A Postmodern History of Philosophy

Benedict Ashley, O.P.
Aquinas Institute of Theology at St. Louis University

Some histories of philosophy, like the admirable one of Frederick Copleston, only attempt to give an accurate account of various philosophies in their general historical setting. Others, like Bertrand Russell in his absurd *A History of Western Philosophy*, or Étienne Gilson in his brilliant *The Unity of Philosophical Experience*, proffer an argument for a particular philosophical position. Deely takes the second view, and says that a good history of philosophy must be itself philosophy.

The thesis of this book, a history as brilliant as Gilson's — and certainly one of the most original and comprehensive recent efforts to explain the value and scope of philosophy — is that postmodernism is not, as Heidegger claimed, the end of philosophy, but a promising new beginning. Ancient Philosophy discovered Substance. The Latin Age discovered Being. The Modern Age took the byway of Ideas. Thus, with Descartes, modernity took a road that wobbled between idealism and empiricism, and dead-ended in solipsism. Postmodernity is about returning to a road philosophy missed, the Highway of the Sign, although that road lay open to it at the end of the Latin Age. On this path philosophy will at last be freed of its solipsism and enabled to recognize that the experienced world is a network of mind-dependent and mind-independent relations, of reality and cultural interpretation, that can be distinguished in order to be rightly united. This is not the postmodernity of Derrida, since that is merely the last gasp of modernity. It is the postmodernity of Charles Peirce — and, I must add, of Deely himself.

As Deely has explained Peirce, semiotics, the doctrine of signs that transcends the distinction between the real and the mental and enables us to make both this distinction and this interrelation clear, makes available to us today the major achievements of the three past ages of understanding.

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Ancient philosophy attained the notion of "sign" as regards natural signs; but even the masterly logic, psychology, and epistemology of Aristotle did not explicitly extend the concept of *semeion* to mental signs. The Latin Age, especially in the philosophy of being of Aquinas, took this major step, but its full implications were recognized only at the end of the Latin Age, in the writings of John Poinsot (Joannes a Sancto Thoma, O.P.). In the Third Age of Modernity, beginning with Descartes, the failure to recognize this semiotic achievement resulted in the war of Idealism vs. Empiricism. But this Empiricism, by its assumption that what we know are not beings but *representations*, was as solipsistic as its opponent Idealism. With Peirce, who went behind Modernity to recover something of the first two Ages, especially in its Scotistic version, the Fourth Age of Postmodernity has begun with the recognition that the Sign transcends the natural and the mental worlds by distinguishing and relating them in the complex web of historical cultures.

For Deely, however, as for Gilson, the philosophy of being of Thomas Aquinas remains central to this historical development. If Peirce had better known Aquinas and especially what Poinsot made explicit in Aquinas as well as Scotus, and if in this new century Thomists can escape their Neoscholastic or Transcendentalist dead-ends, Post-Modernism will be saved from Modernism's destruction of philosophy. I want to congratulate Deely, in this regard, on his renewal of the distinction between ideoscopic and cenoscopic knowledge in natural science,[1] as between knowledge which presupposes the use of instruments in experimentation and mathematization in interpreting the results, on one side, and knowledge which is directly developed on the basis of common experience, on the other side. This will help answer deconstructionist attacks on what they call "foundationalism". If there is really to be a postmodern age of science that withstands the skepticism of deconstructionism, we must interpret modern scientific theories in a way that respects its cenoscopic foundations.[2]

Thus Deely pictures the history of thought as progressive, even though subject to occasional dead-ends that can, however, eventually be overcome, and

1. See the entry for these terms in the Index to the *Four Ages*, pp. 865 & 910, respectively, but especially the discussion in Deely's *The Impact on Philosophy of Semiotics* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2003).

2. At this point, Ashley departed from his written remarks to develop a lengthy digression, tangential to his main remarks for the occasion, on his own views concerning the Aristotelian foundations for Thomistic metaphysics. This material the interested reader may find fully developed in Chapters 3–5 of his book, *The Way Toward Wisdom* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). Here we reproduce rather the remarks, displaced by the digression, that were originally written by Ashley for this occasion.

not without some positive profit. Thus Deely emphasizes that what is important is not just semiotics, but semiosis, the action of signs by which thought is led from one insight to another, through the intricate web of natural truth and cultural construction. The reason that St. Thomas' philosophy of being remains fundamental even in this semiotic age is that it was he who showed us that the *primum cognitum*, the primary object of intelligence, is "being" in a sense that transcends differences between mind-independent being and mind-dependent being. Only in this way does it become possible to establish the principle of contradiction by which real objects, which cannot contradict themselves, are distinguished from what human thought in its efforts to deal with real objects necessarily or arbitrarily projects on reality. Naïve realism cannot make this distinction; and idealism, no matter how sophisticated, cannot escape the inhibited and solipsistic world of its own construction.

This fundamental epistemological position of Aquinas was based on Aristotle's distinction between sense cognition and intellectual cognition, and on an understanding of the dependence of the latter on the former. Aquinas was acquainted not only with Aristotle's notion of how we know through natural signs, from effect to cause, but also with Augustine's insight that there are not only natural signs but also cultural signs, as for example the Christian sacraments. Thus it became clear for Aquinas and scholasticism that signs are both natural and instrumental. In what centrally and directly concerns semiotic, or the doctrine of signs, the account of Poinsot (John of St. Thomas), following Aristotle and Aquinas, of the category of relation, showed that predicamental or categorial relation (physical relation, or relation in the order of physical being) cannot be sensed but only known intellectually, and that it is suprasubjective as a relation, since it exists not *in* but *between* subjects of existence that only supply its foundations and termini. Since this is the nature of relation in general, the specifically triadic relation that constitutes the sign is independent of whether the subjects supplying its foundations are real or ideal. These foundations are the sign-vehicles, not the relations that constitute the sign as such.

It is this indifference of the sign-relation to the real and the ideal that makes it possible for semiotics, the study of the sign (as distinguished from semiology, the study of culturally determined signs), to deal with the intricate web of reality and ideality that constitutes the Lebenswelt, the actual world of human experience in which we live. It is by distinguishing and relating natural and cultural signs without confusion that we are not only freed for practical decisions, but also enabled to make progress in theoretical knowledge as a historical process — not as a finished dogmatic product — without falling

into deconstructionist skepticism. So it was that at the culmination of Baroque scholasticism, in John Poinsot's *Tractatus de Signis*, it is demonstrated that this indifference of the sign to mind-independence or mind-dependence makes it possible for us to relate the real and the ideal without detriment to either. Immediately after this establishment of semiotics, however, Poinsot's achievement was overwhelmed by the rise of Cartesian Modernity; and it was not until Peirce creatively took up an undeveloped suggestion of Locke, while picking up at the same time the threads of the discussion woven by Poinsot's teachers, that a genuine semiotics again emerged.

What Peirce saw clearly and Poinsot had in scholastics terms anticipated was the triadic relational nature of the sign. A sign is not simply something by mediation of which something else is known, a dyadic relation of sign and signified, but a triadic relation between, first, something representing another than itself A (the sign vehicle), another object known through that first element (the terminating object) C, and what Peirce called the "interpretant", that is, a third factor of knowledge, B, which is precisely the tie of the relation of signification between the first two objects. For example, a scientist observes that heavy objects fall (A) and infers that they have the property of gravity (C), because he understands this in terms of what in his scientific perspective he knows to be the logical relation of cause to effect (B). This critical or scientific understanding is possible only if the scientist does not confuse the logical relation of *inference* from effect to cause (which is purely mind-dependent) with the real dependence of effect on cause. If he does not make this distinction, he falls either into Hume's empiricist notion that we do not know causal relations, or into Kant's idealist notion that this relation is a merely mental projection. One has only to look at current quantum theory to see into what puzzles such confusions have plunged modern science. As the Nobel Laureate in Physics Richard Feynman is often quoted, "I think that I can safely say that nobody understands quantum mechanics".

Poinsot, following Aristotle's and Aquinas' account of the category of relation, showed, as I said, that predicamental (categorial) relation cannot be sensed but only known intellectually, and that it is suprasubjective, since, although it is a relation, it exists not in a subject but *between* subjects that only supply its foundation. Because suprasubjectivity is the nature of a relation, the triadic relation that constitutes a sign is independent of whether the subjects that supply its foundations are real or ideal. They are the sign-vehicles, not the relations that constitute the sign as such. It is this indifference of the sign relation to the real and the ideal, therefore, that makes it possible for *semiotics*, the study of the sign, as distinguished from *semiology*,

the study of culturally determined signs, to deal with the intricate web of reality and ideality that constitutes the *Lebenswelt* or nature-culture world in which humans live.

It is by distinguishing and relating natural and cultural signs without confusion that we are not only freed for practical decisions, but also are enabled to make progress in theoretical knowledge as an historical process (not as a finished, dogmatic product) without falling into deconstructionist skepticism. Thus Deely pictures the history of thought as progressive, yet subject to occasional dead-ends, that can, however, eventually be overcome and not without some positive profit. Thus Deely emphasizes that what is important is not just semiotics but *semiosis*, the action of signs by which thought is led from one insight to another through the intricate web of natural truth and cultural construction.

Therefore, I believe that this work of Deely will make a major contribution to the revival of Thomism, because it shows so vividly how Thomists can proceed to assimilate the positive achievements of modernity as a point of departure for a vigorous postmodernity. Moreover, its treatment of Aquinas' own thought is excellent. He acutely exposes a number of Neothomist misreadings, such as the "Christian philosophy" confusion, the reduction of metaphysics to the single topic of *esse*, the over-emphasis on the originality of the real-distinction of essence and existence in Aquinas, and the Cajetanian mishandling of the doctrine of analogy.

What was lacking in the great synthesis worked out by Aquinas was an adequate consideration of the way the historic development of culture and the perspective of individuals within their culture both limits and opens up the understanding of reality. While St. Thomas well understood that "a thing is received in the mode of its recipient", the pioneering culture in which he lived tended to naïve objectivity (or what Deely calls "the way of things"). What modern thought from Descartes to Heidegger achieved was a painful reflection on how much of our *Lebenswelt* is a cultural veil through which with difficulty reality reveals itself. Our efforts to understand the world do in fact — not totally, as Kant claimed, but in a major way — conceal it. This has now become evident in quantum theory where the action of observation is so equally entangled with the observed facts.

In keeping with this emphasis, Deely writes in a style that is at once erudite, critically argumentative, and vigorously personal, indeed, sometimes more personal than is often considered academically "proper". He lets us see that he is an active participant in this on-going dialogue that employs a touch of polemical rhetoric as well as patient analysis. I enjoyed this liveliness of

style in a very long and complex work, and welcomed the immense amount of information contained in its lengthy bibliography and huge index.

On a few topics, however, my reaction was that Deely has not been entirely faithful to his own emphasis on cultural contextuality. For example, he calls the Pseudo-Dionysius a "forger", when in the culture of that writer a pious pseudonymity was acceptable, even in the Sacred Scriptures, since the purpose was not so much to claim a spurious authority as to express humble deference to authority. Similarly, his unnuanced criticisms of the Inquisition are more "modern" than "postmodern". In particular, I prefer St. Thomas' benign reading of Aristotle on the question of creation and the efficient as well as the final causality of the Unmoved Mover, and on the First Cause's knowledge of the world, to that of Deely, who follows current scholarship in this matter. While certainly Aristotle never speaks of *creatio ex nihilo* or of God's knowledge of creation, neither does he deny these truths; and they are consistent with his metaphysical principles, while a denial of them, as Aquinas shows, would make Aristotle contradict himself—not likely in the Father of Logic. We know that Aristotle wrote a dialogue *On Prayer*, and that his will provides for sacrifices. Abraham P. Bos in his *Cosmic and Meta-Cosmic Theology in Aristotle's Lost Dialogues* (1989) has well argued that these are mature works in which Aristotle chose another literary form for his more religious speculations.

I must confess, moreover, that if I were to write a history of philosophy, I would center it not on the theme of sign, as important as Deely has convinced me that this theme is, but on Aristotle's discovery of First Philosophy in the sense of a science of being as inclusive of immaterial as well as material existents. Deely does indeed accept the Aristotelian demonstration of the existence of an immaterial First Cause from sensibly observed change in the world, and hence I find that we are in fundamental agreement.

So I would conclude that Deely's perspective on thought as a network of semiosis escapes idealism by firmly grounding thought in sensation. It saves the epistemology of Aristotle and Aquinas, as against Plato, Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Derrida, but at the same time shows how human thought exists always in a cultural context. Hence no philosopher, and especially no Thomist, who faces the challenge of the postmodern age can afford to neglect this massive, lively, and profound work.

Chair Rasmussen: Thank you, Fr. Ashley, for your comments, in exactly twenty-four minutes and thirty seconds. Nicely done.

Fr. Clarke?

Reflections on John Deely's Four Ages of Understanding

W. Norris Clarke, S.J.
Fordham University

Many of my friends, when they saw this program, said to me: What are you doing in semiotics? Well, ah, yes, I said, that's a good question. Many years ago I decided to avoid semiotics as something strange and new that I didn't want to get mixed up in. So when I received the invitation to participate in this occasion I had to insist on seeing the book first before I allowed myself to get caught up in the event. But, on seeing the book, I had to agree to participate.

This is a remarkable book, I must say. Thomas Sebeok, leading scholar in the contemporary semiotics movement, has called it "a masterpiece, destined to become an indispensable work of reference for all future students of semiotics". There are good reasons for saying this, but the recommended interest of this formidable book should also extend far wider, to include all serious students of the history of philosophy and of the fundamental issues of philosophy itself. What is the aim of this thousand page book — seven-hundred-fifty pages of text, one-hundred of bibliography, one-hundred-eighty-eight of index, from the Toronto University Press, 2001? I read the seven-hundred and fifty pages, in small print, with even smaller print in the footnotes there; it almost killed me, but anyway, here I am. It also weighs five pounds. I put a pillow under the thing reading it. It broke my postal scale.

Why is this such a significant book? Under the framework of a selective history of Western philosophy from Thales to the beginning of the second millennium, its central focus is the slow emergence, partial eclipse, and final re-emergence with full self-conscious recognition in our own day (with Peirce and contemporary semiotics) of the theory of signs as an essential element for understanding the cognitive and cultural life of human beings — and the social life of animals too — in relation to the real world around them.

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Speaking for myself, I have been teaching philosophy for over fifty years. Yet this book was still a significant illumination in giving a new, unifying perspective to the whole history of philosophical thought which I hadn't quite seen that clearly before. The book reveals the deep structures underlying the whole development of Western philosophy, in particular the structure of sign, understood as the indispensable key to realism in epistemology, and its misguided rejection by "modern" philosophy (from Descartes to the recent present) to follow what Deely calls "the way of ideas" (ideas as the immediate objects of thought) rather than "the way of signs" (ideas as self-effacing signs that make known something other than themselves). The book is a whole history of philosophical thought, but one focussed on the relation to sign theory. And so that slowly emerges, and then it becomes the central point. So the book doesn't present a full history of the thought of each person, but it becomes more and more focused on just that relation to signs. It becomes clear that only self-effacing signs can bridge the two worlds of mind-independent real being that surround us and the mind-dependent world of human consciousness within us.

Thus the author divides the philosophical history of thought into "four ages": *ancient philosophy*, dominated by Greek thought but including the Roman and Hellenistic, ending with fifth century Neoplatonism; *the Latin age*, beginning with St. Augustine, developing its own indigenous line of thought cut off from the Greek tradition in the Eastern empire, still partially mediated by Boethius (d. 524)—a crucial transition which the author takes great pains to elucidate, far beyond most histories of philosophy—and ending with Iberian Scholasticism at its high point, John Poinsot (John of St. Thomas, d. 1644), with his *Tractatus de Signis*, the first general theory of signs in Western thought; *the modern age*, which Deely calls "the way of ideas", beginning with Descartes, moving through the rationalists, the empiricists, and finally Kant, with Hegel as its last great figure—an age that Deely claims is now passing away, collapsing under the weight of its own inner incoherence, but still exercising a pervasive influence under various forms of Neo-Kantianism and empiricism; *the postmodern age*, beginning with Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) and finally reaching full recognition in the rapidly growing contemporary semiotics movement, as evidenced by the internationally recognized magisterial (but still partially flawed) work of Umberto Eco, *Theory of Semiotics* (1976).

I. Ancient Philosophy

What is noteworthy about the first age, that of ancient philosophy, or the Greek Age, is that it had not only no general theory of signs, but no explicit

recognition of signs at all outside of the obvious "natural signs", such as smoke as the sign of fire, urine as the sign of health, etc., which raised no special philosophical problems, since this was merely a case of one material being, known first in its own reality, then becoming a sign of some other real being. There is as yet no recognition that intra-cognitive signs, such as not only sense images (perceptions) but also purely intellectual and immaterial concepts and judgments, are all equally signs which make known something other than themselves and yet are not sensible objects first known as real beings in themselves and only later known as signs of something other than themselves. There is also no explicit recognition yet that the existence of such a system of intra-cognitive "self-effacing signs" is the absolutely necessary condition for a true knowledge by created knowers, like ourselves and animals, of a real, mind-independent world outside us. These ancients had, over-all, a natural acceptance of realism wherein they used the hidden theory of signs, but without formalizing it or developing a language for it — in short, without realizing what they were doing.

II. The Latin Age

Then we come to the Latin Age. Deely doesn't like to just call this period the "medieval", but does a remarkable study — far beyond the exposition most histories of philosophy provide, as I said — of the transition from the Greek Age to the Latin Age which broke off from the ancient Roman world that included Greece and Greek philosophy. In his treatment of the *Latin Age* the author becomes much more selective in his choice of authors, according as they contribute something to the understanding of a theory of signs. Thus he treats only of St. Augustine, Boethius, Abaelard, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, Duns Scotus, Ockham, and the later Thomistic Scholastic tradition of the great commentators, culminating in the late — and little known — revival of Iberian Scholasticism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the first ones in the West to take really seriously the discussion of the nature and role of signs in general. The high point of this period is publication by the last of the great Thomistic commentators, John Poinsot (John of St. Thomas, d. 1644), of the first general theory of signs in Western thought, *Tractatus de Signis* (1632).[1]

Three points are especially noteworthy in the philosophical history of this *Latin Age*, as focused on the development of the theory of signs. First

1. 1 See the critical bilingual edition of the work published by Deely with the University of California Press in 1985, which was the feature book in *The New York Times Book Review* on Easter Sunday, 1986.

of all, St. Augustine is the first thinker in the West to have explicitly raised the question of the nature of signs in general. Book II of his *De Doctrina Christiana* is devoted largely to the nature of signs, their role in human life, both in the natural and the supernatural orders, and their special application to language and the sacraments as supernatural signs of the hidden working of God's grace within us. His general definition of a sign is "anything sensible that makes known something other than itself". The fundamental flaw in this definition, later to be corrected by St. Thomas and other later scholastics, was the limitation of sign solely to sensible signs. But its great merit and importance in the history of thought is that it opened the possibility of a more general theory of sign including both intellectual or immaterial signs and material structures which are or become signs, thus retaining only the essential core of Augustine's own definition, namely, "a sign is that which makes known something other than itself". Augustine hints at this possibility for a general doctrine of signs, but never develops it himself, leaving the door open for later Latin thinkers.

