

# Cosmic semiosis: Contuiting the Divine

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## *Abstract*

*Bonaventure's thirteenth century symbolic theology anticipates the semiotic theories of Poinot and Peirce, while their theories elucidate the expressio-impresio-expressio dynamic integral to the signum in Bonaventure. The integrally triadic nature of all reality fundamental to semiotics accounts for what is self-evidently true in human experience. Peirce's Semiotics explains What Is; Bonaventure's Metaphysics of Manifestation reveals Why it is how it Is. "Every sign consists in the three-cornered relation itself connecting the sign at one and the same time to the mind and to the object signified": this co-inhering relation makes the contuitio (the simultaneous co-recognition of sign-vehicle and Object Signified) of God possible in, through, and together with the particular sensible expression of the sign-vehicle. On the occasion of sense experience, an "innate idea" of God is discovered and elaborated by the human intellect as it participates in the Divine capacitating model of its own thought processes.*

*Keywords:* *expressio-impresio-expressio; contuitio; dynamic innatism; exemplarism; relation; triads.*

But every sign consists in the three-cornered relation itself connecting the sign at one and the same time to the mind and to the object signified.

—Deely (2001: 219)

This tightly focused definition that we take here as epigram neatly summarizes the historical fruits of semiotics from its origins in Augustinian theory, through its explication in the *Tractatus de signis* (1632) of John Poinot, O.P., to the postmodern development of the action of signs in

the work of Charles Peirce. As John Deely goes on to clarify the exact nature of this “three-cornered relation” (Deely 2001: 219), he states that relation, as a distinct category, must always be supra-subjective or inter-subjective, but never merely subjective, and that it comprises “all and only those features of being whose very essential conceivability involves being toward another, those features of being which cannot, even by an abstraction, omit reference toward” (Deely 2001: 228). Building on the work of Poinset, Deely concludes (2001: 442) that the irreducible and unique feature of the sign is triadicity or “Thirdness”: a sign must always involve three terms.

These crucial insights into the nature and universal function of sign provide a common ground with the work of yet another forerunner of the field of semiotics, who is not referred to in any significant way in Deely’s otherwise inclusive study of the precursors of semiotics — Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1217–1274). Bonaventure, like Poinset and Peirce, explained the triadic nature of the cosmos as a “being toward something — relation,” a sacrament of the God who is Triune (1250–52c: 23 = *In IV Sent.* d. 1, p. 1, a. un, q. 4).

### 1. A neglected major figure in the history of semiotic inquiry<sup>1</sup>

A brief foray into Bonaventure’s metaphysics of Emanation-Exemplarity-Consummation brings to light that the Seraphic Doctor is a hidden but profoundly important link between the “creative genius but also naïve innocence” of Augustine in his “casting forth onto the sea of ideas the notion of sign as superior to the division of being,” (Deely 2001: 217) and the “nothing less than doctrinal beginnings of a revolution in philosophy in [Poinset’s] *Treatise on signs*” (Deely 2001: 468).

Bonaventure’s *Opera* was recognized by Etienne Gilson (1965) as the culmination of the Augustinian tradition, both in its articulation of Augustine’s categories of vestige, image, and similitude within the created universe, and in its symbolic theology. Bonaventure’s early contribution (1273) to the development of signum, symbol, and sacrament<sup>2</sup> provides additional substance for Peirce’s postulate that “the highest grade of reality is only reached by signs” (*CP* 8.327, 1904). Like St. Augustine, Bonaventure’s theology is centered in love; therefore his semiotic metaphysics is also essentially a method of communion. All things are signs whose very beings communicate and lead back to their Signifier. As potentially knowable, all things are created to be mediums of communion. As we will see, Peirce’s theosemiotics are also centered in love and signs exist for communication and communion.

