whose validity rests in an indefinite future must be based in a precarious present whose prime directive is to give reasonableness to the future. When inquiry violates that directive, must it not be blocked simply to allow its own life to continue into the indefinite future?

When Peirce argued that science is too "thin" for the practice of life, that it was in a state of relative immaturity, and that theory should be kept separate from practice, he acknowledged that scientists represent specialized inquirers, but another implication of his argument is that scientists are a form of immature human being, *qua* scientists. In my opinion this is a clear argument against technocracy, and implies that fallibilism requires science to reconcile inquiry to the conditions of life and its possible limits, those conditions representing mature reasonableness relative to immature science. It means that scientific inquiry, as attunement to the living signs of nature, must respect its own immaturity relative to those signs, especially in the age of the infantilized megamachine, and allow those signs their weight in policy decisions and the ethics of research. Not blocking the road of inquiry does not mean that inquirers are justified in speeding down the road at breakneck speed, willy nilly, unnecessarily risking their lives and the community of life.

The unlimited community of inquirers must, in my opinion, acknowledge its responsibilities to its incarnate body. And in this portion of the universe, its incarnate body is the living earth. A genuine citizen of the unlimited community of

inquiry would feel in his or her gut that responsibility to cultivate life, to participate in the creation of the universe by cultivating fellow species toward their own continued wild evolution: look what happened to that ape who became human in two million years, thanks to the community of mature, instinctive life to which it attuned itself.

What is two million years in the unlimited community of inquiry? The unlimited community of inquiry, in short, must be a good citizen in the unlimited community of life, or what's a living universe for? The unlimited community of inquirers is not limited to those human interpreters of the future, for we should allow the full weight of those previous insights into the nature of things into the community as well, inclusive of instinctive intelligence, human and animal, into that "generalized other" within, through which we think in dialogue.

Should we discover and institutionalize the means to rebuild science and transform the dynamics of civilization, animating life toward inquisitive awareness, it will involve, in my opinion, arriving eventually at creatures aware that truth is the breath of the Creator on creation, and that the further creation and pursuit of truth, goodness and beauty involves an attunement to all-surrounding life, not an isolation from it. It will again be able to proclaim, even in its science, that the great evolutionary agency of the universe is Love.

It will become instinct with life, a paradoxical critical instinct. It will realize that truth ultimately becomes beauty, as life already is aware in its own being. But guess what, dear reader, that is precisely the path humans were on, before our tilling of the soil and civilizing removed us from participation with the living earth to becoming spectators of life, from being children of the earth to becoming that form of infantilized dominion whose master symbols are "civilization" and "God."

The time has come to escape from this degenerate, leaden primitivism that is modern civilized consciousness, and to revive the broadened awareness of animate mind. That mind lives as a reality embodied in the human, Pleistocene body-mind, though repressed by the machine of modernity. And that mind is the one Peirce was led to in his lifelong development, in which, at the end of the *via moderna*, he found the means to re-open philosophy to its golden legacy.

NOTES

1. William James, "The Compounding of Consciousness," in *The Writings of William James*, ed. John J. McDermott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), p. 556.

2. D. H. Lawrence, "Indians and Entertainment," in *Mornings in Mexico* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, 1982), p. 116 (first published in *New York Times*, 26 October 1924).

3. Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur Burks (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,

1931–58), vol. 6, para. 502–3. Hereafter citations from *Collected Papers* are noted by volume and paragraph number, for example, CP 6.502–3.

4. Lucian Lévy-Bruhl, *How Natives Think* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1926), pp. 129–30.

5. CP 6.505.

6. Peirce, “Detached Ideas Continued and the Dispute Between Nominalists and Realists (439),” in *The New Elements of Mathematics by Charles Peirce, vol. 6: Mathematical Philosophy*, ed. Carolyn Eisele (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1976), p. 345. Hereafter cited as *New Elements*.

7. CP 6.553

8. CP 7.364.

9. Paul Shepard, *Nature and Madness* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1982), pp. 78, 80.

10. S. Boyd Eaton, Marjorie Shostack, and Melvin Konner, *The Paleolithic Prescription* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988). Marshall Sahlins, “The Original Affluent Society,” in *Stone-Age Economics* (Chicago: Aldine, 1973), pp. 1–39.

11. CP 6.294.

12. CP 6.300.

13. Eugene Halton, *Bereft of Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

14. CP 8.83.

15. CP 1.673.

16. *Charles Sanders Peirce: Contributions to The Nation, Part Three: 1901–1908*, ed. Kenneth Laine Ketner and James Edward Cook (Lubbock: Texas Tech University, 1979), pp. 17–18.

17. CP 7.380–1.

18. Paul Shepard, *The Tender Carnivore and the Sacred Game* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1998).

19. G. W. Domhoff, *Finding Meaning in Dreams: A Quantitative Approach* (New York: Plenum, 1996).

20. Richard Nelson, “Searching for the Lost Arrow: Physical and Spiritual Ecology in the Hunter’s World,” in *The Biophilia Hypothesis*, ed. S. R. Kellert and E. O. Wilson (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993). Tom Brown, Jr., *The Science and Art of Tracking* (New York: Berkley Pub. Group, 1999).

21. Eugene Halton, “The Reality of Dreaming,” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 9 (1992), pp. 119–39. Halton, “The Living Gesture and the Signifying Moment,” *Symbolic Interaction* 27 (2004), pp. 89–113.

22. Lewis Mumford, *The Myth of the Machine, vol. 1: Technics and Human Development* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1967), p. 12.

23. CP 7.384

24. Donald Henry, *From Foraging to Agriculture: The Levant and the End of the Ice Age* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

25. Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *Meaning and Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

26. Owen Barfield, *The Rediscovery of Meaning, and Other Essays* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

27. Peirce claimed that there is “a reasonableness energizing into being” in the universe, framing it in terms of Thirdness as habit-taking. His view is that habit-taking arose out of primordial chance, as he stated in 1898: “But in this endless haphazard shindy between generalization and chance this generalization happens to come about, namely a limited but still a general tendency toward the formation of habits, toward repeating reactions that had already taken place under like circumstances ... although this was doubtless smashed like the others billions upon billions of times, to use a hyperbole of stating matters infinitely weaker than I really mean, yet still, it was often springing from its ashes, and on the whole was tiring out the lawlessness, until at length, — of course after an infinite lapse of time subsequent to the first moment, although infinitely long ago, there came to be a decided and so to say a sensible degree of tendency in nature to take habits.... The acquiring [of] a habit is nothing but an objective generalization taking place in time. It is the fundamental logical law in course of realization.” Peirce, “Abstracts of Eight Lectures,” in *New Elements*, p. 141.

28. Peirce also addressed this problem in his philosophy of “critical common-sensism.” How to reconcile that critical consciousness, based on the capacity of rational doubting, with belief in a meaningful universe, was the problem that haunted two of Peirce’s literary contemporaries, Herman Melville and Fyodor Dostoyevsky. These two novelists saw through the problem of the modern age, and proposed a means out of it, with perspicacity surpassing that of Peirce, in my opinion; although Peirce’s chief concern was developing a logic of the long run.

29. *CP* 6.428.

30. Peirce, *The Essential Peirce*, vol. 2 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), pp. 54–55.

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