This expansion is exactly what St. Thomas and the later scholastics accomplished. Thomas chides Augustine gently for limiting the notion of sign only to sensible ones, showing how all communication, in all orders of conscious being, sensible or spiritual, requires signs as its medium. Thus, he points out, angels certainly communicate, and through some kind of sign; but they transcend the whole realm of the material and the sensible; hence the signs they use cannot be sensible ones. Any kind of cognitive transmission, whether it's sensible or not, is going to have to use signs. He works out quite explicitly,[2] using it as the key to his own realistic theory of knowledge, the fundamental distinction between the two kinds of signs: (1) a *natural sign*, which is something in nature that is first known in its own being and then also functions as sign, making known something other than itself, e.g., smoke, first seen in itself, then signifies the presence of fire not yet seen in itself; and (2) a *formal sign* (in later terminology), a sign or presence in consciousness (*intentio*, or *species*) which does not make itself known in its own being but whose whole being consists in its role of signifying to consciousness something other than itself. My own modern description of this is "a self-effacing sign".

2. Transcription note: perhaps "clearly" would be better here than "explicitly"; for the fundamental distinction within semiotics between a sign whose foreground vehicle is extrinsic to the subjectivity of the one interpreting and another sign whose principal vehicle is intrinsic to the psychological subjectivity of the interpreter can be shown to be doctrinally clear in St. Thomas' wtitings (as Poinsot especially demonstrated), yet it never receives an explicit terminological marker in Aquinas' own vocabulary, just as Fr. Clarke will remark.

That Thomas is fully conscious of the nature of such self-effacing formal signs and their central importance in his theory of knowledge is shown by his highlighting this question in his *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 85, a. 2: "Whether the intelligible species abstracted from the phantasm is related to our intellect as that which is understood." And he explains in a long and careful response just why this cannot be the case, for if so the whole objectivity of science, of all our knowledge about the real world, would be destroyed, and we would know only our own inner world of images — which is absurd. Hence the intelligible species within us, which are the similitudes of the object known, projected into our consciousness by the action of the object known upon us, are not *that which is known*, which is the object itself, but only *that by which* [i.e. self-effacing signs] the object itself is known. It would be hard to find a clearer, more explicit exposition of just what a "formal sign" is, as opposed to a merely natural sign. It is a sign[3] which by its whole being directs us to the thing itself; we don't stop at the sign, and it even takes us some time to discover that it exists. So it's a self-effacing sign whose whole purpose is to be something *through*[4] or *on the basis of which*[5] we understand things. That was a fundamental grasp on the part of St. Thomas of the concept and the sense-image as both intentional beings which have an intrinsic thrust: they come from beyond and they point beyond, outside again.

But still St. Thomas does not go on to work out any general theory of signs for its own sake, including the very special character of the sign: that it does transcend that distinction between real and mental being, sort of bridging the two there as the distinct realm of intentional being. St. Thomas clearly got that, but without going beyond it to an explicit general theory of signs. He perforce broadens Augustine's notion of sign to include a whole further range: that fundamental position that ideas, concepts, sense images are not that which is known but only that on the basis of which the known is known, that they have an intrinsic dynamic relation pointing beyond themselves, coming from, and then pointing to, I guess, is absolutely essential for any realistic theory of

3. *Editor's note*: This standard way of presenting the so-called "quo/quod" distinction in defense of 'epistemological realism', however, Poinsot will show (*Tractatus*, Book II, Qq. 1–3) to involve an oversimplification, requiring instead a trichotomy of "quo/in qo/quod", in which only the second term, not at all the first, can be identified with the *species expressa* or 'concept'. In a book both inspired by and dedicated to Fr. Clarke, *Intentionality and Semiotics* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2007), Deely has developed this point at length.

4. = "quo", the *species impressa* of sensation prescissed from perception and understanding, which is not a formal sign, sensation having only the 'instrumental signs' of proper and common sensibles.

5. = "in quo", the *species expressa* of perception and understanding alike, where alone the semiosis of 'formal signs' begins.

knowledge. Unless you have *in the knower* some kind of intrinsic reference to the outside world, you can't have realistic knowledge. The ancients used that, and St. Thomas is quite aware of the point, but he never did a full-fledged treatise on signs in general, since his primary interest as a philosopher was in a philosophy of being and a theory of knowledge adequate to ground this project, for which he uses the language of intentionality, which turns out to be very, very close to and easily translatable into the later language of the doctrine of signs.

John Deely, who had a Thomistic background, devotes more than a hundred pages to Thomas himself, the longest chapter in the entire book, it may surprise you, even longer than the chapter on Peirce. This hundred pages is very stimulating, I must say, and quite insightful.

Clarke, turning to make a direct aside to Deely: Although I strongly disagee with your approval of Ralph McInerny on analogy. That's not up for discussion here, and neither is his claim that the real distinction is a matter of general knowledge; I think he's way off there. But anyway those are other questions. I don't know how you got wound up with him. I'm sorry about that.

Anonymous comment from audience: Even Homer nods.

Clarke, returning to main remarks: Then, as the scholastic tradition developed, there was a remarkable phase of it which has been sort of ignored by so many modern historians. It is a late flourishing of scholasticism, called the Iberian Scholasticism, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain and Portugal. There for the first time developed a whole strong discussion across the schools of the Iberian peninsula about the nature of signs, something that had never occurred before. One of the leading participants was the school of the Conimbricenses, with a series of texts put out at the University of Coimbra by the Jesuits. The great figure culminating this development is John of St. Thomas, or John Poinsot, who was a Dominican, yes, but taught by the Jesuits at Coimbra where he was first immersed in the whole discussion of signs and then went on to become the first to succeed in unifying the subject matter of semiotic inquiry.

So the third noteworthy moment in this history of the development of a theory of sign in the Latin Age of Western thought is the emergence of the first full-fledged, fully self-conscious general theory of signs in Western thought, with the *Treatise on Signs* of John Poinsot (John of St. Thomas) in 1632 as the culmination of the late — and lively — Thomistic revival in the Iberian peninsula (Spain and Portugal) in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, often called (when it is referred to at all) "Iberian Scholasticism". Poinsot's *Trac-*

tatus de Signis was a brilliant breakthrough, achieving a generalized theory of sign that was not in St. Thomas, but built on the central insight of St. Thomas on the intentionality of signs, and generalized to include all signs, outside as well as inside thought, etc. A remarkable piece of work. He was taught by the Jesuits, but he carried the work further than his teachers to lay the first formal foundation for a unified doctrine of signs as triadic relations grounded in the more general theory of relation itself as a suprasubjective mode of being. It was in this milieu, then, in which leading figures were, among others, Soto, Fonseca, Bañez, Suarez, and Poinsot, that, for the first time in the history of Western thought, the nature of sign as such and a general theory of signs was openly and hotly discussed in the university world.

In Chapter 10, Deely gives us a dense exposition of the main ideas in this remarkable period of synthetic and creative thinking. In it, a new more inclusive definition of sign is worked out to include all forms of sign, both natural and formal: "a sign is that which makes known something other than itself", however it does this. The absolutely central distinction between what I have called natural and formal signs is clearly worked out, and the key importance of the formal sign for any realistic theory of human knowledge is noted.

What is perhaps most original and creative in the theory, Deely believes, is the analysis of the "ontological nature" of the sign, in particular the formal sign, as a distinctive mode of being. And what is unique in the sign among the modes of being is that it transcends the sharp distinction between the orders of real being and mental being, as though "neutral to both", and hence is able to build a bridge connecting each to the other, thus enabling the real world of mind-independent nature to be transformed into the mind-dependent world of human culture with all its ramifications in human history — in a word, the sign is the fundamental bond of integration between the generically real world of nature and the specifically human world of culture.

The other consequence of this unique mode of being of the sign as such is that it can fulfill its signifying function equally in the natural world between two real beings, or in the cultural world, where a sign has as its object signified another mental being (*ens rationis*), or between the two, a mental sign as signifying a real being. That is because a sign is essentially a relation, and relation is the only one of the Aristotelian categories that can refer indifferently to terms in the natural world or the cultural world, according to the circumstances, whether it be mathematics, or logic, the study of nature, etc. This seminal work of theory, Poinsot's *Tractatus de Signis*, thus opened the door to a vast range of applications in many different fields, which are now being systematically explored in contemporary semiotics, as is evident in the

work of the Semiotic Society of America and other such societies around the world today.

Now at the identical time of Poinsot's achievement started the modern philosophy with Descartes. So the first two periods are the age of signs, implicity the ancient, and then more formally in the scholastic period. And the amazing thing is that just as this discussion of signs blossomed out into this full, rich theory, the achievement got totally ignored and not even read, it seems, within what was to become the modern mainstream. Nobody in that mainstream apparently read or knew anything about this Iberian development of the doctrine of signs. The start of modern philosophy, culturally, gestated just in the Northern part of Europe (England, France, Germany, the Netherlands), where (especially after Galileo) there was increasing disenchantment with Catholic authority. This was the Iberian development in Southern Europe, Spanish and Portuguese, filled with all these Catholics, written in Latin, tied up with authority of Thomas and the Inquisition and Scholasticism—all the things that the moderns wanted nothing more to do with. So starts the modern age, where the fundamental move is to say that what we know, the object of our knowledge, is our own ideas.

III. The Modern Age

Because the two previous periods, the ancient and the Latin (extended medieval), were both basically realistic in their view of knowledge, and hence implicitly or explicitly accepting the mediation of formal signs whose whole being consists in signifying the being of another, Deely calls both of them "the Age of Signs". With the emergence of Descartes, however, the main stream of Western thought (with a few notable exceptions, such as Whitehead and Process philosophy, the perdurance of the Aristotelian and Thomistic traditions, etc.) takes a dramatic new turn. "The Way of Signs" is not so much rejected as simply ignored; it is our ideas themselves that now become the immediate object of our thought, *that which is known*, not the mind-independent real world outside of us.

But now the formidable problem arises of how to connect these inner objects of thought, our ideas, with the real world, the famous "problem of the bridge", now that the bridge of formal signs has been dismantled. Deely tracks down lucidly how each one of the main figures, from Descartes through the Rationalists, then the Empiricists Locke and Hume, tries various strategems to get around the problem without recourse to the mediation of formal signs, but without convincing success, till finally Kant gives up and accepts that we can know only the phenomena generated within our own consciousness—

projected into it by the inaccessible world of "things-in-themselves" outside of us; and we confer order and intelligibility by imposing our own a-priori forms of sensibility and understanding upon phenomena — all of which Kant calls proudly his "Copernican revolution". This basic "Way of Ideas" persists to this day in various forms of Neo-Kantianism and mitigated empiricism, often (but not necessarily) hidden within various analytic traditions of thought. Hegel tries to break out of this closed bubble of consciousness, but is only partially successful, for various other idealistic reasons. All through the modern period they never really solve that problem of how you can know really the outside world, the mind-independent world, *ens reale*. The moderns come up with all kinds of constructions. Some late moderns say, "Well, the Kantian a-priori is language and culture, and we, by our language, we're world-makers". It's always that same modern thing, where we're imposing forms on the world by not being informed by the world, which was the fundamental thesis of realistic knowledge (that the mind is a receptive knower open to be *informed* by the world). So stands the Age of Ideas, where ideas become the object; and this view triumphs everywhere, as I say, with some few exceptions, such as remnants of Thomism and Aristotelianism, Whitehead who is a real metaphysician not caught in this trap, and a few other realistic variants; but the defining current of philosophical modernity was this Way of Ideas, which really produced a failure. Putnam, for example, keeps going back and forth between 'realism' and 'idealism', as if to illustrate Deely's claim that the whole thing is a blind alley, a dead-end, including the empiricists.

It is noteworthy that the beginning of this Age of Ideas is strictly contemporaneous with the end of the Age of Signs. Descartes' writings appear at exactly the same time as John Poinsot's *Treatise on Signs*. But there is no evidence, as I have said, of any knowledge, let alone influence, of Poinsot's work on either Descartes or any other of the main figures of modernity. It is as though a fully conscious and sophisticated theory of signs finally bursts off in Western thought, and just as suddenly is wiped out of the memory of the new generation of philosophers in their general revolt against all the "authorities" of the past, especially Latin Scholasticism, with its close ties to the official Catholic Church.

Deely calls our attention to the strange schizophrenia that persists all through this Age of Ideas between the realistic aims and achievements of the new science, launched by Galileo, Newton, etc., in their effort to reveal at last (through their new method of experimentation, quantitative measurement, and mathematical expression) just what the world of nature is really like, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the Way of Ideas of the philosophers,

fascinated by the new science but at the same time systematically dismantling the only bridge connecting the mind-independent world of nature with the mind-dependent world of human knowledge, hence of science itself.

The Kantian line cannot withstand simple analysis of interpersonal human dialogue, where we get *informed* by the message of another person.[6] I can't constitute my dialogue partner, because then he or she must be constituting me; and that doesn't make any sense. Both have to be equally real or not at all. So we have to receive from another information coming in through the senses, but Kant says we're the ones who have to inform the world. So he cannot explain the very obvious feature of human dialogue where we are *informed* by another. And he complains "You didn't read my book. You didn't get what I was saying." But if you're constituting everything then you can't receive. So the moderns simply end up unable to explain how there can be other human beings as real as I with whom I can converse, because there is no way of really being informed by anything outside my own mind. The lonely thinker facing the material world neglected to question how dialogue was possible among thinkers! Finally came some of our contemporaries to claim the question is false,[7] since we are already in the world to begin with.

But anyway the modern mainstream proved a flow to futility, till Charles Sanders Peirce, at the end of the nineteenth century, picked up again the Trail of the Sign. He read the old scholastics. He almost got as far as Poinsot's *Treatise on Signs* itself, reading at least Poinsot's principal teachers in matters semiotic; and when he realized where the path led he totally rejected the Kantianism on which he had been brought up in philosophy. He picked up again the old theory of signs as self-effacing by reason of their relational

6. See Norris W. Clarke, "The 'We Are' of Interpersonal Dialogue as the Starting Point of Metaphysics", *The Modern Schoolman* 59 (1992), 357–368. Reprinted in *Explorations in Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), Chapter 2. Deely, in his *Four Ages*, p. 589, puts it this way: "the moment people began to thematize their experience of communication and to think of communication as such as something real, the moment they began to think of *that* experience as a proper starting point for philosophy, the days of modern philosophy were numbered. For with the substitution of the experience of communication for ideas as the point of departure for considering 'the nature and extent of humane understanding', with a belief in the occasional success of communcation as the guiding notion for developing the consequences of that point of departure, postmodernism had begun."

7. *Transcription note*: Notably Heidegger, whom Deely presents in the *Four Ages of Understanding* as one of postmodernity's pioneers: "When Dasein directs itself towards something and grasps it, it does not somehow first get out of an inner sphere in which it has been proximally encapsulated, but its primary kind of Being is such that it is always 'outside' alongside entities which it encounters and which belong to a world already discovered" (*Being and Time*, p. 89 in the Macquarrie/Robinson translation). Cf. John Deely, "The Quasi-Error of the External World", Part II of *The Impact on Philosophy of Semiotics* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2003).

constitution, and brought it back into a central focus. And that's the post-modern age in the special meaning of Deely.

IV. The Postmodern Age

The author understands "Postmodernity" here not in the current sense of its close connection to the general relativist movement of Deconstruction (Derrida, Lyotard, etc.) but in the special sense of the turn away from the "modern" Way of Ideas we have seen above, to connect up again and carry further the older Way of Signs, so brusquely interrupted by the new way of the moderns just as it reached a peak. "The last of the moderns", Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914) was first a committed Kantian, then turned his back on Kant to become "the first of the postmoderns" when he rediscovered many of the Latin sources of Poinsot's *Treatise on Signs*. He makes his own essential contributions from these late Latins, then goes on to develop new contributions and applications of his own, such as his famous triadic definition of sign as involving three elements: the sign-vehicle, the object signified, and the interpretant, which I understand (perhaps not accurately) as the interpreter to whom the sign makes known the object signified. All concepts and sense images (perceptions) as mediums of knowledge, in this view, must contain all three elements. Note the key difference from the understanding of ideas in the modern Way of Ideas: the three elements in the Way of Signs modernity has shrunk to two, namely, the idea as itself the object known and the consciousness to which it presents itself. The object signified, which in the Peirceian triad the idea presents to the mind as other than itself, has disappeared! The connection between the idea in consciousness and the real, mind-independent world outside, mediated by the idea as self-effacing sign, has been severed.

At first the significance of Peirce's work was not clearly understood and was confused with the Pragmatist movement led by his friend William James and others, from which he finally dissociated himself by calling himself a "Pragmaticist", a term "so ugly that no one would be tempted to steal it". In the mid and late twentieth century his work has been taken up and extended further into many different fields in the world-wide contemporary movement known as "semiotics". This should be carefully distinguished, Deely shows convincingly, from the "semiology" school of De Saussure (1857-1913), which is really only the last gasp of the modern Way of Ideas applied to language. Its positive contributions to the technical understanding of language can easily be assimilated into the more realistic sign-theory of semiotics, which the author heralds as the "way of the future" as we move into the Third Millennium, and

the only way to heal the schizophrenic split between the work of science and the explanatory theories of philosophy. Very interesting is Deely's exposition of the strange modern split—for which he uses the metaphor of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—between the thinking of modern science to penetrate the real world and uncover laws of nature, and the modern philosophers' clamoring claim that scientists are not penetrating the real but merely imposing upon it categories of their own making.

Clarke to Chair Rasmussen: Now when did I start?

Chair Rasmussen: You have seven minutes.