Bonaventure builds upon Augustine's AD397 definition of sign<sup>3</sup> as the basis of human experiential knowledge. He regards the signum as the link that binds not only the whole of the created universe (macrocosm) with humanity (microcosm) and with God as Source (*Fontalis Plenitudo*), but also as the irreplaceable means of knowing all reality, including God. Knowledge of reality, for Bonaventure, means contemplation; and contemplation of sensible things leads to grasping the intelligible aspect of a thing which, in turn, points to something transcendent by virtue of the fact that there is a likeness between the sign vehicle and the object signified (i.e., the sensible aspect of the thing and the transcendent dimension of the thing that connects it to the object signified). *Sign is at the heart of Bonaventurean contemplation*, for it is the recognition that, since things cannot explain their own intelligibility and being, they must be signs of that which *can* explain them adequately. The sign is always in relation to the thing signified *and* to the sign-receiver, but the first aspect of the relation is more essential than the second, since the sign is *in act* and *essential* toward the signified, but may only be *in habitu* toward the receiver (Bonaventure 1250–52c).<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the degree of likeness between the sign and the signified may vary, but the likeness is always rooted in the nature of the sign, i.e., to be an *expression* of the signified, even as the sign always remains ontologically distinct from the signified.

## 2. Semiotics as presupposed

The relation of the thing to the knower is called the *species or similitudo* by Bonaventure, and is that by which the knower and known are united intentionally according to a likeness that the soul abstracts from the thing (1250–52b: 415a [d. 17, a. 1, q. 2 ad 4]). This similitudo is generated by the thing to bring it into the human soul; it makes perception of the thing possible, and so serves a relational function. While the *species* has a unity in regard to the thing known, it has a diversity in the minds of various knowers (Bonaventure 1250–52b: 447b, at *II Sent.* d. 18, a. 2, q. 1 ad 5). The *species* is formative and a structuring of the intellect; it is an accident inhering in the intellect; it is a sign representing the object. Yet, unlike Peirce or Poincaré, Bonaventure does not develop a theory of sign as such. Rather, he *presupposes* the radical interdependence of persons and “sign-vehicles” in acquiring the truth of the real ontological relations that constitute being-as-such. Bonaventure bluntly expresses this interdependence:

Whoever is not enlightened by such brilliance of things created must be blind; whoever is not awakened by their mighty voice must be deaf; whoever fails to praise God for all his works must be dumb; whoever fails to discover the first Principle through all these signs must be a fool. (Bonaventure 1259–60a: 299b, = *Itin.* c. 1, n. 15)

While semiotics — as so clearly presented by Deely (2001: 461) — sets forth the sign as “the key to a philosophy of experience” of “what is,” Bonaventure seeks the answer to other questions regarding experience and sign: “*how* is a sign constituted?” and “*why*?” These two approaches to what is now called semiotics are referred to by Deely as two aspects of the extrinsic formal cause: objective specification, which determines cognition as an awareness of “this” rather than “that” object or aspect of an object; and exemplarity, which provides a pattern for fabrication.<sup>5</sup>

It seems clear that these two aspects of extrinsic formal cause call forth one another: the pattern of fabrication of the cosmos as sign-vehicle is precisely “toward something — a relation” that can be actualized only through objective or specificative formal causality: see Figure 1. To explore the complementary inter-relationship of these two aspects of semiotics, I will examine the areas outlined by Deely and the *metaphysics of manifestation* developed by Bonaventure in their correlative dimensions, i.e., “what is” (cognition as awareness of this object), and “how/why it is” (pattern for fabrication). The theory of sign and the precise definitions developed throughout Deely’s history of semiotics will be used in the presentation of Bonaventure’s work to add clarity to his explication of the *signum*.

### 3. The Summum Bonum: Being as communion

At the heart of Bonaventure’s thought and theological system is the *Summum Bonum*, a Trinity of Persons who exists in a perfect relationship of Love. That Love has its Source in the *Primitas*, the *Fontalis Plenitudo*. As Eternal Father, this primordial and fecund *Fountain-Fullness* communicates himself so completely to Another that the second Person is a true, equal, and consubstantial Son and Image of this Life, and who as *Verbum* communicates this Being as *Exemplar* of the Good to everything created. The Perfect Bond or *Nexus* between these two Persons is a third Person, the Holy Spirit of Love — self-diffusive Goodness by essence and existence — who impresses the inner triadic nature of God into the heart of cosmic being.

