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Title: Signifying Nature: Semeiosis as the Foundation of Post-Critical Cosmology in Charles S. Peirce

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Abstract: This thesis presents a reading of Charles Sanders Peirce's logic of semeiosis as the foundation of a pragmatist cosmological speculation. For the benefit of a systematic and chronologically substantiated approach, the elements of this logic are first recovered through a special focus on Peirce's early and largely unexamined metaphysical manuscripts. Such a focus primarily serves the purpose of situating the genesis of semeiotics within a distinctly post-critical problematic. Beginning with an investigation of the core tenets of Kantian and German Idealist thought, the first part proposes that semeiotic logic emerges as a consistent effort to return the sign to Nature by relieving the schism between infinity and finitude. It is shown that the various aspects of Peirce's original inspiration – including his logical method, the novel conception of continuity, and the theory of feeling – systematically converge on the point of confronting reason with its unconditioned or un-conscious ground, thus aiming to render possible an experiential metaphysics of the Idea as part of a self-expressive Nature. Picking up the results of this initial exploration, the second part then proceeds to trace the development of Peirce's early foundational concerns into his mature doctrine of the Categories, which is reconstructed as an evolutionary cosmology of the sign. Such a metaphysics of cosmic semeiosis, which is found to simultaneously require and to be powered by a pragmatic-experimental mode of thought, is revealed as the consistent thread that runs through Peirce's opus from his early musings to his mature philosophy. This thesis therefore advances the argument, propounded by a number of scholars, of the fundamental integrity of Peirce's thought, against its standard and rather persistent division into distinct metaphysical and logical components. Finally, it is argued that the reconstruction, presented in this work, of Peirce's metaphysics is to be understood as a powerful vantage point from which to think of the possibilities of a contemporary cosmological practice of semeiosis.

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