Clarke, resuming: OK. Let me join up the analysis of signs with St. Thomas. St. Thomas did not use the language of signs, but he certainly had its equivalent in that his whole intentionality theory can be translated into the language of semiotics. I am referring here to an extremely rich part of the Thomistic metaphysics and theory of knowledge that has not been thoroughly explored. People recognize *esse intentionale* and *esse reale*, and that the *species impressa* coming in from the outside is an *intentional being* that points beyond itself. I think you can really say that the intentional notion of the *species expressa* as the self-effacing sign was later expressed as a formal sign. St. Thomas doesn't expressly use that linguistic marker, "formal sign", but all the later commentators in his line did. It is a formal sign that not only makes known something other than itself but does so without itself first being an object in its own right. The natural sign is something first known as an object which then shows also another object, like smoke; but it is especially the formal sign that can be translated into the language of intentionality, as not just the real order or pure mental being, but a middle realm in the mind pointing beyond it, in itself totally relational and "pointing". That intentional order is absolutely essential to have a realistic theory of knowledge. Because knowledge takes place *in us*. Knowledge is not "out there" somewhere, but *in us*. So there must be something in us that points to the things outside and makes that mysterious link between the inner and the outer, this bridging factor which is the order of intentionality. So it is extremely important and central.

Let me summarize my concerns here under a series of points.

V. Thomistic Reflections

1. It is clear to me that John Deely has made a significant contribution both to our understanding of the indispensable role of the sign in our human cultural world and also the social world of animals, and to our better understanding of the development of Western philosophy itself by means of his distinction

between the two great antithetical ways of thought at work in it: the Way of Signs and the Way of Ideas. I had never seen this so clearly before.

2. I cannot yet get my mind around the full vision of Peirce — and apparently of Deely too—to include signs in all levels of reality, not only in the world of humans and animals, which is clear enough, but also in the world of plants and even the world of inanimate entities, such as atoms and molecules. I can make it with difficulty into the world of plants, but I am stumped as to what it can mean in the world of molecules, atoms, quarks, etc. Help here would be appreciated.

3. Although Deely himself seems to assign more importance to the emergence of a general theory of signs including both natural and formal signs (a distinction already clearly understood by St. Thomas) than he does to Thomas' own primary focus on the formal sign as the key to a realistic theory of knowledge, it still seems to me that, from the philosophical point of view, by far the most significant mode of sign is the formal (or self-effacing) sign. For it is this alone that can ground any realistic theory of knowledge and explain how it is possible to transform the mind-independent world outside of us (what he calls the *Umwelt*)[8] into the inner world (the *Innenwelt*) of our human consciousness and culture, so that our knowledge can be meaningfully said to be *true* to this surrounding real world without duplicating the physical reality of this world inside of us — which is manifestly impossible — and so enable us to elevate this world, veiled under the darkness (or semi-darkness) of unself-consciousness, into a new mode of being or presence within us where it shines forth in the light of self-conscious intelligibility and appreciation as a gift from the Author of nature to us who alone in our cosmos can recognize and respond to this gift and so fulfill the meaning of our universe. The splendor of this full vision of ourselves in our universe mediated by the bond of signs compared to the imprisonment within the bubble of our own consciousness implicit in the Way of Ideas of Kant and the Age of Modernity renders the latter not only unnecessarily restrictive but even bordering on the tragic.

4. Another expansion of consciousness for which I am grateful to John Deely is that he has directed my attention to focus more explicitly, as a metaphysician, on the mysterious mode of being of the formal sign itself, which

8. *Transcription note*: technically, the term Umwelt is not used in semiotics to mean the physical environment of *ens reale*, but as the objective counterpart to the Innenwelt or inner representations on the basis of which the physical environment is partially transformed into an objective world of meanings. On this technical point, see "Definition of Umwelt", with references, in John Deely, *What Distinguishes Human Understanding* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2002), pp. 126–143. See also Delly's article on "The Thomistic Import of the Neo-Kantian Concept of Umwelt in Jakob von Uexküll, Angelicum 81.4 (2004), 711–732.

occupies an elusive intermediary mode of presence between real (existential) being in itself and unqualified non-being or nothingness. This cannot be reduced into a simplistic either/or dichotomy: "Either it's real or it's not, and if it's not, then it's nothing." It can only be described in terms of its own unique status, as one form of "mental being" (a being that can exist only in a mind or consciousness sustaining it), which can only be identified as "sign-being", "intentional being" (St. Thomas' *esse intentionale* or *intentio* or *species intelligibilis* or *species sensibilis*).

I quickly recognized the striking affinity, even interchangeability, between the realm of "intentional being" or "intentionality" in Aquinas and the "sign-language" of Poinsot, Peirce, and semiotics, at least in the realm of realistic knowledge. For St. Thomas, an intentional being (or *esse intentionale*) in the order of cognition is an intellectual concept or sense image (perception) whose whole being is a kind of dynamic relational pointing towards another, i.e., to the object it is presenting to the field of consciousness of a knower (*intendere* in Latin means to "tend or stretch toward something"). This domain of intentional being is a whole dimension of being that is clearly and explicitly recognized and distinguished from real being (*esse reale*) by Thomas, but is not as well known (or well understood) as his explorations of the level of real beings in themselves. But it is an essential piece in his realistic theory of knowledge. It is part of the wonder of knowledge that a single really existing knower, with one really existing functioning mind, can provide an open field of consciousness able to receive (and even to spin out creatively in addition) a vast inner "universe" of objects known quite different from its own real being, some real, some only "intended" or projected, planned to become real, yet without increasing or decreasing the number of real beings in the universe at all. It can only do so by the mediation of such sign-beings or "intending presences", existing only in a consciousness apt to receive or create them, whose whole being consists in making known something other than themselves, whether the object signified is itself real or only objective, as in logic or mathematics or hypothetical theory construction or poetic fantasy.

I also consider it essential in trying to work out an adequate philosophy of God to be consistent, and not be afraid to introduce this distinction between the order of real being and the order of intentional being even into the divine mind itself. For it is clearly compatible with the infinite, uncomposed simplicity of the Subsistent Act of Being (*Ipsum Esse Subsistens*), which is the real being of God, that it also contain within itself an intentional field of consciousness signifying an unimaginably vast multiplicity of distinct, finite, intelligible objects quite other than its own real being, without in the least prejudicing the

infinite simplicity and unity of its own being. Thus, the order of intentional or sign-being does not constitute another order of real being competing with the real being of its knower but only makes possible for the one real being of the knower to constitute within itself a special order of intentional or sign-being by which it makes present to itself all that is other than itself. This is precisely what constitutes the wonder, the "natural magic", of the order of knowledge, by which, St. Thomas says in a magnificent flash of insight, a being finite in its real essence can overcome the limits of its finitude "by inscribing the whole order of the universe within itself in the order of knowledge" (*De Veritate*, q. 2, a. 2). Yet many Thomists, I have found, get very nervous when I distinguish these two dimensions in God, fearing this will destroy his radical simplicity. But the whole point is that this distinction is not between two real beings, but a *sui generis* one between a real and an intentional dimension of being — which is the very condition of possibility of knowledge itself!

5. My last suggestion is that the already rich analysis of the sign-world by John Deely, drawing on Poinsot and Peirce, can profit by further grounding in the deeper metaphysical structure of being as active, according to which Aquinas sees every real being as tending by nature to overflow its own being, so to speak, and manifest itself, communicate itself to others through action. "It is the nature of every actuality to communicate itself insofar as it is possible" (*Summa contra Gentes*, chap. 69); and again, "Communication follows upon the very meaning [intelligibility: *ratio*] of actuality. Hence every form is of itself communicable" (*In I Sent*., d. 4, q. 4, a. 4) — an astonishing text in the perspectives it opens![9] And of course all communication to be received must operate through some kind of sign, leaving some kind of sign of itself in its receiver. Action itself is the indispensable medium of all communication, for it is an intrinsically relational property by which the self-communicating being reaches beyond itself, so to speak, to impress something expressive, *informative*, of itself on its receiver. St. Thomas calls this the "intentional similitude" of the active communicator, projected by its action into the receptive being of its receiver and remaining in it. If the latter is a conscious knower, since this "vicarious similitude" bears on it the mark of "coming from another", the knower can immediately interpret it as a sign of the communicating source and point back to the latter as to what the sign signifies and makes known to it. In a word, it can "get the message", be *informed* about the world around it.

9. See W. Norris Clarke, "Action as the Self-Revelation of Being: A Central Theme in the Thought of St Thomas", in *Explorations in Metaphysics* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), Chap. 3; and also my *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 2001), chap. 2, sections V and VI.

The term "informed" is quite significant. For just what is it that is thus communicated from the active communicator to its receiver? For St. Thomas, this obviously cannot be the actual physical, extended matter of the communicator, which by its nature is always pinned down to its here and now location in the space-time framework of the universe. Hence it can only be something of the *form* of the agent, which, as not being strictly material itself but the unifying organizer of matter, is not thus pinned down, hence is "of its nature communicable", as Aquinas puts it, and thus fit to be *sign* of its sender.

Thus, for St. Thomas, the whole universe of active beings constitutes one great interconnected system of self-communication to one another mediated by the dynamism of action, which leaves in its receivers "intentional similitudes" or formal (self-effacing) signs of its source, pointing not to themselves as objects known but through themselves back to their source, thus "making known what is other than themselves". This is the indispensable key to any realistic theory of knowledge, lost in the Age of Ideas and now being recovered in the new Age of Signs by semiotics.

Thus it seems to me that the "intentionality world" of St. Thomas can easily be translated into the semiotic "world of signs" of Peirce/Deely, and can be enriched by incorporation into this wider perspective. But it must also be remembered that the world of signs needs to rediscover its own deeper grounding in the Thomistic metaphysics of being itself as in its very nature dynamically oriented toward self-communicating and self-manifesting action, thus generating signs of itself wherever it acts. For it must be carefully noted that the full metaphysics of "intentionality" in Aquinas contains within it a *double* or *two-way* direction of intentionality that I am not sure has been explicitly taken into account by the workers in semiotics, and certainly not by the phenomenologists.

Brentano was proud of rediscovering as the foundation for phenomenology the intentionality of the Scholastics, whereby consciousness is of its nature directed toward another: consciousness is "consciousness of . . . something". So far, so good. This is an important recovery of a key part of an almost lost tradition. It is, however, only half of the full story, a Thomist would say: i.e., the movement from within consciousness through the sign-beings in it back to the object known in itself. But such a responsive movement of the knower back toward the known would not itself be possible save through a-priori forward movement of *ontological intentionality* coming *from* the self-communicating object making itself known by actively projecting an intentional similitude, a sign of itself, into the knower, which the latter can

then interpret as a formal sign pointing back toward its source, thus making it the "object known".[10]

Let me comment on this a little further. The modern phenomenology with Brentano was proud to have restored intentionality from the scholastics into the modern world. However, to expand a little on what I have just said in the last paragraph, Brentano gets only half of it. He gets the intentionality of the mind extending out towards things, but totally forgets the other half of the central doctrine of the Thomistic intentionality. First of all, the real world has actively to communicate itself. First of all, there is an ontological intentionality in St. Thomas, a dynamism inside of real being to communicate itself to another—not to become the other fully, but to communicate, to leave some aspect of itself, some formal aspect of itself, in a receptive knower. There has to be that first formal giving of itself, and only when that has occurred can we respond to that gift from the outside, the ontological intentionality, with the sign which in turn can point to where it came from. So the ontological intentionality is absolutely central, and part of any communication system. The world is, in the midst of everything else, a communication system.

Thus, there is for St. Thomas a two-way process of intentionality at work in the world-system of communication between active (and receptive) beings: a first *ontological intentionality*, looking forward from the communicator to its receiver by projecting signs of itself into the conscious receptive field of the knower; then a second, responsive, *psychological intentionality* proceeding from the knower through the intentional (pointing) signs it has received back to its active source, thus making the latter formally known to the responsive knower. Only the second process has been recovered by the phenomenologists. I am not sure just where the semiotics people stand in general on this, and I would appreciate hearing further from John on it from the semiotic point of view. He himself has a strong Thomistic background, and I know he has insisted in his book on action on our sense receptors as the only way in which we first receive knowledge of the real world around us. But I am not sure whether he goes further to commit semiotics to connecting up with the more basic substructure of being itself, of all real beings, as naturally self-communicative through action.

This is a magnificent metaphysical vision—not well known, let alone well understood, by those outside the Thomistic tradition, perhaps not even fully

10. Cf. Andre Hayen, *L'Intentionel selon St. Thomas* (Paris, 1954), p. 13: "The theory of intentionality plays an essential role in a realistic metaphysics. It alone permits a coherent explanation of the exteriority of the world and the knowledge of it by the human spirit"; and Gerard Casey, "Immateriality and Intentionality", in Fran O'Rourke, ed., *At the Heart of the Real: Philosophical Essays in Honour of Desmond Connell* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992), 97–112.

by not a few inside it—a vision of a vast interconnected universe of self-communicating beings open to share, to give and receive from each another, using the universal medium of action and the "sign-language" interaction generates. Without this deeper metaphysical underpinning it seems to me that the work of semiotics itself remains incomplete, insufficiently grounded, and could be enriched by incorporating this depth dimension within itself. A lot of the writers accepting the new discourse about signs seem to me insufficiently sensitive to this ontological intentionality, wherein being communicates itself first. Are the semiotics people willing to ground the psychological intentionality in a deeper ontological intentionality of being communicating itself? This is my main question.

While awaiting an answer, let me say in the meantime that I am sincerely grateful to John Deely and his unique book for stimulating me to bring together into mutual illumination these two great complementary perspective on our universe, semiotics and the Way of Signs, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, St. Thomas' metaphysical vision of existential being as intrinsically active and self-communicating.

Chair Rasmussen: Thank you, Father Clarke, very much. Our last but not least speaker is Peter Redpath.

Quo Vadis, John Deely? Reflections on Deely as Teiresias and Sign as Intensive Quantity

Peter Redpath
St. John's University, Jamaica, NY

John Deely's recent tome, *Four Ages of Understanding*, is a masterful re-interpretation of Western philosophy's history in light of the notion of sign.[1] While I do not agree with every detail of Deely's account in this work, I substantially agree with what he says. I measure Deely's excellence in light of my recent trilogy of books, and subsequent research, about Western philosophy's history.[2] Deely starts his account with a hypothesis that, he says, frames an apparently "outrageous" tale: "philosophy as it has been taught in

1. The reference to Teiresias, the blind Theban seer, is taken from *The Odyssey*, Book 10, 492ff. and Book 11, 90ff. (Poseidon has thrown Odysseus' ship off course in Odysseus' attempt to return to Ithaca, because Odysseus had blinded Polyphemos, greatest of the Cyclops and Poseidon's son. Odysseus has been told by Circe that he had to visit Hades and find Teiresias in order to learn how to make his way home. After encountering in Hades various gods and heroes, Odysseus at length meets Teiresias, who showers him with predictions as well as the information he needs to get home.) I refer to Deely as Teiresias because his text provides an essentially sound prescription for returning to real philosophizing, in contrast to philosophy as it is done in the land of dead, the dreamwalkers. I think, however, that the prescription can be improved somewhat, given greater precision, insight (hence, now it is somewhat deprived of sight) by considering sign in light of the notion of intensive quantity (quality as a measure); because quality so considered acts as a ground for contrary opposites. Some opposites have a middle that, when considered as a measure, allows us to know them. In such a condition it stands as an equal between qualitative extremes within a genus. I think that understanding this throws tremendous light on the notion of sign and a host of other concepts, such as Thomas' notion of science, and the realist philosophical foundations of modern physics, a practical science involved in mathematical measurement of qualities.

2. See my *Cartesian Nightmare: An Introduction to Transcendental Sophistry* (Editions Rodopi, B. V., 1997), *Wisdom's Odyssey from Philosophy to Transcendental Sophistry* (Editions Rodopi, B. V., 1997), and *Masquerade of the Dream Walkers: Prophetic Theology from the Cartesians to Hegel* (Editions Rodopi, B. V., 1997).

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our American universities since their beginning in 1636 has mainly left out so many irreducibly key elements as to get the whole thing wrong, when it has not been made downright incomprehensible. And philosophy itself as a discipline of thought has suffered severely in consequence."[3] My account starts with a similarly outrageous tale. Deely does not go far enough. He should move the date of decline back about twelve centuries and the place to continental Europe.

When I defend this hypothesis, the reactions I get often range from bemusement to hysterical rage. Despite such reactions, I, as does Deely, have sound historical grounds that defend my hypothesis. For this setting let me cite one, Ernst Robert Curtius. In his classic *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Curtius states:[4]

> engineering, military science, grammar, textual criticism, literary culture, gnosis — all these things can be called "philosophy" in late Antiquity. Any and every systematized branch of knowledge lays claim to the title. But the cultural ideal of late Antiquity was rhetoric, of which poetry was a subdivision. The assimilation of philosophy to rhetoric is a product of neo-Sophism. Rhetor, philosopher, sophist now mean the same thing to the Latin West too.

Curtius says, further, that the concept of philosophy "had already begun to grow vague in the third century of our era."[5]

I specifically mention Curtius here because of his intellectual authority about Latin literature in the Middle Ages, and because of the effect he says this battle of the arts had on reading in late Antiquity. What he says lends credibility to Deely's thesis that the notion that ideas are sign-vehicles was largely absent from Antiquity, and that, in a way, philosophical awareness starts with the transcendental awareness of sign:[6] "In late Antiquity, allegory becomes the basis of all textual criticism whatsoever."[7]

In my opinion, the reason this mode of textual criticism dominated late Antiquity is clear. Nominalism and nominalists dominated the era, as they dominate the era from Descartes onward, and they dominated the era from Homer to Socrates. By denying the transcendental function of ideas, nominalists cannot explain reading at all. Hence they tend to (1) transform the

3. The "Aviso" to John N. Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding: The First Postmodern Survey of Philosophy from Ancient Times to the Turn of the Twenty-first Century* (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2001), viii.

4. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (New York: Published for Bollingen Foundation by Pantheon Books, Bollingen Series 36), p. 210.

5. Ibid., p. 209.

6. Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding: The First Postmodern Survey of Philosophy from Ancient Times to the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*, p. 20.

7. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, p. 205.

notion of reading away from abstracting meaning from a page and toward confrontation and (2) assign to reading the nature of an *ens rationis*.

In my opinion, illiteracy is the net long-term effect of the Cartesian project because this project's nominalistic character demands no communication between substances. In a sign relation, the potential knower and knowable object stand as opposite terms, or extremes in a communication relation. In a nominalistic universe, they cannot stand as contrary opposites unified by a sign because the contrariety involved in a sign relationship presupposes participation in a common genus. In a sign relationship, nominalism obliterates the generic relationship between the potential knower and knowable object through the only other extreme opposition: contradiction. In this situation, at best, the book becomes reduced to the status of an occasional cause to emote about a text, or a set of oracles about which we can express our feelings — just the way it appears to most American college students today.