<i>IT IS = EXPERIENCE</i>	<i>HOW IT IS – WHY IT IS</i>
Semiotics	Metaphysics of Manifestation
Sign = Triadic Relation	God is a Communion of Three Persons [Source/ <i>Verbum</i> (Exemplar)/Bond]
	A cosmos of Triadic Relations manifests the <i>Summum Bonum</i>
Sign = Communication	Communication = diffusion of goodness
sending/receiving/intermediaries (signs)	<i>Expressio – Impressio – Expressio</i>
Universe of Signs	All Creation is a <i>Signum</i> of God
Ontological Relation	Ontological Relation
Mind dependent or mind independent	Mind dependent or mind independent
Natural and Conventional	Natural and Conventional
Genuine mediation is the character of a sign.	Axiom: There must be a medium between extremes
Extrinsic formality as species-specifically- human specifies cognition as awareness of this object	Extrinsic Formality as Exemplarity/Expressionism: <i>Verbum</i> expresses multiplicity of forms impressed with vestige/image/similitude <i>Divine Ideas</i> <i>seminal reasons</i>
Thing – Signified – Interpretant	Signified – Knower – Thing
Sign: bringing “other” into awareness	“toward something – a relation”
Experience-based	Experience-based
All experience is in signs	Human as <i>Imago Mundi</i> Knower becomes all things
Interpretant	Human person = Interpreter of symbols exists as a Symbol (body/spirit)
Cognitive or non-cognitive	<i>Imago Dei</i> : three consubstantial powers; one essence. <i>Capax Dei</i> : God is the Object of human powers
Action of signs gives structure to sensations, perceptions and understandings	<i>Contuitio</i> : Indirect simultaneous knowing of thing and object signified Agent Intellect is both active and passive: 1) abstracts 2) judges 3) object received in <i>Intellectum</i> God = Light <i>Verbum</i> = Light enlightens every man <i>Signum</i> = participation in Divine Light Illumination = knowing in cooperation with Divine Light Reason = natural light Grace = light of similitude/deiformity

Figure 1. *The dual aspect of extrinsic formal causality*

Bonaventure’s theology of the Trinity is one of dynamic Procession: the divine nature of God and the created nature of the cosmos is a continuously expanding and inter-linking communication, achieving a mutuality of life, a rhythm of giving and receiving — *expressio-impressio-expressio*. As the Father — the One innascible and fecund Source — has primacy within the Trinity, so the only-begotten Son as Image and Truth

receives the self-gift of Divine Fecundity and has primacy over all creation (St. Paul c. 61–63: *Col.* 1:12–20). The inner Bond of their Love permeates, invites, and embraces each and every thing as Beauty, made “good” as an expression of this Being-in-Love. Whatever exists bears the imprint of the Trinity.

Bonaventure defines goodness as communication: communicating to another the power to live, to know, and to communicate to others (1250–50b: 41b).<sup>6</sup> In the image of the divine Trinity, every communication consists of a giver, a receiver, and an act of communication. The *Image* of the Father, described as the *Verbum* of God, communicates this power to live, to know, and to communicate to each creature according to the capacity and powers of its own nature. In the *Hexaëmeron*, Bonaventure first describes the Son as Exemplar within the inner life of the Trinity:

For from all eternity the Father begets a Son similar to himself and a likeness similar to himself, and in so doing he expresses the sum total of his power; he expresses what he can do, and most of all, what he wills to do, and he expresses everything in him, that is, in the Son, or in that very Center, which so to speak is his Art. Hence the Center is the Truth. (Bonaventure 1273: 331b, = *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 1, n. 13)

