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Author: Champagne, Marc
Title: A less simplistic metaphysics: Peirce's layered theory of meaning as a layered theory of being
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Abstract: This article builds on C. S. Peirce's suggestive blueprint for an inclusive outlook that grants reality to his three categories. Moving away from the usual focus on (contentious) cosmological forces, I use a modal principle to partition various ontological layers: regular sign-action (like coded language) subsumes actual signaction (like here-and-now events) which in turn subsumes possible sign-action (like qualities related to whatever would be similar to them). Once we realize that the triadic sign's components are each answerable to this asymmetric subsumption, we obtain the means to track at which level of complexity semiosis finds itself, in a given case. Since the bulk of such a "trinitarian" metaphysics would be devoted to countenancing uninterpreted phenomena, I argue that current misgivings about sign-based ontologies are largely misplaced.
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