In his classic *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, Étienne Gilson tells us that, according to Ockham, "no universal exists in any way outside of thought nor belongs in any sense to the quiddity or essence of any substance."[8] He adds that Ockham's final conclusion on universality was that it consisted in:

> the very act of cognition subjectively present in the soul, its sole reality is the reality of the soul which produces it. As there are singular things, common images are formed, which are valid for all these objects. This community, made of its very confusion, is what universality boils down to. Universality, therefore, is self-producing in thought, under the natural action of individual things without the intellect having to produce it; it is "nature" which produces universals in us in a way that is occult and whose effects only are known to us: *natura occulte operatur in universalibus*.[9]

Such a view of universality is the ground of ancient poetry, sophistry, and magic; not of philosophy. In my opinion, nominalism is no philosophical doctrine, and this mental aberration did not arise with Roscelin. It arose with the ancient poets and sophists, chief among them Protagoras. Nominalism is the position that sophists ordinarily take to justify Protagoras' claim, "Man is the measure of all things."[10]

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8. Étienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (New York: Random House, 1955), p. 482.

9. Ibid., p. 495.

10. For a more detailed defense of this thesis, see my article, "Poetic Revenge and Modern Totalitarianism", *From Twilight to Dawn: The Cultural Vision of Jacques Maritain* (Notre Dame: Distributed for the American Maritain Association by the University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), pp. 227–240.

Ancient philosophy started as a liberation movement away from ancient magic and superstition. Hence Plato vigorously opposed the nominalism of the ancient sophists.[11] How is the view of Ockham that Gilson expresses above substantively different from the view of Protagoras that Plato criticizes in the *Theatetus*, or of Gorgias in the dialogue of the same name?[12] Or of the teachings of Descartes, for that matter? Are not they identical? Hence, in considering the question whether intelligible species that we abstract from sense images constitute what the intellect knows, St. Thomas says that, were we to say that the intelligible species is what we apprehend, not that through which we apprehend, we would wind up holding the position of "the ancients who said that what appears is true".[13] Clearly, the sophists were the Ancients St. Thomas had in mind.

Surely, then, we must agree with Charles Sanders Peirce and Jacques Maritain when, as Deely indicates, they warn us that nominalism and conceptualism are essentially the same.[14] In addition, we have to agree with Peirce when he says that "all modern philosophy in every sect has been nominalistic".[15] If so, then should we not also agree with Maritain when he tells us that modern subjective idealists are "not philosophers", that what they practice is a "Grand Sophistry", and "neo-Protagoreanism", a "secularized theology"?[16] Is not the whole of modern thought fundamentally deconstructed, secularized Augustinian theology? Augustine in Drag?[17] How do we get Socrates from the head of Protagoras? If we agree with Maritain, are we not also forced to conclude that, properly speaking, the

11. See my extensive defensive of this thesis in *Wisdom's Odyssey from Philosophy to Transcendental Sophistry*, pp. 12–29. See, also, Charles Maurice Bowra, *The Greek Experience* (New York: New American Library, 1957), pp. 177, 182; G. S. Kirk and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, 1966), p. 72; and Gregory Vlastos, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

12. See Plato's *Theatetus*, 152A–210C. and *Gorgias*, 459B–D. See my critique of René Descartes as a "transcendental" sophist in my *Cartesian Nightmare*, especially my comparison of him to Gorgias and Protagoras, pp. 26–27, and 106–107.

13. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, ed. Piana (Ottawa: Collège Dominicain d'Ottawa, 1941), 1, q. 85, a. 2, Respondeo: "sequeretur error antiquorum dicentium 'omne quod videtur est verum.'"

14. Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding*, pp. 246, 740n8.

15. Ibid., p. 544.

16. See Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne: An Old Layman Questions Himself about the Present Time* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1968), pp. 84–126; *The Dream of Descartes: Together with Some Other Essays*, trans., Mabelle L. Andison (New York: Philosophical Library, 1944), pp. 13–29; and *Education at the Crossroads* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1970, p. 74.

17. For an extensive defense of this thesis, see my *Masquerade of the Dream Walkers: Prophetic Theology from the Cartesians to Hegel*.

whole of modern philosophy is a *flatus vocis*, an empty project consisting in self-fulfilling prophecy? And do we not have to agree that the author of this empty project could not have been a philosopher?[18] I am certain we are, at least if we are bound by Peirce's "Ethics of Terminology".[19]

In a similar vein, I think we must substantially agree with Deely's account of the nature of sign and the way it functions in relation to real being and beings of reason, especially when he says: "Abaelard . . . saw quite clearly that the 'problem of universals' considered in relation to the being proper to signs opens up to the whole vista of the problem of nonbeing", and "the sign in its being transcends the 'opposition' or difference between the orders of language . . . and physical nature".[20] In my opinion, Armand A. Maurer's recent excellent scholarly analysis, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham in Light of Its Principles*, lends weight to Deely's thesis about the general nature of signs and Deely's observation about Abaelard's insight about nonbeing. For Maurer maintains that, "considered just in itself", a specific or generic form "has no being or unity". It has being, unity, and plurality "only as it exists". Hence, Maurer, like Deely after him, rightly notes that, "above all", St. Thomas' teaching about analogy is not about terms. It "is a doctrine of *judgment* of analogy or proportion rather than an analogous *concept*. The Thomist doctrine of analogy is . . . focused, not upon essence, but upon being, understood as the act of existing (*esse*)".[21]

I agree with Deely that the notion of nonbeing opens up a crucial element to understanding the proper function of signs. Simultaneously, I think that this is the precise point in Deely's historical journey that we have to ask him, "*Quo vadis*, John Deely?" And, as a guide for our philosophical odyssey, "Where are you taking us?" Deely rightly takes us on the road not taken, through Poinsot. We owe Deely much thanks for introducing us in such detail to Poinsot's contribution to the doctrine of signs and to the Hispanic-Latin tradition. He is right to criticize modern historians of philosophy for ignoring these crucial elements in philosophy's history. One reason they did so, however, is because the first modern histories of philosophy were written by rhetoricians heavily influenced by the Renaissance humanist tradition.[22] As

18. See Peter A. Redpath, "Why Descartes was not a Philosopher", *The Failure of Modernism: The Cartesian Legacy and Contemporary Pluralism*, ed. Brendan Sweetman (Washington, DC: Distributed for the American Maritain Association by The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), pp. 10–21.

19. Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding*, pp. 662–668.

20. Ibid., p. 247.

21. Armand A. Maurer, *The Philosophy of William of Ockham in the Light of Its Principles* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1999), pp. 78, 287.

22. Redpath, *Cartesian Nightmare: An Introduction to Transcendental Sophistry*, pp. 7–9.

such, their accounts were not the history of real, temporal records. Instead, they were, as Kant calls his own historical musings *Conjectures on the Beginning of Human History*, "a pleasure trip" made "on the wings of the imagination".[23] In short, pure practical beings of reason: propaganda.

From Deely's account, we cannot fully appreciate this development because his road not taken is only partly taken. While traveling to Spain, he neglected to stop long enough in Italy and the countries influenced by the Italian Renaissance. In my opinion, by so doing, his historical account leaves out many of the same crucial details that all modern histories of philosophy neglect: Renaissance humanism and its attendant nominalism, which he insufficiently treats. Had Deely traced the development of the Renaissance humanist movement in more detail, I think he would have enhanced his already powerful defense of his hypothesis. This, however, is not the time or place to criticize Deely on these issues. Instead, let me focus on some things in St. Thomas that I think strengthen Deely's case and add a new dimension to his argument by (1) improving his explanation of the way negation relates to the action of signs and (2) more completely identifying the mental and physical ground of the sign relation, something for which Deely tells us Peirce had hunted.[24]

Considering the first point, we should recall that Poinsot says he derived the start of his doctrine of signs through some statements St. Thomas made in his *Summa theologiae* regarding relation.[25] If we turn to St. Thomas' detailed teaching about relation in his *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, we find that Aristotle and Thomas speak about relation as one of the four kinds of opposites, opposites being extreme differences.[26] Within this context, Thomas tells us that a relationship is a kind of sameness between two extremes.[27] He says, in addition, that sameness is a way of being one, as are similarity and equality, or what he calls "the primary parts of unity":

> Now the parts of unity are *sameness*, which is oneness in substance; *likeness*, which is oneness in quality; and *equality*, which is oneness in quantity. And opposed to these are *otherness*, *unlikeness*, and *inequality*.[28]

He says, moreover, that extremes are terms or limits. As limits, they are that beyond which we can go no further: indivisibles, or ones.[29]

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23. Redpath, *Wisdom's Odyssey*, pp. 116–117.

24. Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding*, pp. 640–643.

25. Deely, pp. 473–474, and 474n100. See, Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 28, a.1.

26. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, trans. John P. Rowan, vol. 1 (Chicago: Henry Regnery, Co., Inc., 1961), Bk. 5, Lectio 12, n. 922; vol. 2,Bk. 6, Lectio 3, nn. 1202–1203.

27. Ibid., vol. 1, Bk. 5, Lectio 11, n. 912.

28. Ibid., n. 907.

29. Ibid., vol. 2, Bk. 10, Lectio 2, n. 1952.

This means that, apart from *esse*, all the elements of a sign relation are ways of being one. If St. Thomas is correct, we cannot understand a sign relation without a metaphysical consideration of the notion of unity. According to St. Thomas, however, the notion of unity contains the notions of determinate negation and opposition because we derive the concept of unity from a negation of, and primary opposition, to plurality. Hence, unity and plurality are the grounds of all opposition.[30]

Unity, or what is undivided, however, grounds all sameness, equality, and similarity. St. Thomas holds that similarity, equality, and sameness, and their respective opposites are analogous extensions and the proper accidents of unity. As such, they ground all plurality. And plurality grounds all difference. For Aristotle, difference is a pluralization of unity, and unity's opposite. Since the analogous extensions and properties of unity are unities, to be similar, equal, or the same, therefore, is, analogously, to be one.[31]

This means that to be dissimilar, unequal, or different is to be many, to be a plurality of unity. But the one and the many are opposed. Together with being and privated being, St. Thomas tells us that these notions ground all opposition and contrariety, and are the primary contraries into we reduce all other contraries.[32]

This being so, for St. Thomas and Aristotle, the principles of similarity, equality, and sameness, and their opposites and contraries (dissimilarity, inequality, and difference), ground all the *per se* accidents and relative first principles of all the sciences. This must be so, because they are the most fundamental oppositions between unity and plurality, the opposition which grounds all other oppositions and into which all others are reduced. And science studies the principles of opposition within a genus.[33]

In my opinion, recognition of this fundamental opposition is a main reason that Aristotle divided the speculative sciences into three classes. Since I have defended this thesis elsewhere, I will not take time to discuss it here.[34] Instead, at this point, let me note that St. Thomas tells us science studies real beings, and that "each thing is a being insofar as it is one".[35] He maintains, further, that we know all things through unity. Unity is the measure of all things,[36] because "to be a measure" is a property of unity.[37]

30. Ibid., Lectio 1, n. 1936, Lectio 6, nn. 2036–2058.
31. Ibid., vol. 1, Bk. 4, Lectio 3, nn. 564–569, 582–587.
32. Ibid., vol. 2, Bk. 10, Lectio 6, n. 2058.
33. Ibid., Lectio 4, nn.1998–2022, Lectio 5, n. 2035.
34. Peter A. Redpath, "Post-Postmodern Science and Religion: A Critique", *International Journal of World Peace* 18:1 (March 2001), pp. 61–90.
35. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. 2, Bk. 6, Lectio 2, n. 1176.
36. Ibid., Bk. 10, Lectio 2, n. 1952.
37. Ibid., Lectio 2, n. 1937.

This is because unity stops division. Indivision brings division to an end, is that beyond which no further division exists. This means that we come to know the principles that comprise each thing's substance by dividing or resolving a whole into its component parts, "whether", as St. Thomas says, "they are quantitative parts or specific parts, such as matter and form and the elements of compounds".[38]

Analogously, we can call knowledge and perception "measures" of things. Aristotle maintains that we can speak this way because we know something by knowledge and perception. "[A]s a matter of fact", he claims, "they are measured rather than measure other things."[39] He immediately adds that thinkers like Protagoras "say nothing . . . while they appear to say something remarkable, when they say 'man is the measure of all things.'"[40] The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of Descartes and his progeny: while seeming to say something remarkable, in fact they say nothing.

According to Aristotle, a measure is the means by which we know a thing's quantity.[41] And quantity is that by which we know substance. That is, a measure is a unit, number, or limit.[42] He adds that we first derive the notions of measure and order from the genus of quantity. From this we analogously transfer this notion to other genera.[43] Hence, in a way, unity and quantity are the means by and through which we even know substance, quality — in short, everything.[44] Hence, he states:

> Evidently, then, unity in the strictest sense, if we define it according to the meaning of the word, is a measure, and most properly of quantity, and secondly of quality. And some things will be one if they are indivisible in quantity, and others if they are indivisible in quality; and so that which is one is indivisible, either absolutely or *qua* one.[45]

In my opinion, Aristotle's points about unity being a measure of quantity and "of quality", and unity and measure being the means through which we know things, are crucial for a complete understanding of the action of signs as Deely, following Peirce and Poinsot, understands the sign relation. For, as Deely, tells us: "signs are *relative* beings whose whole existence consists in the

38. Ibid., Bk. 10, Lectio 2, n. 1952.

39. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1968). Bk. 10, chap. 1, 1053a32–1053b3.

40. Ibid.

41. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. 2, Bk. 10, Lectio 2, n. 1937.

42. Ibid., nn. 1938–1960.

43. Ibid., vol. 1, Bk. 5, Lectio 1, nn. 752–754, 937–944.

44. Ibid., vol. 2, Bk. 10, Lectio 2, n,. 1937–1938.

45. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. 10, chap. 2, 1053b4–9. See, also, Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. 2, Bk. 10, Lectio 2, n. 1960.

presentation within awareness of what they themselves are not. To function in this way the sign in its proper being must consist . . . in a relation uniting a cognitive being to an object known *on the basis* of some sign vehicle."[46] If such be the case, then, apart from a sign relation's *esse* (which is *ad esse*), its essential nature as a one and measure constitute the ontological ground of its action.[47]

To understand, however, how unity and measure help ground the sign relation, we have to consider how we can analogously predicate quantity.[48] To achieve this, we must have a fairly precise understanding of St. Thomas' teaching about quantity. Many Thomists are familiar with Thomas' distinction between continuous and discrete quantity, continuous quantity being the proper subject of the geometrician and discrete quantity being the proper subject of the arithmetician. Few are familiar with a more basic distinction he makes between dimensive (*molis*) and virtual (*virtutis*) quantity.[49]

Continuous and discrete quantity are species of dimensive, or bulk, quantity. They result in a substantial body from emanation of a natural substance's matter to become a body divisible in one, two, or three magnitudinal limits or directions: length, width, or depth.

Virtual quantity is a species of quantity that emanates intensively, not extensively, from a natural substance's form, not its matter. The accidental form "quality", not dimensive "quantity", produces it. Aquinas describes the distinction between these two forms of quantity thus: "Quantity is twofold. One is called bulk (*molis*) quantity or dimensive (*dimensiva*) quantity, which is the only kind of quantity in bodily things. . . . The other is virtual (*virtutis*) quantity, which occurs according to the perfection of some nature or form." He adds that this sort of quantity is also called "spiritual greatness, just as heat is called great because of its intensity and perfection".[50] Moreover, he says:

> each thing is perfect when no part of the natural magnitude which belongs to it according to the form of its proper ability is missing. Moreover, just as each

46. Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding*, p. 463.

47. Charles Bonaventure Crowley, *Aristotelian-Thomistic Philosophy of Measure and the International System of Units (SI)* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1996), pp. 27–28, and 42n22.

48. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, Bk. 5, Lectio 15, n. 981, Lectio16, n. 998.

49. For a major exception to this case, see Crowley's *Aristotelian-Thomistic Philosophy of Measure and the International System of Units (SI)*, note 47 above.

50. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1, q. 42, a. 2, ad 1. See also, 1, 2, q. 52, a. 1, respondeo. For a more extensive treatment of the notion of virtual quantity in Aristotle and Aquinas, see Crowley, *Aristotelian-Thomistic Philosophy of Measure and the International System of Units (SI)*, pp. 25–47, 249–260.

> natural being has a definite measure of natural magnitude in continuous quantity, as is stated in Book II of *The Soul*, so too each thing has a definite amount of its own natural ability. For example, a horse has by nature a definite dimensive quantity, within certain limits; for there is both a maximum quantity and minimum quantity beyond which no horse can go in size. And in a similar way the quantity of active power in a horse which is not in fact surpassed in any horse; and similarly there is some minimum which never fails to be attained.[51]

For St. Thomas, in other words, forms and qualities have their own kind of quantity and magnitudinal limit, one that consists in the greater or less intrinsic perfection, completeness, or intensive quantity of form, not in the extension of matter throughout potentially divisible parts within a spatial continuum. We derive this notion analogously from the way we predicate perfection, or completeness, of dimensive quantity. We then transfer this notion to qualities, which, for St. Thomas, are intensive quantities.

This intensive quantum property of form is crucial to understand because: 1. it is a property that modernity had to deny to signs to get its nominalistic and sophistic project off the ground, thereby altering the action of sign relations and eliminating their transcendental aspect; 2. it enables to exist within a subject and genus the opposition between privation and possession that grounds all contrariety; 3. privation (a type of negation that requires the disposition to have a form and the absence, in a definite subject at a definite time, of the form to which one is disposed) is an essential element of the sign relation that we need to account for a sign-vehicle's ontological indifference;[52] 4. it explains why the sign relation must involve proportion between the knower (or perceiver) and the object known (or perceived); 5. it helps us to understand, *contra* Deely, that, in practice, modern science never broke away from philosophy; in practice, it broke away from Cartesian sophistry; and 6. that the whole of philosophy for the Greeks and all time is a sustained realist reflection on the problem of the one and the many.

Recall that opposition between privation and possession is the basis of contrariety.[53] Hence quality, or intensive quantity, as the foundation of all opposition and contrariety is, in a way, the ground of all science and the action of all sign relations. Furthermore, St. Thomas tells us that qualities are of basically two kinds: (1) essential difference and (2) differences, or alterations, of bodies capable of motion, like hot and cold, heavy and light, black and white.

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51. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. 1, Bk. 5, Lectio 18, n. 1037.