Christ, the Incarnate Word, brings to completion the created order, which, in its symbolic nature, is, as the Bonaventure scholar Zachary Hayes puts it, “the objectification of the self-knowledge of God” (1981: 14). Christ the Exemplar is the self-expression of God *ad intra* as the uncreated Word, and *ad extra* as the incarnate Word. This Word as Exemplar and Center, in Bonaventure’s own words:

principally leads us to union with the Father who brings all things together. Such is the metaphysical Center that leads us back, and this is the sum total of our metaphysics concerned with emanation, exemplarity, and consummation, namely, to be illuminated through the spiritual rays and be led back to the Supreme. (Bonaventure 1273: 332a, = *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 1, n. 17)

Exemplarity is the heart of Bonaventure’s metaphysics. Through *emanation* all creation comes forth from the Source *impressed* with the self-communication of God as Good; through *exemplarity* an infinite multiplicity of forms is capable of *expressing* an aspect of the True Image as shadow, vestige, image, or similitude.<sup>7</sup> Efreem Bettoni states that, for Bonaventure: “Reality is not a scattered manifold but a structured multiplicity bound together by an organic and wise plan which is manifested through many signs. This purpose, however, is not immediately accessible

to man; it constitutes the object of his search” (1964: 32). In the rhythm of *egressus/regressus* and the mediation of *signs*, all is destined for final *consummation* in full communion with Being Itself. Here Bonaventure builds on Aristotle’s relationship of the whole to its parts.<sup>8</sup> While in *egressus* the One becomes the many and the whole is divided into parts; in *regressus* the many is reunited and gathered up into the One through the medium. Christ is that medium. As Son he is the center of the Trinity. As Verbum, he is the exemplar of all creation. As Image, he is the medium<sup>9</sup> of *expressio-impessio-expressio*.

Nothing in the cosmos exists in monadic isolation.<sup>10</sup> Each being exists “toward another — a relation,” so that the network of communicated life<sup>11</sup> is itself a participation in the *Summum Bonum*. Since all creation participates in the diffusion of the Good, the cosmos is, in Bougerol’s summary, “one immense sacrament of God” (1964: 9). Bonaventure describes the world as a “book which reflects, represents, and describes” (1254–57a: 230, = *Breviloquium* Pars II c. 12) the creating Trinity. This, in essence, is Bonaventure’s *metaphysics of manifestation* — an ontological relationship<sup>12</sup> that exists for communication; knowledge achieved through sign for a saving purpose: full and final communion with the *Summum Bonum*. Thus Bonaventure establishes the “three-cornered *relation itself* connecting the sign at one and the same time to the mind and to the object signified” described by Deely (2001: 219).

#### 4. Sign and symbol in the way of return

The term “symbol” (*ymballein, symbolun*) is not commonly used in texts from the Middle Ages. Rather *signum* is the generic term used, which includes what is today distinguished as “sign” (univocal reality) and “symbol” (a polyvalent reality). In medieval usage, a sign was determined to be either natural or conventional. The *natural sign*, in which there existed a resemblance between the sign and the signified reality, was further subdivided according to which of the four causes produced the relation. A type of sign often referred to by Thomas is an *effect* (efficient causality) that *points* to a cause (e.g., smoke for fire). Bonaventure (1250–52b: 397b) prefers those signs that *actually represent* (formal causality) the signified reality through natural likeness<sup>13</sup> — as an image of the exemplar reality (what Peirce would call an “icon,” or Poinsett an “*idolum*,” 1985 [1632]: 241, note 3). Other natural signs could be based on material and final causality. *Conventional* or *arbitrary signs*, on the other hand, are determined by social agreement — for example, road signs or letters of the alphabet.

## 5. The perfusion of signs in Medieval Latin culture

For the medieval theologian, and particularly for Bonaventure, everything in creation was a natural sign of a transcendent reality, which in turn opened the knower to more complex levels of interpretation of the universe.<sup>14</sup> The world in and of itself was intelligible, and human persons acquired ideas from it. Such a presupposition is problematic to the modern consciousness for which the real world, the world “in itself,” is not intelligible.<sup>15</sup> Because a natural signification by the world does not mesh with atheism, signification is limited to social construction, to human process and activity.

But for Bonaventure, whose starting point was the analogy of faith, the “book of the creature” and the book of sacred scripture provided the human being with everything needed to “retrace” the truth of being to its first and ultimate Principle. When human sin distorted the communication between God and humanity, between human beings, and between humans and the created world (*Gen.* 3:15), the natural human capacity to “read” the book of the universe as the expression of God was seriously diminished. But the God who is Love re-established communication through the revealed Word as the Restorative Principle, illuminating human intellects to once more perceive the symbolic nature of the cosmos.

## 6. The metaphysics of manifestation

In his treatment of the emanation of the Divine Persons in the *Breviloquium*, Bonaventure states that faith requires that we have the loftiest concept of God, and that this is proved not only by scripture but also by the whole of creation: “The first Principle opens himself to our mind through the scriptures and through creatures. In the book of creatures he manifests himself as the effective Principle, and in the book of scriptures as the redemptive Principle” (1254–57a: 222a–b).<sup>22</sup> Here (1254–57a: 211a–b, = *Breviloquium*, Pars I, c. 2.) Bonaventure cites *De Trinitate*, where Augustine also declares the natural universe as witness to the existence of a transcendent Creator who gave us enough intelligence to judge the extent to which each created reality manifests God.

Later, in his “necessary reason” for the unity of the divine nature to be expressed in a plurality of manifestations, Bonaventure develops his metaphysics of manifestation. While the Principle is invisible, immutable, and uncontainable, “he reveals himself, makes himself known,” through what is “mutable, sentient and contained.” Symbols explicitly signifying divine realities do so “by reason of the union between the thing signified



and the sign specifically destined, both in manner and origin, to express it.” Things are relational to the core of their beings; the embodiments of Divine Ideas. These symbols are offered to the senses for the sake of signifying something that is truly present.

As the work of a creating Trinity (Bonaventure 1254–57a: 219a–b, = *Breviloquium* Pars II, c. 1), every creature, whether material, spiritual or a composite bears the trace of a triple causality (efficient, exemplary, and final), and therefore is one, true, and good. But while these attributes are manifested to some degree (*umbra, vestigium, imago, similitudo*) in everything that God brings forth, according to Bonaventure, “he necessarily manifested them most of all in that creature last in the making but first in rank. For God made man last, that in him might clearly appear and shine forth the consummation of the divine works” (1254–57a: 228). This creature God composed in the nature of a symbol, with both inner and outer reality: with a two-fold perception, of mind and of flesh; with a two-fold capacity for motion, of will and of body; with a two-fold good, one visible and the other invisible (1254–57a: 229a, = *Breviloquium* Pars II c. 11). So composed, humanity was “designed to ascend gradually to the supreme Principle who is God” (1254–57a: 230a) by reflecting upon the universe that represents and describes its Maker.

For the soul is something great: the whole universe may be described in it. The soul is called as *lovely as Jerusalem*, for it is likened to Jerusalem through the disposition of the hierarchical levels. For they are disposed in the soul in a threefold manner: in relation to ascent, to descent, and to the return to God . . . Therefore we should attribute [the three levels] to diligence combined with nature, diligence combined with grace, and grace superior to both nature and diligence. (Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 22, n. 24–42, in the 1970 DeVinck trans.)

The first level of *ascent*, which also consists of three levels, is diligence combined with nature. The first level of diligence begins with perceiving what one of the senses announces, but also making a distinction between those data that are to be rejected and those to be chosen. Thus, the second level is deliberating upon whether the thing is permitted and fitting; and the third, executing that which is fitting. The second level of diligence combined with grace has three acts: ordination of the act to God; strengthening by Virtues; and finally the command. The third level of diligence is that of grace above nature and diligence, in which the soul is lifted higher than itself, empties itself out, and receives divine illuminations.