52. Ibid., Lectio 14, nn. 962–965.

53. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. 2, Bk. 10, Lectio 6, nn. 2036–2058.

This second sense refers to the way we generally use the term "quality" "of virtue and vice, and, in general, of evil and good", and, therefore, of intensive quantity (because it involves completeness of perfection of form).[54] Aristotle considers quality in this sense to be an accident related to motion or action, an intensive quantitative modification of something moved or acted upon inasmuch as it is moved or acted upon. Hence, regarding virtue and vice, he says:

> Virtue and vice fall among these modifications; for they indicate differentiae of the movement or activity, according to which the things in motion act or are acted upon well or badly; for that which can be moved or act in one way is good and that which can do so in another [the contrary] way is vicious. Good and evil indicate quality especially in living things, and among these especially in those which have purpose.[55]

St. Thomas comments upon Aristotle's reference to virtues and vices enabling us to move well or badly that the terms "well" and "badly" chiefly relate to living things, and "especially" to those possessed of "choice". The reason Thomas gives for this comment is that living things particularly act for an end, and "rational beings, in whom alone choice exists, know both the end and the proportion of the means to the end".[56]

Part of St. Thomas' point in the above passage is that quality modifies a motion or action, in the sense that it places it within bounds and, in a way, gives it order and proportion, especially in connection to acting for an end. This point is crucial to understand in relation to any science involved in study of qualities, or to a proper understanding of the action and ground of signs. The reason is that every science must study a genus in relation to opposition between contrary members of a species, an opposition, like all oppositions, grounded in possession, privation, proportion, and limits. And the sign relation works in a similar way.

Modern science and the function of signs are grounded in an understanding of analogous predication, and, at least in part, this appears to be grounded upon the notion of intensive quantity. No science, then, can proceed without considering the proportionate and unequal relationship of possession and privation that a multiplicity has to a chief proximate subject, to the maximum in a species, to a one to which other things are related as numerically one end.[57] And no proper understanding of the action of a sign can proceed without considering the proportionate and unequal relation of privation and

54. Ibid., Bk. 5, Lectio 16, nn. 987–999.
55. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk. 5, chap. 14, 1020b18–25.
56. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. 1, Bk. 5, Lectio 16, n. 998.
57. Ibid., vol. 1, Bk. 5, Lectio 1, nn. 534–544.

possession that a sign-vehicle has to two terms. For, in the sign relation, the sign-vehicle stands as a mean between extremes belonging to the same genus through an opposition of privative negation and possession, just as moral virtue stands as a mean in a relation of privative negation and possession to extremes of vice. The equal, however, is a one. As such, it is a measure. Hence, the sign relation can function as a measure indifferent to the being of its terms precisely because its being (*ad esse*) as an intensive quantum measure, an equal, causes it to function as a mean in a tripartite relation in which it is deprived, not possessed of, the *esse* and modes of unity of its terms. As a mean or middle between both terms, it relates to both extremes as a one, intermediate, or midpoint, equally deprived of both. It is neither term; it relates to both; and it is opposed to both by an opposition of privative negation, not of contrariety.[58] In a sign relation we can compare one term to another by relating both the terms to a sign-vehicle that stands equidistant to them in intensity, much as we can compare the heaviness of two different bodies through use of a balance scale that compares their weight relative to a state of equilibrium. This qualitative state becomes the measure of the other two, and the principle by which we know them. In a similar way, the sign-vehicle is the measure of its terms and the principle by which we know them.[59] This function of the sign-vehicle as an intensive quantum measure appears to be a main reason St. Thomas says that "the intelligible object and the intellect must be proportionate to each other and must belong to one and the same genus, since the intellect and the intelligible object are one in actuality".[60]

In conclusion, reflecting on sign as intensive quantity in terms of the metaphysics of unity and measure, first, more completely explains the nature and action of a sign; second, shows how, as a division of the metaphysics of measure, semiotics can lay legitimate claim to be a philosophical science; third, justifies Deely's claim that philosophy's immediate future demands we define human beings as "semiotic animals";[61] and fourth, demands more radical conclusion than Deely's claim that modern science has broken away from philosophy: the unity of the sciences is totally philosophical, as the seminal research in the philosophy of measure conducted by Charles Bonaventure Crowley, O.P., clearly shows.[62]

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58. Ibid., vol. 2, Bk. 10, Lectio 7, nn. 2059–2074.

59. Crowley, *Aristotelian-Thomistic Philosophy of Measure and the International System of Units (SI)*, pp. 28–29.

60. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics of Aristotle*, vol. 1, Prol.

61. Deely, *Four Ages of Understanding*, p. 736.

62. See Crowley, *Aristotelian-Thomistic Philosophy of Measure and the International System of Units (SI)*.

Chair Rasmussen: I would like to thank all three speakers for staying within the twenty-five minute limit.

I think the way we should proceed is to have John make a response limited to ten minutes, followed by a half-hour's discussion.

Response to the Speakers

John Deely
University of St. Thomas, Houston

I would like to express my thanks to everyone for being here, but to the three commentators in particular, because, you know, when you're a young scholar, you have this ambition to publish a book and you think that that is a big achievement. And then you discover that it is almost as nothing compared to the problem of getting someone to read the book. These three gentlemen not only read the book, but had the almost excessive courtesy to supply me with a written version of their comments ahead of time, so I can give some focus in my remarks. The problem is that my good friend and former teacher Fr. Ashley betrayed me the most because he so revised his remarks in the oral presentation that all the things I wanted to comment on were omitted.[1]

Let me begin with Fr. Clarke. In the remarks that he sent to me, he titled the last part of his paper "Thomistic Reflections". I'd like to go straight to those, because he puts to me the question 'Where exactly does semiotics stand on this question of the metaphysics of being as self-communicating?' In answer I would like to point to what Fr. Clarke describes as "the magnificent metaphysical vision which is not well-known outside of Thomism" but, even more interesting, he says "not well-known inside of Thomism either", which he describes as a "vast interconnected universe of self-communicating beings using the universal medium of sign-language that such a universe"—that is, a universe of self-communicating beings—"generates".

Now, that vision is not something that needs to be added to semiotics. That is where semiotics is coming from. There's an old medieval expression, very familiar to Fr. Clarke, "ens et verum convertuntur". In a recent book by two good friends of mine from the University of Bari, Italy, Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio—and I think the formulation is Susan's in particular—there is given a perfect semiotic translation of *ens et verum convertuntur*: being and communication are co-extensive.[2]

1. See note 2 to Ashley's text, p. 6 above.
2. Susan Petrilli and Augusto Ponzio, *Thomas Sebeok and the Signs of Life* (USA: Totem Books, 2001), p. 54.

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Fr. Clarke also raised for me the question of the extent of the action of signs. He could see how we have signs in the human world and the animal world, and even the plant world, but to go beyond that he begins to wonder. Well, he's not the only one who begins to wonder. In fact, that is exactly the great divide in semiotics today: how far can you extend this notion of semiosis as the action of signs?

Clarke intervention: Peirce wanted to go all the way down even to the inanimate.

Deely: Peirce wanted to go all the way down even to the inanimate, as do I.[3] In fact I coined a term for it: *physiosemiosis*.[4] But to make this matter maximally intelligible in terms of what Fr. Clarke rightly described as "this magnificent metaphysical vision" which is proper to St. Thomas, though not well understood either inside or outside of Thomism, of a universe of beings not merely interacting but *communicating*, I would say that all communication stems from or, sooner or later, gives rise to semiosis. If I were to have a criticism of Fr. Clarke's remarks, it would be that, in terms of his emphasis on intentionality, he has not quite come to the realization that intentionality is entirely derivative from the theory of relations. I know in my own writings I used to use this language of intentionality a great deal.[5] Let me put it this

3. Famously, Peirce at one point despaired and threw it as a "sop to Cerberus" that signs involved "persons"—interpreters rather than interpretants, as it were. I undertook at the Harvard Peirce Congress, with the help of Poinsot, rather to vindicate his "grand vision" of a genuine thirdness at work even in inorganic nature, with a chequered success, to judge by the strange history of the publication. My paper, titled "The Grand Vision", was presented on September 8 of the September 5–10 Charles Sanders Peirce Sesquicentennial International Congress at Harvard University. The essay was first published in the *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* XXX.2 (Spring 1994), 371–400, but, inexplicably, after the submission of corrected proofs, the journal repaged the whole and introduced such extreme errors as to make the text unreadable at some points, which, to say the least, took the delight out of the publication. The correct version has since appeared in one of the several volumes that came out of the Congress, *Peirce's Doctrine of Signs*, ed. Vincent Colapietro and Thomas Olshewsky (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 45–67; and as chapter 7 of my *New Beginnings. Early Modern Philosophy and Postmodern Thought* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 183–200.

4. Originally in my *Basics of Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), Chapter 6, but in several publications since, such as "How Is the Universe Perfused with Signs?" in *Semiotics 1997*, ed. C. W. Spinks and J. N. Deely (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 389–394; and "Physiosemiosis and Semiotics", in *Semiotics 1998*, ed. C. W. Spinks and J. N. Deely (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 191–197. See, in particular, "The State of the Question", Chapter 1 in *The Impact of Semiotics on Philosophy* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2003), with references; and the Nöth symposium organized in Kassel, Germany, February 16–17, 2001, "The Semiotic Threshold", published in *Sign System Studies* 29.1 (2001), co-edited with Kalevi Kull.

5. See, besides my book, *The Tradition via Heidegger* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), for example, John Deely, "The Immateriality of the Intentional as Such", *The New Scholasticism* XLII

way. The first one thematically to discuss the subject of relation in the history of philosophy was Aristotle. And he had the maximum amount of trouble in understanding how relation would constitute a *distinct* category from the other accidents and even from substance itself as the sustainer of accidents. In the traditional way of considering the matter of the categories it is said that there are basically substance and accident. Hardly ever emphasized or even understood is the fact that relation among the other accidents has, as irreducible to subjectivity, a totally unique status — to wit, that anything instantiated in the other nine categories of Aristotle can *only* be instantiated in the order of mind-independent being, whereas relation can be instantiated indifferently as a mind-dependent or mind-independent reality. That's the first point.

When St. Thomas comes across this point, what does he use the theory of relation for? Of all things, astounding, to explain the inner life of God as consisting in a communication among a Trinity of Persons. This is explicable, St. Thomas says, compatible with the unity of the Godhead, precisely because

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no. 3 (Spring 1968), 293–306; "The Ontological Status of Intentionality", *The New Scholasticism* Vol. XLVI, No. 2 (Spring 1972), 220–233; "How Language Refers", *Studi Internazionali di Filosofia* IV (1972), 41–50; "The Use of Words to Mention", *The New Scholasticism*, LI no. 4 (Autumn 1977), 546–553. These articles, in turn, led to my first acquaintance with Douglas Rasmussen through his publication of "Deely, Wittgenstein, and Mental Events" as a discussion article in *The New Scholasticism* LIV.1 (Winter 1980), 60–67. In the exchange of letters that I had with Etienne Gilson in the last few years of his life, which actually began as a result of a remark he made to Otto Bird concerning something I had written on intentionality, he pointed out to me that the language of *esse intentionale* was only occasionally used by St. Thomas, and that it never became properly his own way of speaking. When Gilson realized this, in fact, he told me that it became his principal reason for ceasing to read John of St. Thomas as a guide to the thought of Thomas himself, *for the language of the two was no longer fully a common vocabulary*. The value and limits of this Gilsonian way of approaching the thought of St. Thomas I have discussed before the American Maritain Association, in my "Quid Sit Postmodernismus?", in *Postmodernism and Christian Philosophy*, ed. Roman Ciapalo (Washington, DC: CUA Press, 1997), pp. 68–94. Deprived by a series of moves of access now to that correspondence, I yet remember clearly how strongly distasteful Gilson found the Neothomist reliance on doctrines of intentionality, of which Maritain, who expressly told us that he had learned his Thomism, after Thomas himself, principally from John of St. Thomas, Poinsot, became a principal Neothomistic exponent. I myself spent three years (1962–1965) immersed in the Latin texts of Thomas himself at River Forest, and only after that did I first read Maritain (in the Fall of 1965), who gave me my main ideas on intentionality in relation to Heidegger's notion of Sein, which I published as *The Tradition via Heidegger*, mentioned above. And only much later still, in the Fall of 1970, did I begin systematically to read Poinsot himself, Maritain's principal teacher in this area of *esse intentionale*. So it is one of history's minor ironies that I learned from Poinsot's doctrine of signs the derivative nature of intentionality from the peculiar being of relation existing in nature prior to any finite consciousness which would pick it up in the semiosis of intentionality. See, perhaps, Chapter 5, "How is the distinctiveness of semiosis in general possible", in my *What Distinguishes Human Understanding* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2002), pp. 47–67.

of this unique feature of relation according to which a relation as such is not tied determinately to the order of mind-dependent or mind-independent being. Then along comes his disciple John of St. Thomas, properly named Poinsot, who says simply "Aha! What you gentlemen need to notice is that the same feature which makes possible as it were the interior life of God as a communication among Persons is what makes possible communication at all the levels of nature, human beings among themselves, human beings with God, human beings with nature, natural beings among themselves". And then the great discovery, which Poinsot is the first to make:[6] it is because a sign relation can sometimes be categorial or "real" in Aristotle's *strict* sense[7] that a sign relation can also function, and equally well, ontologically speaking, in a context of fiction.

Fr. Clarke mentions Peirce going back to the Conimbricenses. The Conimbricenses were people that Poinsot studied with the way that I studied with Fr. Ashley or have attended conferences with Fr. Clarke. I learned from Jack Doyle in an astonishing paper that he presented to the Semiotic Society of America[8] that Poinsot's *Treatise on Signs* was actually a point and counterpoint response to his teachers from thirty years before. It was with the Conimbricenses that the triadic structure of the sign was determinately established, but it was Poinsot himself who first made the definitive move from the three elements of the sign-relation (and in particular from the representative element) to the realization that *the sign consists in the triadic relation itself over and above the elements related*, rather than in the elements themselves related or any one of them in particular.

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6. See the 5th and 6th opening paragraphs of his *Tractatus de Signis*, 117/18–118/18, esp. 117/28–118/6.

7. The "strict sense" referred to here could hardly be clearer in the Latin Age: "The distinction of the categories was introduced for this, that the orders and classes of diverse natures might be set forth, to which all the things which participate some nature might be reduced, and on this basis the first thing that must be excluded from every category is mind-dependent being, because being which depends for its being on being cognized (mind-dependent being) has not a nature nor a true entity, but a constructed one, and therefore must be relegated not to a true category, but to a constructed one. Whence St. Thomas says (in q. 7, art. 9 of his *Disputed Questions on the Power of God*) that only things independent of the soul pertain to the categories." — Poinsot, *Ars Logica* (Reiser ed.; Rome Marietti, 1931), Part II, Q. XIV, Art. 1, "Quid sit praedicamentum et quid requiratur ut aliquid sit in praedicamento" ("What Would a Category Be and What Would Be Required for Something To Be in a Category"), 500b36–501a2; cited in the Editorial AfterWord to the Deely edition of Poinsot's *Tractatus de Signis* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), p. 472.

8. John P. Doyle, "The Conimbricenses on the Relations Involved in Signs", in *Semiotics 1984*, ed. John Deely (Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Meeting of the Semiotic Society of America; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 567–576. See also his recent bilingual edition of the 1607 text, *The Conimbricenses. Some Questions on Signs* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2001).

I learned many things in the course of writing the *Four Ages* and quite a few things since, and the one since that struck me the most I made the theme of a Presidential Address to the Semiotic Society under the title "A Sign is *What?*"[9] The point of the title was that nothing you can point to with your finger or see with your eyes or hear with your ears is, strictly speaking, in the technical analysis, a sign.

Clarke intervention: Empirical analysis can't touch it with quantitative measurement.

Deely: So I would say that when Fr. Clarke raises the question of where semiotics takes its stand in terms of this magnificent metaphysical vision, he more than anyone goes straight to the heart of the matter. Let me say that when I was a young student studying with the Dominicans, I had an advantage. My main teacher, Ralph Austin Powell, never agreed with any of the others, and was completely crazy

Clarke intervention: Powell was my classmate at Georgetown.

Deely: Yes, which may be where he got his craziness. So I was kind of able to stand on the sidelines watching the claims of the so-called "River Forest School". One of the main claims that the non-Powellians emphasized in the House of Studies was that natural philosophy had to be continuous with modern science, almost the way that Peter Redpath claimed in his remarks. But really we have to make some discrimination here. When Redpath says that, "contra Deely, modern science never broke away from philosophy", we assuredly have to distinguish. That modern science never broke away from modern philosophy, I deny; but that it didn't break away from the medieval philosophy of being, I grant — although those who came to call themselves scientists were hardly aware of the continuity,[10] and I don't think the philosophers of being generally sufficiently realize the importance of this fact that we have a whole realm of knowledge in modern science that could never be arrived at except by experimental means and special instruments (ideoscopic knowledge, in contrast to the cœnoscopy common to the origins of semiotics and philosophy), so much that, when we think of Galileo and Descartes today,

9. John Deely, "A Sign is *What?*", *Sign Systems Studies* (2001) 29.2, 705–743. Now published in dramatic reading format in *The American Journal of Semiotics* 20.1–4 (2004), 1–66.

10. See my remarks in "Semiotic as Framework and Direction", paper presented at the 1984 "Semiotics: Field or Discipline" State-of-the-Art Conference organized by Michael Herzfeld at the Bloomington campus of Indiana University, October 8–10, 1984, and subsequently published in Deely, Williams and Kruse anthology, *Frontiers in Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 1986), text 264–271, notes 287–288.

everyone thinks of Galileo in terms of science and of Descartes in terms of philosophy, but these gentlemen themselves saw themselves as involved in a *common* project in their time: the illusion that science could answer all the old questions of philosophy. And the period of that illusion historically is known as the Enlightenment.

But, to stay within my ten minutes, let me turn to a last point.

Clarke intervention: Yet you didn't answer my question, do the modern semiotic people accept the ontological intentionality of incoming being, or do they amend that?

Deely: I think, Fr. Clarke, that that matter is still up in the air. So far as I have an influence on the discussion they admit it, and you clearly see it in the maxim of Ponzio and Petrilli that I cited above; but it's not there in Eco's work, nor in semiology generally heretofore.

Clarke: No, no, that's true.

Deely: So I'm hoping that the *Four Ages* will tip the balance.

Clarke: But you admit that they need to put that in?

Deely: Absolutely.[11] And I am hoping that this book is going to tip that balance.

Clarke: OK.

Deely, continuing: Alright. One last thing, and in two minutes we will open the discussion to the floor. One of the discoveries that I made in working on the *Four Ages* was that the great Pseudo-Dionysius had what came to be clear to me as an absolutely pernicious influence on the development of philosophy in the Latin West and on the development of the Catholic Church in its excessive hierarchization, with which you are all well-familiar and of which some of you even are a part. Why is this so? All this stuff about angels, about celestial and ecclesiastical hierarchy that Aquinas takes from Pseudo-Dionysius,[12] why did he accord Pseudo-Dionysius such

11. That Fr. Clarke's above observations on the imbalanced notion of intentionality introduced into late modern thought by Brentano are warranted is something that I had myself already demonstrated in a special study on the point: John Deely, "Semiotic and the Controversy over Mental Events", *ACPA Proceedings* LII (1987), 16–27. On Brentano, in the *Four Ages* see p. 404, text and note 87, and p. 561.

12. Concerning the spiritual nature of angels, Poinsot, in his *Treatise on Angels* (1643: 458 ¶4), remarks that St. Thomas demonstrates the fact of this spirituality from Patristic testimony "et praecipue ex D. Dionysio, qui ceteris abundantius Angelorum notitiam nobis tradidit. Eamque doctrinam ex Apostolis hausit, praecipue ex Paulo, cujus discipulus fuit [Dionysius].

great authority? He accorded him such great authority — "omnino auctoritatem habet" was the way Poinsot described the edition of Dionysius he worked from[13] — because Pseudo-Dionysius through St. Thomas' time succeeded in perpetrating a major fraud. Now Fr. Ashley in his written remarks said that I am unfair to Pseudo-Dionysius because "the purpose of these medievals was to express humble deference to authority, not to spuriously claim authority". So if I wrote what I thought was a really important work in metaphysics, I might sign it 'Norris Clarke', in order lend the work authority and as a way of signifying my respect for the greatness of Fr. Clarke as a metaphysical thinker. But that's not simply what Pseudo-Dionysius did. He very carefully constructed a correspondence and a number of stories that put him present at the Dormition of the Virgin Mary, that made him present at the Crucifixion, that detailed intimate accounts of his personal relations with various of the apostles, and particularly of his being privy to the otherwise private revelations made to St. Paul, communicated only to Dionysius.[14] Such care in the construction of a false identity goes well into the territory of outright fraud, and well beyond the boundaries of any humble deference to authority.

And when the Reformation struck, and the fraudulence of the Pseudo-Dionysian writings and of the papal Decretals along with them became known, of course the Catholic side (meaning 'Catholic' in the modern sense oppositional to 'Protestant') clung to these things, and the Reformers with equal tenacity jettisoned them; so the whole affair of the Pseudo-Dionysius became part of this great modern divide between Catholicism and Protestantism, and there has eventually to be an extensive deconstruction of medieval Catholicism in order to reconcile for some future time the split between Catholic and Protestant, not to mention the earlier split between the Orthodox Greek Church and Catholicism within Christianity, in which the Dionysian writings also played their sinister part.

Inquit ergo S. Dionysius de Angelis loquens", etc. — Joannes a Sancto Thoma, "Tractatus de Angelis" (1643; being a summary and extended gloss upon Aquinas 1266: *Summa theologiae prima pars*, Qq. 50–64, and 106–107), in *Joannis a Sancto Thoma Cursus Theologicus Tomus IV*, Solesmes ed. (Paris: Desclée, 1946), pp. 441–835; specifically disp. 39, art. 2, p. 458 ¶4. Further in note 14 following.

13. *Treatise on Angels*, disp. 42, art. 1, p. 628 ¶20.

14. Poinsot, *loc. cit.*, disp. 42, ¶20: Sanctus Dionysius "in his quae de Angelis traduntur praefertur aliis: quia, ut dicit S. Thomas (in II, D. 10, q. 1, a. 2 [italic emphases added to Aquinas citations]), '*discipilus Pauli fuit, et dicitur ejus visiones scripsisse*'; et sic (in eodem II *ad Annibald*. dist. 9, a. 1 ad 5) modum assignandi ordines in Angelis, quem Dionysius tradit, veriorem dicit: '*Quia Dionysius*, inquit, *ab Apostolo immediate accepit*.'" Or again (disp. 45, art. 2, p. 829 ¶2): "Et hoc communiter tenent omnes scholastici: quia doctrina Dionysii, in hac parte, . . . quae de Angelis docuit, a D. Paulo et ab Apostolis videtur accepisse."

In all of this, St. Thomas says that we can reach the highest reality, the knowledge of God, only through signs. The Catholic Church, indeed, the Christian Church, Catholic or non-Catholic, is nothing if not a sacramental structure. The elements of such a structure are all signs. So, what I am waiting for is the inevitable time when theologians will wake up to semiotics. But that the whole development can be said to be rooted in a metaphysical vision of the coextensiveness of communication and being, of this vast interconnected universe of self-communicating beings (such as Thomas Aquinas had as Fr. Clarke describes it) using the universal medium of sign-language such a universe generates, presents the possibility for a Thomism beyond Neothomism, if you catch my meaning.

I would like to say that in *modern* Thomism, Neothomism, the biggest mistake that they made was to equate the *ens primum cognitum* of St. Thomas with *ens reale*. I noticed that each of the commentators spoke of the division between "real being" and "mental being", and that is a way of speaking that is, in the matter at issue, semiotically hopeless.[15] What St. Thomas called *ens rationis* cannot be rendered mental being, as if *ens rationis* were a *passio animae*, a psychological condition, a subjective state. Because *ens reale* and *ens rationis* arise (or separate themselves!) within the *primum cognitum* as equally objective. Who thinks that the boundary between Texas and Oklahoma is a mental being? It is an irreducibly public objective reality; and when the human animal as a rational animal wakes up to the world of being, it wakes up to a world wherein mind-dependent relations are inextricably interwoven with mind-independent relations, at the terminus of which interweave are presented within experience *objects*, not merely or even primarily "things", but priests and witches and policemen and bishops and imams, etc. That is the tangle or mix which the human animal as philosopher, as scientist, as theologian, has to begin to commence to start to sort out in terms of "what is real".

Fr. Ashley mentioned in his remarks the "dead-end of transcendentalism" for Thomism. But I am not so sure that transcendentalism is quite as dead an end as he thinks, because the simple matter is, as St. Thomas points out, that things are per se sensible, but they have to be *made* intelligible, and it seems to me that that is the insight out of which Transcendental Thomism grows. I don't consider myself a Transcendental Thomist, but then I never call myself any other kind of "Thomist" either, not because of a lack of respect for

15. So deeply was the nineteenth century psychologistic approach embedded in the Neothomistic stance toward *entia rationis* that, as late as the published version of the bilingual text of Poinsot's *Tractatus de Signis* in 1985, I occasionally allowed "mental" as an alternative for "mind-dependent". It is the one feature of the translation I came later to wish could be undone.

St. Thomas but out of excess respect: I have not read *enough* of St. Thomas, even though I have read *more* of him than probably a majority of people in this room. Needed is a Thomism, if we are to speak of the future of this great tradition,[16] where Thomas can be freed from the ghetto of Catholicism, freed from the Catholicism of the Council of Trent, freed of all the modern oppositions; we need a *global* St. Thomas, a Thomas who is free to be seen by *all* as as great as he is—the equal and sometimes surpasser of Hegel, Augustine, Aristotle, and Plato, and so on. And I think that semiotics provides one vehicle, the first *de jure* postmodern vehicle, in fact, for doing this.

So my whole book, the thousand page book, I tell you, is an attempt to define the correct meaning for philosophy of the term "postmodern". And that idea I got from the Pope's queries on the meaning for philosophy of postmodern in his *Fides et Ratio* encyclical, ¶92, which I read at the provocation of my friend Ralph McInerny when I had already written the main part of the book, to discover that the book was an answer to the Pope's own question: How need we divide the periods in the history of philosophy in order to make sense of the postmodern?—but always mindful of the specter of Hegel who wound up in his analysis of the development of the state with, oddly enough, the Prussian state at exactly when Hegel was alive; so I tell you that the book, *Four Ages of Understanding*, has an express section early on where it says "There will no doubt be a Fifth Age".

16. What Sebeok, in his last book, *Global Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), pp. xvii–xviii, referred to (if somewhat anachronistically) as "the Dominican sub-tradition" within semiotics, "deriving retroactively from Aristotle, then, via Aquinas, Poinsot, and Maritain, to engaged contemporaries like Herculano de Carvalho, Beuchot, Deely, and others."

Open Discussion

Symposium Chair Douglas Rasmussen: Thank you, John. The floor is now open for questions. The best thing to do is for the questioner to address whomever they want, and if someone wants to make a comment to keep it brief. Fr. Ashley?

Benedict Ashley: I don't want to get into the Pseudo-Dionysius thing, because I don't like him either. I just don't think he was a forger.

Deely interjection: No. He was a fraud.

Ashley: However, I agree with John that this question of the *primum cognitum* is really the point I was trying to make, that the *primum cognitum* is a confusion of the mental, or rather the mind-dependent, and the mind-independent, because we know we know something, and we know we know it. So that there is a mixture of our consciousness of the object and the fact that we are conscious. That's where Descartes gets into the whole thing. The trouble is that, as we try to clear up that confusion, the only way we can do it is to look at the part that is most obvious. You can only get from confusion to clarity by looking in the confused mess for the part that is clear, or clearer. Now what's clearer is not that I'm thinking, as Descartes said, but it's the sensible object.

Deely intervention: What if the sensible object is a witch?

Ashley: Well, I believe that there are witches. However, that isn't a sensible object that I'm ordinarily dealing with.

Deely: It's a perceptual object, an object to sense perception.

Ashley: Well, I grant, you see, that the two things are always there together. But one of them is clearer than the other, and you have to work back from the clearer to the less clear. So to get out of this problem we're in we have to start from these ordinary sensible things like this [picks up ashtray] and then work back to some kind of understanding of what it is to know sensibly and of what it is to know intellectually. And then the fact that this implies the existence of spiritual beings as well as sensible beings. And if we let go

of that loop of going from the more certain to the less certain then we get into utter confusion, we fall back into the confusion.

I don't think John Deely denies that in the book, in fact I think he really is saying that throughout; but that's the point to my mind that we have to be very clear about.

Frank Oppenheim, Xavier University: This is really a question to John, but the other three are involved. In attempting to answer Fr. Clarke's question whether the communications with physical being is acknowledged by Peirce and the whole American school of semiotics — I'm a neophyte in Peirce, I've waded through the six volumes of the *Writings* and other things, but I certainly don't know Peirce the way I know other American writers — to what extent, John, do you think that Peirce, with his three categories rising out of phenomena, has grasped being. Now, he will say that phenomena have a substrate in them which, by determining the phenomena to be the kind of phenomena you encounter, is itself a phenomenon, but a latent phenomenon. So he's got a double there in the phenomena. My question is, is Peirce still caught by Kantianism? Or has he really rejected Kant?

Deely: He's really rejected Kant. Peirce makes it very clear that he distinguishes himself from the Pragmatists, Dewey and James in particular; and he would do it with even greater vehemence if he were aware of the work of Rorty which has developed after. And the American philosophers, I find, are very, very resistant to facing up to this. Because really to understand Peirce you've got to learn Latin, one of his main sources for the doctrine of signs; and, in order to accept the trajectory of development Peirce envisioned for pragmaticism and, more generally, semiotics, you've also got to repudiate to a great extent the development of distinctively American philosophy.

Oppenheim: You mean James and Dewey.

Deely: Yes, and you know the presentation of Peirce by Menand in *The Metaphysical Club* is a complete distortion as far as Peirce is concerned.[1] Peirce asks "How does my position, Pragmaticism, differ from Pragmatism?" And he answers, "Simply in this. That Scholastic Realism is of the essence of Pragmaticism, whereas every version of Pragmatism after my original version is still compatible with Nominalism." Now, in the medieval world, where they developed the (modern) distinction between *ens reale* and *ens rationis*, I don't think that it is fully appreciated that what Kant did is put *ens reale* under erasure. This, *ens*

1. See Louis Menand, *The Metaphysical Club* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001). A wonderful book, but no place to learn Peirce.

reale, is the (modern) unknowable; the central unknowable of the Kantian system. So you have three great systems of categories developed in the history of philosophy. The original scheme of Aristotle was an attempt to enumerate the irreducible kinds of mind-independent being, the ways in which being about which you can make univocal statements can exist independently of the mind — that's Aristotle's list of categories. The categories of Kant, by contrast, are categories of mind-dependent being, because they can't be categories of anything else (nothing else is knowable!). That's why, by the way, though you often hear his name mispronounced with a long ā in "Kant", the name should be pronounced as "can't", because you can't know the soul, you can't know the world, you can't know God — in a word, you can't know anything of the order of mind-independent being, *ens reale*, beyond the fact that it is *as* unknowable, "under erasure". In the case of Peirce, by contrast, what makes his move postmodern is the fact that he has the first system of categories which is designed to account for neither *ens reale* nor *ens rationis*, but rather for the way that the mind-dependent and mind-independent constitute together the fabric of human experience.

Oppenheim: So you are answering Norris Clarke's question by saying that Peirce does have the input from the physical into the creation of the sign.

Deely: In fact that is the biggest resistance to Peirce within semiotics with people even like Sebeok who want to say that semiotics is coextensive only with life, while Peirce wants to say it's coextensive with *being*. The thing that is distinctive about the action of signs that Peirce brings out is that, unlike physical interaction, where, if I want to run my car into a tree I need a car and I need a tree, in the action of signs you may have a sign that says "Bridge out", but there doesn't even have to be a bridge, and if there is a bridge it doesn't necessarily have to be out. So wherever you have an influence of the future upon the present you are dealing with an action of signs; but when you have an influence on the present of the future that very influence also restructures the whole pertinence of the past. So I personally have come to think, 'slow by slow', that semiosis is going to displace the notion of evolution as the best way to understand the development of the universe as a whole.

Rasmussen: Or you get into the whole idea that cultural evolution has to be a part of evolution, a sub-set of semiosis.

Deely: Culture after all is just a human expression of nature.

Rasmussen: We have four questions. Yes.

Paul Richard Blum, Loyola Baltimore: I observe that sometime toward the end to the seventeenth century, I can give you the reference, it occurs that authors

call the *ens rationis* rather *ens rationale*, which, when you look at the text, reveals that they don't know anymore what an *ens rationis* is as opposed to *ens reale*. That's very interesting to observe.

Deely: Who says that?

Blum: I can give you the reference in detail.[2] I observed that. It was not the major focus of my studies, but I observed it. Now, that's a small detail. But, look, Jan Patočka, in his paper on the theory of the post-European state of our culture, that he wrote in the 1960s,[3] says that the major divide in the history of philosophy is not between Aristotelianism versus Platonism, but between Aristotelico-Platonism, on the one hand, and Epicureanism, on the other hand, the one strain distinguished by the care for the soul, "Sorge für die Seele" — he wrote that in German; the other is what we can broadly call Materialism. Now it interesting that in this case, that middle case where they start misunderstanding *ens rationis*, that they are actually materializing or reifying the *ens rationis*, and by that depriving it of its momentum to bridge between reality and thought.

Tim Noone, Catholic University: I would like you to take off on Ockham, in this respect. Ockham works out a complete theory of signs, and he was the first one in the history of Western philosophy to want that sign theory to do service for elements of ontology. He wants a very sparse ontology, then he gives an extremely complex system of signs. I would just like to hear your reaction to that. Particularly I'm thinking of the *Summa Logicae*, of course.

John Deely: In the beginning, when the Greeks were speaking of the *semeion*, they were thinking of a particular class of sensible phenomena you can point to. Then, when Augustine expands this to include cultural phenomena, he's still thinking of

2. Bernardus a S. Theresia, *Quaestiones logicae* (Salisburgi, 1682), qu. 1, art 1: "Nota quod Ens rationis in communi tantum secundario pertinet ad Metaphysicam . . . ratio est quia habet passiones tantum per analogiam ad Ens reale, et consequenter est tantum scibile per Ens rationale, Ens rationis autem logicum, sive secunda intentio habet passiones absolute ei convenientes sine analogia ad Ens reale, unde primario pertinet ad logicam." See further Paul Richard Blum, *Philosophenphilosophie und Schulphilosophie—Typen des Philosophierens in der Neuzeit* (= Studia Leibnitiana Sonderheft 27; Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1998), chap. 4.1. To which Blum in his e-mail dated December 4, 2002, added as a gloss: "Now it seems my memory cheated me. Ens rationale might refer to mind—but I am not sure, because that would entail that mind is opposed to real being, and that is quite a strong statement for a thomist as Bernardus tries to be."

3. Jan Patočka (1907–1977), in his "Europa und Nacheuropa" of 1964, trans. as "Europe and the European Heritage until the End of the Nineteenth Century" in *Heretical essays in the philosophy of history* (including Paul Ricoeur's preface to the French ed.), ed. James Dodd, trans. Erazim Kohák (Chicago: Open Court, 1996) from the Czech original *Kacírské eseje o filozofii dejin* (München: K. Jadrný, 1980) (for more details see the Translator's Postscript to the English edition of heretical essays).

sensible phenomena you can hear, point to, see. When the later Scholastics after St. Thomas, in particular the followers of Ockham, introduced the distinction between signs as formal and instrumental, they're still thinking of particular things. Because what they are calling "formal signs" are what we would today call psychological states. The "passiones animae", the passions of the soul, those are what they mean by formal signs. When Ockham speaks of signs that's what he's speaking of, mainly subjective cognitive conditions or states of the soul, "concepts in the mind". These can be cognitive or they can be affective, but they usually thought of them in terms of the cognitive states.[4] Now the reason why Ockham doesn't really have an effective theory of the sign is easy to state. If what a sign is *is* a triadic relationship (not just a relationship, but a triadic relationship), and because it's a relationship it partakes of the subjective indifference characteristic of all relationships, then, the explicit achievement of that realization marks the first time where you transcend and finally grasp that a sign is not a class of things or a class of objects among other objects. What a sign is, and the definition that I think is the best definition of the sign that can be given at this point of our understanding is: A sign is what every object presupposes. The difference between an object and a thing is that a thing exists whether or not we know it, and may or may not be an object. Conversely, an object may or may not be a thing, but what every object must have is that it exists at least on the basis of a relation to a knower. So the object as object distinct from a thing always exists as the terminus of a relation. That's why the object is always public in principle, you know, and that's why this analysis of the sign demands a re-definition of objectivity as anything that exists as known regardless of its ontological status. And subjectivity is simply everything that separates you from the rest of the universe. Ockham's signs are completely subjective.

Tim Noone: But they would have to be, otherwise you don't have a reduction to ontology. That's the move. That's why he's sort of picked on.

John Deely: But then also Gilson was of the opinion that it's almost impossible to define Nominalism. I came to think that there are two forms of Nominalism. There is the loose sense, which is the fact that people often use words when they don't know what they are talking about, a nominalism in which everyone participates at some time. But strictly what Nominalism is, philosophically, is the denial that there are any relations except relations constituted by the mind. That's the essence of Nominalism as a philosophical doctrine; that was Ockham's position, and that's why he is as solipsistic as Kant in the end.

4. This imbalance, I think, has a fair chance of being corrected in the near-term development of semiotics: see my remarks on cathexis in "A Sign Is *What*?", pp. 718–19, 728 note 63, 732 text and note 82.

Tim Noone: Yeah. OK. Good.

Robert McLaughlin: John, I haven't got your book yet. I have to get a packmule first to move it from the bookstore to my office. But I have the packmule on order. A couple of things about this monumental task here. Aristotle seems to incline to think more of a relational property; I think Bertrand Russell was the first to think of relation as an entity. I wonder if there's a big difference there between relation and a relational property?

John Deely: Since you're the only person in the room who doesn't yet own the book, I can only say that Russell was the first to think of relation as a suprasubjective *entity*, but the thing that Russell left out that Aristotle rightly insisted upon is that the relation always *depends upon* some subjective characteristic. This "dependence upon the subjective" in the being of relation, in fact, is so strong in Aristotle that, I would go so far as to say, it has misled the majority of his readers over the centuries since who have failed to see that such a dependency yet lies outside the being proper to relation insofar as it constitutes a category *distinct* from subjectivity of every kind. A categorial relation based on quantity or quality can come and go with the physical being of its terminus, without the quantity or quality on which the relation was based being in any way subjectively affected. When a quantity or quality, an action or passion, *does* sustain a relation, for the duration of that relation the quantity or quality in question can be said to be a "relational property",[5] but it cannot properly be said to *be* the founded relation. Should you care to verify the extent to which the misreading of Aristotle on the subject of relation has confused even the best studies of his thought, I can do no better than to have you read for yourself the great work of Grote, wherein the *relational property* on which relations subjectively depend (a doctrine which the later Latins, Poinsot above all, would later subsume under the term "transcendental relation" or *relatio secundum dici*, which is not a relation at all but the context presupposed for a relation to be or be understood) becomes the whole doctrine,[6] and *relations themselves* as suprasubjective and irreducible to their subjective foundations or ground disappear, undermining in fact the whole categorial scheme as Aristotle otherwise envisaged it as resting on substance as upon *aliquid absolutum*, as it were. Indeed, Russell did not fall into the trap of confusing relations with

5. See note 17, p. 64 below.

6. See George Grote, *Aristotle*, posthumous ed. by Alexander Bain and G. Croom Robinson (London: J. Murray, 1872), 2 vols. Discussion in John Deely, "From 'σημειον' to 'signum' to 'sign': 'Translating' *sign* from Greek to Latin to English", in *Essays in Translation, Pragmatics and Semiotics*, ed. Irmeli Helin (Helsinki, Finland: University of Helsinki Press, 2002), pp. 129–172, esp. Sec. 3.1, pp. 142–145.

"relational properties", but into another trap entirely, namely, the trap of thinking of relations as entities floating around on their own just because of their indifference to being and nonbeing in our thinking and experience of them. He latched onto the indifference and irreducibility distinctive of relations, while misunderstanding their need even as irreducible for a subjective anchoring at least in the *passiones animae*.

Douglas Rasmussen: Well John, just on that point, . . . (to McLaughlin): Go ahead.

Robert McLaughlin: Just one more point. The question of realism is very important here. I think that that's what Fr. Clarke is worried about. And it seems to me that maybe there's a confluence with some literature coming out of Analytic Philosophy. It seems to me that if you look at Ryle, if you look at the later Wittgenstein, you look at Austin, what you're getting is a general house-cleaning of sense-data theory, of problems of other minds, all of that stuff, and you're getting a sense of a type of realism which now, it seems to me, is coming out—I cut Putnam a little slack here: his later stuff which I'm seeing now on Aristotle ends in discussion of form, which goes back to Fr. Clarke's worry. If you read Haldane, too, and I know you have, and also it seems to me the issue there of formal cause is coming out; so it seems to me there's a confluence here out of a tradition which is not seen often to be sympathetic to the issues that you've talked about. You're getting now even from Analytic Philosophy a question of realism and then the discussion of form. And if I read Haldane correctly, and Putnam, and John McDowell also, efficient cause isn't going to handle knowledge. It seems to me that you have to have a formal cause.

John Deely: If you ask the question, How do signs work? John of St. Thomas, Poinsot, who analyzed this more than anyone else, winds up with seven (or eight, depending on how you count them[7]) kinds of cause, starting from the original four of Aristotle; but the original four will only serve to explain the *ens mobile* of which Fr. Ashley is so enamored. But how we can know this *ens mobile* requires the distinction of final cause to be subdivided into intrinsic and extrinsic, you have formal cause similarly divided, and then extrinsic formal cause *further* subdivided into exemplary and specificative. And I wonder how many there are

7. See, in the *Four Ages*, p. 633n73, which gives the original four causes (efficient, material, formal, final: four), then adds extrinsic to formal and final (six), further dividing formal extrinsic into exemplary and specificative (eight). But since extrinsic final only adds one to the original four (bringing the total to five), the division of extrinsic formal into exemplary and specificative adds to that five only two, giving *seven* as the final count of irreducible types, actually the more accurate manner of making the count.

who are even aware of, let alone understand, that last distinction. I once wrote an essay intended to show that the action of signs involved a causality that is not restricted to the living world.[8] On a later occasion, I expanded upon and extended this analysis under the title "How Does Semiosis Effect Renvoi?"[9] Both of these analsyes, the first retitled as "How Do Signs Work?", the latter abbreviated simply to "Renvoi", were published again as Chapters 6 and 8, respectively, in my 1994 book also published by the University of Toronto Press, *New Beginnings: Early Modern Philosophy and Postmodern Thought*.

Derek Jeffries, University of Wisconsin: You had an example of the border between Oklahoma and Texas. I wasn't quite sure what were you trying to illustrate there. Were you saying that we don't have a distinction between, say, *esse intentionale* and *esse reale*?

Norris Clarke: That's a mind-dependent kind of a thing. And yet it's public.

John Deely: The boundary between Texas and Oklahoma, which is extremely important if you are fleeing the Texas Rangers, is public reality, but it is not a reality in the same sense that the earth makes a revolution around the sun. So how do you explain the public character of these things that are entirely the creation of the mind? It's not mental, it's not some mental fiction, you see.

There used to be a philosopher at the University of Wisconsin, Julius Weinberg, who published there a little book titled *Abstraction, Relation, and Induction*,[10] which was the first thing that really got me on the track of this. Because in that book Weinberg pointed out that, you know, people think that philosophers can't agree on anything, but all of the modern philosophers without exception—this is almost unbelievable—Hobbes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Descartes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Leibniz, Kant, all agree that there are no relations independently of the activity of the mind. And that's the essence of nominalism.

Derek Jeffries: I never knew him.

Stan Harrison, Marquette University: Well, the relation between New Mexico and Texas certainly is not independent of the mind.

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8. "Semiotics and Biosemiotics: Are Sign-Science and Life-Science Coextensive?", in *Biosemiotics. The Semiotic Web 1991*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok and Jean Umiker-Sebeok (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), 45–75.

9. This was the Thomas A. Sebeok Fellowship Inaugural Lecture delivered at the 18th Annual Meeting of the Semiotic Society of America, October 22, 1993, St. Louis, MO; published in *The American Journal of Semiotics* 11.1–2 (1994), 11–61.

10. See Julius R. Weinberg, *Abstraction, Relation, and Induction* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), esp. "The Concept of Relation: Some Observations on Its History", pp. 61–119.

John Deely: It's not independent of the mind, but it's not mental. Where does it exist?

Fr. Ashley: Listen, back in Oklahoma we had a war once. They had the troops drawn up . . .

Stan Harrison: You can get a map to figure out where it exists. You're using the term existence now in a very different way. It's not an existent individual thing. It has a kind of reality, but it's not a reality which is independent of the minds who say that it's there.

Douglas Rasmussen: This is the question that I want to get on the table. I always thought that the distinction between *ens reale* and *ens rationis* was not mind-independent and mind-dependent but independent of cognition by the mind, or dependent on cognition by the mind.[11] So that, in a way, . . .

Stan Harrison: That's why the border example doesn't clarify that particular point. The border example is not a reality that's independent of cognition . . .

Douglas Rasmussen: No, it's not a reality that's independent of a human cognition, but it's objective . . .

Stan Harrison: It's not independent of the human decision to say that it's there . . .

Douglas Rasmussen: Yeah, but see that's independent of *my* decision. The border wouldn't be where it is if I had my way.

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11. The justice of Rasmussen's observation may call to the sophisticated reader's mind the discussion of terms in the Editorial AfterWord to the critical edition of Poinsot's 1632 *Treatise on Signs* published by the University of California Press in 1985, pp. 465–66 in particular: "the standard translation of *ens reale* as 'real being' obscures the fact that *ens reale-ens rationis* is a distinction of two sorts of being, each having some 'reality', though of very different kinds, the former having existence independently of being apprehended in cognition, while the latter owes its existence precisely to being thus apprehended. It is a problem of drawing a contrast between two sorts of being both of which are 'real'—members of a class R possessing and not possessing property P, as it were; so no 'translation' that obscures or avoids this problem should be accepted.

"The prevalence of this poor translation in English writings is all the more astonishing in view of the fact that there is no doubt as to the signification of *ens reale*: what exists independently of being known by a finite mind. Mind-independent being at once suggests itself as a shorthand rendering of this notion. The correlative rendering for *ens rationis* in that case would be mind-dependent being, with the caveat that this rendering is open to misunderstanding in a number of ways, for, as our author observes in the 'First Preamble' to the *Treatise* (at 48/1–22 [=285a19–43]), there are several senses in which something can be said to be 'dependent upon the mind', and only one of these strictly speaking answers to the notion of *ens rationis*, namely, that of being entirely dependent as an object upon cognitive activity for existing."

Stan Harrison: I understand your distinction, but I don't think that that example serves to drive home the point that John was trying to make.

John Deely: What's the point that I was trying to make? The point I am trying to make is that objective experience cannot be reduced to the physical realities of the world, and that many of these things that are part of our objective experience, such as the witches that we no longer burn because our ancestors got 'em all. . . . The point I want to make is that the order of experience concerns a public world which is a mixture of beings which exist independently of cognition and beings which exist only in and through cognition, and that we can't always tell the difference in direct experience.

Stan Harrison: That's the point that James harps upon a very great deal. If I may, let me come back to that question that ties in with what Fr. Oppenheim was asking. If you're going to talk about Peirce's ontology here in that physical vision which is operating in Peirce — the extent to which it is the same as Aquinas is perhaps not too clear — what about the fact that Peirce once declared his vision as an Objective Idealism?[12] This is the issue now. It's not Hegel, but it's something else here. These beings which are said to be self-communicating, what are they for Peirce finally besides, if you will, the reification of mind? Each one is supposed to be . . . — he's rejecting the noumenal; so for him whatever is, is knowable, and the one self-intelligible thing *is* mind. And yet you have the element of Secondness, which is the only thing that in a way saves Peirce from being an Absolute Idealist. But these beings which are self-communicating, whether they are inanimate or animate, what are they finally?

Frank Oppenheim: Minded beings. That's what he calls them.

Norris Clarke: Mind-independent beings?

Frank Oppenheim: *Minded* beings, beings emitting signs.

John Deely: Peirce was neglected and passed over for a long time. When they first tried seriously to understand his thought, for example, when they did the *Collected Papers*, they dismembered Peirce, and they organized, or reorganized his papers around the then-existing categories of philosophical analysis and their ideas of metaphysics. What really Peirce was all about was this business of semiosis and semiotics, and as a result Hartshorne and Weiss as his first editors

12. The reference is to CP 6.25, dating from 1891: "The one intelligible theory of the universe is that of objective idealism, that matter is effete mind, inveterate habits becoming physical laws. But before this can be accepted it must show itself capable of explaining the tri-dimensionality of space, the laws of motion, and the general characteristics of the universe, with mathematical clearness and precision; for no less should be demanded of every philosophy."

made a place for this enormous industry that goes on to this day and for the foreseeable future of trying to reconstruct how Peirce's papers stood prior to those first editors getting their hands on them. I wrote the Preface called "Membra Ficte Disjecta" for the Intelex electronic edition of the Harvard *Collected Papers*, an expression I got from Ralph Powell: you take a body and chop it up, then throw the pieces every which way. That's my metaphor for the *Collected Papers of Charles Peirce*. There's no doubt that Peirce had a hell of a time classifying himself in terms of the realism/idealism opposition, precisely because of the absolutely startling point that Poinsot first brought to light in his saying that, when it comes to the question of the sign, you have to deal with relation, and as soon as you are dealing with relation you are dealing with a standpoint that cannot be determinately located in *ens reale* or *ens rationis*, because relation in its very nature is indifferent to both.[13] And that's the point of view from which Peirce was working with his understanding of signs as presupposed for our awareness of objects and their difference from things, and especially of signs as *consisting in* triadic relations irreducibly suprasubjective. That's why I end up my book with a section titled "Beyond Realism and Idealism".[14]

Douglas Rasmussen, Chair: I have a question. You contended that intentionality is entirely derivative from this account of relation, and of course the idea here is that you are saying that relation is a way of being that is not reducible to any of the other accidents and that needs to be recognized as such, or that ultimately the distinction between formal and material signs and all of that just doesn't get off the ground. Now I also understand the contention to be that such relations as "north of", "south of", and "father of", are indeed truly relations and not reducible either. But there's nothing about "north of" or "south of" or "father of" that intend us to something else. In knowing that relation I don't automatically know something other. So it seems to me that there is more to the intentional character of the concept and the proposition and the argument than just them being accountable as having the way of being of a relation. There has to be something more. Or what have I got wrong, John?

John Deely: Well, I don't know that you have anything wrong. But when you say "north of", the question is "North of *what*?"

Douglas Rasmussen: Well there's "north of", "south of", and "father of". Milwaukee is north of Chicago. Cincinnati is south of Detroit. And Ethan Rasmussen is the father of Douglas Rasmussen.

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13. Exactly the point of departure for Poinsot's *Tractatus* on signs — Book I, Question 1, 117/20–118/18, esp. 118/7–14.

14. The "Resumé and Envoi" to the *Four Ages*, pp. 735–742.

Norris Clarke: But "the cause of" one is much stronger than the north-south examples.

Douglas Rasmussen: But what I want to know is, are "north of" and "south of" and "father of" *truly* relations.

John Deely: St. Thomas' paradigm case of an *ens rationis* is being to the right of the pillar. If you are trying to stalk a prey, it's very important to know if it's to the right or the left of the pillar. But whether it's to the right or the left depends entirely on your point of view.

Douglas Rasmussen: Agreed. But I thought your point about the ontological nature of relation was that you are, without denying the older way of real versus logical relations, trying to get beyond it by pointing out that there is a way of being relations have that is indifferent to what the terms are, whether the terms be in the mind or not.

Norris Clarke: That's too strong, I think.

Benedict Ashley: But it's got to be triadic. There's got to be the interpretant.

Douglas Rasmussen: That's my point, then. Fr. Ashley said there's got to be the interpreter . . .

Fr. Ashley: No, the interpretant. That gives an intentionality.

Douglas Rasmussen: Well, I guess what I'm trying to get at is what John said here: "Intentionality is entirely derivative" from this point about relations.[15] Do you want to stick with the word "entirely"?

John Deely: I do, because what the difference is with intentional relations as such is in cognitive states rather than in the relations themselves consequent upon cognitive states;[16] and I think that what eventuates, as far as concerns semiotics, is equally true in affective states as in cognitive states. So what's true of psychological states in general, *passiones animae*, is that they can't exist without relating us to something other than themselves, even though that something other than themselves that they relate us to may no longer exist. And that's what differentiates them: that the relation consequent upon them is necessary rather than contingent.[17] So what differentiates

15. See above, p. 44, text and note 5.

16. Another way to put this, that might better satisfy Professor Rasmussen's concerns in this area, could be to say that "intentionality is parasitic upon" rather than "entirely derivative from" the being proper to ontological relations. But this consideration did not occur to me until afterwards.

17. Poinsot puts the matter thus (1643: 641 ¶16): "similitudo relativa exigit quidem naturam utriusque extremi, eorumque praesentiam, ut completa sit; similitudo autem intentionalis et repraesentativa hoc non exigit: quia non fundatur in convenientia naturae et exsistentiae [sic]

the psychological states is that they are subjective characteristics which necessarily give rise to a relation, whereas other subjective characteristics found relations only contingently upon the material existence of the terminus of the relation.[18] So you can debate whether you're still a son in one sense if your father is dead, or is your father still a father if you're dead—but we know you're not dead, are you?

Norris Clarke: I don't think you can say it is totally indifferent to the two terms. I think there are different kinds of relations. You have to hold on to that.

John Deely: In order to specify the different kinds of relations you have to bring in the terms, and in order to avoid Russell's free-floating "entities".

Peter Redpath: You're talking about intentionality in terms of triadic relations.

John Deely: I'm also thinking of things like two lovers on their way to meet, having set out at 18:30 coming from opposite sides of the city, when at 18:45 a meteor comes and kills the young woman. So from 18:45 to 19:00, what is the guy going to meet? What was a real relation became an unreal relation at that moment. But as far as his experience went it continued to be just as real. St. Thomas says that to make people remember things you should choose examples that are either bizarre or concerned with sex.

Peter Redpath: Or related to bizarre sex.

John Deely: And on that note . . .

Douglas Rasmussen: Did you think that in this whole conversation the last word would be bizarre sex?

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extremorum; immo . . . per speciem intentionalem potest repraesentari res absens et non existens: . . . et tamen similitudo speciei, loquendo de similitudine relativa, tunc non est completa: quia sicut res futura . . . nec res praeterita habet naturam, nec existentiam, per quam assimiletur illi".

18. This matter of the manner in which the terminus of a relation exists correlative with the fundament of the relation is a point as subtle as it is crucial for the full understanding of objectivity such as the doctrine of signs requires. This was why I added Article 5 of Poinsot's original treatment of relation in his *Cursus Philosophicus* to the electronic edition of his *Tractatus de Signis*: see my "Editor's Introduction to the Electronic Edition", ¶24 (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex Corp., 1992). But the point is central and difficult enough to demand treatment in a monograph of its own, a task I have undertaken in my book titled *Purely Objective Reality*, which I fully expect 'slow by slow' to modify the common English usage currently derived from purely modern philosophical thought

Afterword

Reading over the transcription of the occasion, there are inevitably thoughts of more lines the discussion might have taken than time made possible. Since the purpose of this little work is not to bring to light possibilities so much as to illumine what happened on the actual occasion, I want to restrict myself here to two points that came to light in the occasion but to which I think an added comment here would be particularly useful for those who followed the discussion thus far. And I want to address some remarks directly to Dr. Redpath's paper, since it hardly came to figure in the discussion at the time.

Fr. Clarke shrewdly noted,[1] despite his own characteristically Neothomist primary focus on "a realistic theory of knowledge", that "Deely himself seems to assign more importance to the emergence of a general theory of signs". There is a reason for this, and it lies in the main difference that, sooner or later, will strike any serious student who makes a comparison of the doctrine of relation as debated in the texts of the medieval philosophical tradition as "realist" and that same doctrine as Poinsot incorporates it in meeting the requirements of a doctrine of signs.[2] Whereas the highest order of relation considered from any traditional Aristotelian or Thomistic perspective[3] is relation mind-independent according to the way it has being, the semiotic point of view requires a higher standpoint still, namely, the standpoint of relation according to the way it has being *regardless* of whether that being is realized mind-dependently or mind-independently. This crucial difference is what renders so much of the discussion of relation as a category of mind-independent being only indirectly relevant to the central development of the foundations of semiotic, a point to which I could not help but think Peter Redpath needed to pay more attention, even though even the extended

1. See p. 23 above.

2. See my "Editor's Introduction to the Electronic Edition" of the *Tractatus de Signis*, ¶27.

3. "Realist", if you like, though I have tried to make plain in the *Four Ages* that the modern sense of the term, including the Neothomist sense, is only anachronistically applied either to ancient Greek times or to the Latin middle ages: see the Index entry for "Realism" in the *Four Ages*, p. 975.

traditional discussion is certainly useful when reconsidered from the vantage of the doctrine of signs understood according to its own requirements.

Once the principal focus has thus been shifted from subjectivity to suprasubjectivity, moreover, I am not so sure that Fr. Clarke is right to say that "Thomas' own primary focus" is on the concept or "formal sign as the key to a realistic theory of knowledge". That was indeed Maritain's primary focus as a Neothomistic realist in writing *The Degrees of Knowledge*.[4] But Maritain himself, as I have shown in detail,[5] never quite got to the bottom of Poinsot's theory of sign in general. And as for St. Thomas, his own main application of the doctrine of relation was not to the concept and theory of knowledge but to the understanding of how there can be three persons in one God,[6] an understanding which Poinsot showed to turn on the very point unique to relation as a mode of being that makes possible a unified doctrine of signs—or, to say the same thing conversely, the ontological feature of relation that gives rise to semiosis, both within and prior to the living world.

In St. Thomas' own day, the philosophical sciences were determinately either speculative or practical. When the middle moderns came up with the distinction between epistemology and ontology, the Neothomists,[7] as comparatively late moderns, felt obliged to enter the debate more or less on these terms. It was not entirely comfortable. Medieval metaphysics, as a speculative science, was determinately restricted to *ens reale*. But, in order to accommodate epistemology as a part of metaphysics, some accommodation with *ens rationis* had to be made. For the most part, this was accomplished simply by dismissing *ens rationis* under the rubric of subjectivity, though some exception had to be made for logical relations. It was a Brazilian bagunça.[8]

What happens when the standpoint proper to semiotics is adopted is analogous to what happened when St. Thomas adopted the standpoint proper to theology: a new perspective opens up which is neither speculative only nor practical only but inclusive of both. But whereas the new perspective in *the case of theology* presupposes revelation, in *the case of semiotics* presupposed is only the uniqueness of relation as indifferent to realization in the order of what is or is not independently of cognition constituting the objective as such

4. See "Appendix I: The Concept", in Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge*, trans. under the supervision of Gerald B. Phelan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 387–417.

5. See John Deely, "Semiotic in the Thought of Jacques Maritain", *Recherche Sémiotique/ Semiotic Inquiry* 6.2 (1986), pp. 1–30.

6. See pp. 45–46 above.

7. The inevitability and cental import of this designation I have tried to suggest in the *Four Ages*, p. 342n200.

8. "Bagunça": Portuguese for, roughly, a mess

in its difference from physical being,[9] a "fact", in short, in contrast to a "belief". Semiotics is not modern epistemology, but neither is it modern ontology.[10] Hardly surprising that this is taking a while to sink in.

Douglas Rasmussen, constrained by his duties as Chair, I was afraid got short shrift (by force of circumstance and default of position only — 90 percent police work, 10 percent or less scholarly, as he said[11]) for his typically penetrating concern over why the doctrine of relations should be more central for semiotic than even the doctrine of intentionality.[12] To try to address his concern more justly, I would like to summarize here the considerations which led me to enhance the coverage of relation for the Intelex electronic version of the text of Poinsot's *Tractatus de Signis* that I had published with the University of California Press.[13]

The key theoretical point that I have tried to emphasize within semiotics, and that I wrote the *Four Ages* to demonstrate for philosophy as a whole, is not only that relation constitutes the mode of being common to the orders of mind-dependent and mind-independent being, but also that (perhaps even more fundamentally for understanding the nature of experience as the ground of human knowledge) relations constitute the whole of objectivity in whatever of it differs in principle from the order of physical reality. For the division of being into mind-independent and mind-dependent (or *ens reale* and *ens rationis*) remains a division of being as *terminating* our awareness, while the division of relation into mind-independent and mind-dependent (or *relatio realis* and *relatio rationis*) can be taken also as a division of being as *constituting* our awareness from within. Let me see if I can get this point across.

Recall that, in accordance with the state of development of philosophical tradition at the time of his writing, Poinsot regarded two subjects as necessary preambles to the discussion of semiotic doctrine: namely, mind-dependent being (*ens rationis*) *and* relation (*relatio*), in accordance with which regard his treatment of these two subjects became, in order, the First and Second Preambles to the first independent edition of his *Tractatus*. But then, ***mind-dependent being turns out to be*** nothing else than either relations patterned after mind-independent pure relations, or relations formed on the

9. See "Semiotica utramque comprehendit", in *The Impact on Philosophy of Semiotics* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2003), pp. 100–112.

10. Cf. the Conclusion to the Editorial AfterWord of the bilingual edition of Poinsot's *Tractatus de Signis* (California, 1985), pp. 512–514, esp. the concluding sentence.

11. See above, p. 4.

12. See pp. 63–64 above.

13. Cf. the "Editor's Introduction to the Electronic Edition" of the *Tractatus de Signis*, ¶s 16–26.

basis of mind-independent beings which are not pure relations. In short, mind-dependent being turns out to be ***nothing else than relations***. Period.

Hence, even though the First Preamble bears the title "On Mind-Dependent Being", it might as well for the purpose have been titled "On Relation as It Falls Outside the Aristotelian Category of Relation", or "On Relation as It Exceeds Confinement to the Order of Mind-Independent Being", or the like; something which, under any circumstances, cannot be said of any other type or mode of mind-independent being. For the upshot of that discussion in the First Preamble is to provide the lead-in to the *Second* Preamble, "On Relation", but now especially as pertaining to (indeed, as confinable to) the order of *ens reale*. This Second Preamble, then, provides the principal focus of main philosophical notions strictly prior to the novel doctrine of semiotic as Poinsot is about to establish it in the context of his primarily traditional, backward-looking *Cursus Philosophicus*.

What is to be noted here as new, then, is that it is to be through the notion of relation in its proper being, relation "*secundum esse*" or "relation ontologically considered", that Poinsot shows us how to explain the indifference of objectivity to the radical difference between what does also and what does not also exist apart from our experience.[14] This indifference, whereby the objective world of experience transcends the physical environment, Poinsot explains, is a result or consequence for the psychological order of the unique capacity of relation to be realized according to its proper being under mind-dependent or mind-independent aspects of objectivity (the semiotic order, as I have further explained[15]). This peculiarity of relation, then, is the ground of semiotics, because it grounds the possibility of semiosis; but it is also the ground for the possibility of correspondence truth, and for the derivative (or parasitic) phenomenon of intentionality in its subjective ground, erroneously taken as fundamental in the founding and development of twentieth-century phenomenology.

Fr. Clarke's correct emphasis[16] on the importance of the terms (the "termini") as specifying relations, in this context, bears on the crucial point that the term of an ontological relation specifies only as it is virtually contained

14. See "The Semiotic of John Poinsot: Yesterday and Tomorrow", major discussion of reviews of and theoretical issues in the semiotic of Poinsot, *Semiotica* 69.1/2 (April 1988), 31–128, in particular 82–86.

15. *Basics of Semiotics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); "The Supplement of the Copula", *The Review of Metaphysics* 46.2 (December 1992), 251–277; "Philosophy and Experience", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* LXVI.4 (Winter 1992), 299–319; etc.

16. See p. 65 above.

in the foundation or fundament of the relation (which would be the formal sign in the order of cognition).[17]

I hope this does more justice to the point Dr. Rasmussen sought to raise than such meagre justice as I was able to give under the pressure of time in the actual event.

Professor Redpath in many ways "stole the show", at least for creating bafflement among the hearers. He introduced from Aquinas the distinction between dimensive and virtual quantity, and then proceeded to make the latter the basis of his whole treatment of semiosis. This created bafflement, not to say consternation, all around, for at least two reasons that I can guess.

The first is that this distinction from Aquinas is not generally known. In Thomist tradition, it has been used mainly in connection with the idea of pure spirits or Angels, in order to compare and contrast the situation of wholly immaterial substances without quantity with that of quantified or material substances, such as ourselves and the rest of the physical universe. Thus, in explaining the difference between *ubi circumscriptivum*, a categorial notion pertaining to material substance, and *ubi angelicum*, the manner in which angels by their action on bodies only can be said to be "localised", Thomists have recourse to so-called "intensive quantity", which is actually the "strength" or "extent" of an active quality (angels having no quantities); and Crowley, apparently, with whose work Redpath became associated,[18] exploited this secondary way of treating quality to show how measurement can be applied to the entire order of experienced being.[19]

There is no doubt that this notion is valid, but hardly less doubt that it is yet considerably less than central to the doctrine of signs prior to the question of semiosis among angels.

I could not help but feel that Redpath had diminished an opportunity by insisting on evaluating the whole question of semiotics on the basis of his own research into the rhetorical traditions behind certain aspects of the work of Descartes and the later moderns.[20] When Redpath says that the *Four Ages* "leaves out many of the same crucial details that all modern histories of philosophy neglect: Renaissance humanism and its attendant

17. See the "Editor's Introduction to the Electronic Edition" of the *Tractatus de Signis*, ¶ 27; and Joannes a Sancto Thoma, *Cursus Philosophicus*, Vol. I (Reiser ed.; Rome: Marietti, 1931), Secunda Pars, Q. 17, Art. 7, "Quommodo explicandae sunt proprietates relativorum, quod sint simul natura et cognitione", pp. 600b25–606a31.

18. See above, p. 37ff., text and notes.

19. Compare the discussion of "Mathematicism" by Benedict Ashley in his "Change and Process", in *The Problem of Evolution*, John Deely and Raymond Nogar, eds. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1973), pp. 265–294, esp. 272–78.

20. See his opening paragraph, p. 29 above.

nominalism",[21] not only is he glossing over the fact that Renaissance humanism is precisely what the modern histories of philosophy do not neglect between Ockham and Descartes,[22] but he is missing the central pertinence to semiotic development of what these modern histories really *do* neglect, in company with Redpath himself: the Iberian scholasticism where Thomism first flourished as more than the thought of an isolated thinker and where semiotic consciousness first found its footing — as if we should look to the predecessors of Trithemius or Bruno for the origins of semiotic. Casaubon[23] already had the experience of Redpath: "I devoted myself to Renaissance philosophers and I discovered that the men of secular modernity, once they had emerged from the darkness of the Middle Ages, had found nothing better to do than devote themselves to cabala and magic." No wonder Redpath finds Nominalism everywhere. He has surrounded himself with the Renaissance Neoplatonists "who chanted formulas designed to convince nature to do things she had no intention of doing", as if in imitation of the original pagan Neoplatonists described by Gibbon.[24]

When I first read Maritain's dismissal of the modern "children of Descartes" as "not philosophers but *ideosophers*",[25] I understood his frustration with

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21. See p. 34 above.

22. Surely Redpath is acquainted with the standard, near-classic writings on the matter by Paul Kristeller?

23. The main protagonist in Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum*, trans. William Weaver (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989), p. 172.

24. "The surviving sect of Platonists, whom Plato would have blushed to acknowledge, extravagantly mingled a sublime theory with the practice of superstition and magic; and, as they remained alone in the midst of the Christian world, they indulged a secret rancour against the government of the church and state, whose severity was still suspended over their heads. About a century after the reign of Julian, Proclus was permitted to teach in the philosophic chair of the academy, and such was his industry that he frequently, in the same day, pronounced five lessons and composed seven hundred lines. His sagacious mind explored the deepest questions of morals and metaphysics, and he ventured to urge eighteen arguments against the Christian doctrine of the creation of the world. But in the intervals of study he *personally* conversed with Pan, Aesculapius, and Minerva, in whose mysteries he was secretly initiated, and whose prostrate statues [that is, the statues of Pagan gods pulled down by order of the Christian emperors] he adored; in the devout persuasion that the philosopher, who is a citizen of the universe, should be the priest of its various deities. An eclipse of the sun announced his approaching end; and his life, with that of his scholar Isidore, compiled by two of their most learned disciples, exhibits a deplorable picture of the second childhood of human reason. Yet the golden chain, as it was fondly styled, of the Platonic succession, continued forty-four years from the death of Proclus to the edict of Justinian, which imposed a perpetual silence on the schools of Athens, and excited the grief and indignation of the few remaining votaries of Grecian science and superstition."—Edward Gibbon, 1788, cited from the 7-vol. J. B. Bury ed. of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Methuen & Co., 1909–1914), vol. 4, pp. 282–83.

25. Jacques Maritain, *The Peasant of the Garonne*, trans. Michael Cuddihy and Elizabeth Hughes (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1968), p. 102.

the late modern situation in which he found himself, but I little expected that he expected this particular move to achieve broad success. When, more than a quarter century or so later, I found someone — namely, Peter Redpath, in the series of his books that he has cited above p. 29n2 — taking Maritain's venting full seriously and making of it the basis for an alternative reading of the whole history of philosophy, ancient as well as modern, I was very much surprised, though not unpleasantly so. In fact, I went out of my way in the *Four Ages* both to state why Maritain's attempt to read Descartes out of the ranks of philosophers can never have full success[26] and to give due credit to the partial success that attempt did have in inspiring Redpath's maverick approach.[27]

So I could only be further surprised, not quite so pleasantly, this time, to see that Redpath, in his own reading of the *Four Ages*, took account neither of my answer to Maritain's dismissal nor of my placement of his own work in relation to the overall development of semiotic consciousness, which, after all, was both main thesis and principle of selection for the book as a whole. So I cannot agree with Redpath's thesis[28] that modern philosophy is not philosophy at all; and I can hardly rightly be said to "follow"[29] Mauer's unbalanced attempt to reduce analogy to the metaphysics of esse.[30]

At the invitation of Professor Giovanni Manetti of the University of Siena I am currently engaged on an essay trying to diagnose the application of the action of signs to communication among angels.[31] I am hoping here to gain better insight into the bearing of Redpath's introduction of virtual quantity into the heart of the discussion.

Whether I succeed in this particular, the event Rasmussen so generously organized around the *Four Ages* and magnanimously chaired leaves me much encouraged that the sour grapes with which Catholic intellectual tradition has treated modernity will not also be the measure of its response to the opening of philosophy's postmodern epoch. In this regard, I am reminded of the French reviewer who published in Quebec around 1983 or 1984 a review hostile to my book, *Introducing Semiotic*, concluding with the warning: "This is *not* what

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26. See the *Four Ages*, p. 511n1 *in finem*.

27. See the *Four Ages*, 515–516.

28. See p. 32 above.

29. See Redpath's characterization on p. 33 above.

30. In the *Four Ages*, see pp. 313–331 on analogy; and the further development of these pages in "The Absence of Analogy", *The Review of Metaphysics* LV.3 (March 2002), 521–550.

31. Now published as "The Semiosis of Angels", *The Thomist* 68.2 (April), 205–258. See also: <http://www.thomist.org/journal/2004/April/2004%20Apr%20A%20Deely.htm> and <http://www.bun.kyoto-u.ad.jp/mdvphil/ksmp/24corrigenda.html>.

most people mean by semiotics." The reviewer, perhaps needless to say, was a structuralist semiologist, in the days when only the companions of Sebeok (and some students of Peirce) had a clear awareness that semiology had no hope of claiming the whole of the ground semiotics was destined to occupy. Twenty years later, *Introducing Semiotic* proves to have provided what Sebeok prophesied in his Foreword thereto,[32] "the 'missing link' between the ancients and the moderns in the history of semiotic", and semiology stands both as a diminished remnant of modernity and as a part of semiotic[33] as the doctrine of signs. My bet with the *Four Ages* is that its immediate readers will be inclined, like Fr. Clarke,[34] to see it as arguing for a "special sense" of the term "postmodern", but that its readers twenty years from now will regard what it establishes as the *central sense* that the term "postmodern" is destined to have for philosophy as it moves the intellectual culture of the twenty-first century beyond that opposition of "realism" to "idealism" (and *e converso*) that defined philosophy as "modern".

But that bet depends upon speakers yet to be heard from, many of whom are yet to be born. It is my last strategic gamble, the one on which I have bet my reputation, after which I have nothing to lose. Such is history, the laboratory in which philosophy finds its results in time.

32. Thomas A. Sebeok, "Foreword" to John Deely, *Introducing Semiotic. Its History and Doctrine* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1982), p. x.

33. See my essay "A Context for Narrative Universals: Semiology as a *Pars Semeiotica*", *The American Journal of Semiotics* (1986) 4.3–4, 53–68. Or more recently "On the Word Semiotics, Formation and Origins", Semiotica 1461./4 (2003), 1–50, winner of 23rd Mouton D'Or Award for best essay in the field published in the calendar year.

34. See pp. 20–21 above.