The order of *descent* involves three powers of the soul: receiving, preserving, and distributing. For the soul to receive these illuminations it

needs lively desire, perspicacious scrutiny, and calm judgment before it is able to command what God wills to be done, execute it in virtue, and triumph over all obstacles. Finally, the soul must distribute life to neighbors through a threefold relationship: clarity of example, truth of expression, and humility of service.

### **7. The threefold level of contemplation**

The return of the soul to God corresponds to the threefold level of contemplation — of that which is outside us, inside us, or above us, by means of the three powers: the exterior, interior, and the superior; that is, the apprehensive, affective, and operative. Apprehension involves discerning investigation as the senses perceive exterior things; then the common sense; after that, the imagination and reason consider the truth of what has been discerned, and place it in memory. Discerning selection involves choosing that which is good, judging, and finally executing.

The interior powers require disciplined chastising of the roots of the passions, disciplined strengthening against concupiscence and weakness, and a disciplined calling into action of the virtues. Then, Bonaventure says, the soul is its own master, and after it does what it can, grace lifts it up easily to God; God works within it and the soul is rapt in God the beloved. “And so the soul is *a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon . . . under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars, for it is full of lights and never turns its eyes away from light*” (Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaemeron* Coll. 22, nos. 39–40). These twelve stars symbolize for Bonaventure the human incapacity to remain on any one object while a pilgrim in this life; hence, the soul has twelve matters of consideration with which it concerns itself, consistently moving around the circle and never outside of it.

### **8. The need of redemption**

Bonaventure next considers sin as a defect in this established order of symbolic being and relationship. As Hayes (1981: 15) puts it, mankind’s capacity to interpret creation “as a vast symbol of the divine reality” and to “unlock the meaning of the universe” is reduced to ignorance, while its power to “ascend gradually to the supreme Principle” by the rungs of the ladder of creation, degenerates into concupiscence and domination. To effect the restoration of the established order God sent the incarnate Word, who instituted the sacramental economy as an extension of his teaching and healing presence.

Since sensible objects had been the occasion of the fall of the soul, they must also be the occasion of its rising.<sup>16</sup> Sacramental signs have three dimensions of efficacy: “through natural similitude they represent; through conjoined institution they signify; through superadded benediction they sanctify and prepare for grace by which the soul is healed and cured” (Bonaventure 1254–57a: 265b, = *Breviloquium*, Pars VI, c. 1). The sacraments as signs are always there to dispel man’s “intellectual blindness” and to invite to the union signified, but healing *grace as relational* demands the consent of the receiver.

Bonaventure’s emphasis regarding sacramental grace falls upon *ex opere operantis*. Grace is the marriage between God and humanity, the conjoining and communion in Divine Life. The Relation Signified requires mutual consent.

The *vestigia* of God are bound to the cosmos, and their revelation of God elicits from man a conscious response to the Transcendent. Valentin Breton observes that while the hidden meaning that the sign points to is more important for Bonaventure than the visible object itself, still, the sign keeps, and does not annihilate, the value and significance that the object has in the profane world while it simultaneously points to the transcendent value. The thing in its natural order signifies the transcendent value. God gives himself through the sign to be known and attained; this occurs through a mutuality of penetration which opens unknown depths of both matter and spirit.<sup>17</sup> The *impressio* of the self-communication of God transforms the sign-vehicle into symbol, a reality no longer “two-dimensional” but polyvalent as it participates (*expressio-impressio-expressio*) in the network of communication-ontological relation.

## 9. The footprints of God

The search for meaning in and through the world is accomplished by Bonaventure through exemplarism and reduction. As these “footprints” of God are experienced in the universe, mankind retraces them, searching for the principle of unification that underlies the multiplicity. Meaning subsists in the relation between the individual *signum* and the whole to which it belongs.

Paul Ricoeur (1974: 59–60) echoes this insight when he states that the symbolic actually exists “between the symbols” as an “economy of relation.” Because each is a partial manifestation of one ultimate reality, “symbols symbolize only within wholes which limit and link their significations.” Hinwood (1973: 482), following Bonaventure himself (1250–52b: 397b of *II Sent.* d.16, a.1, q.2, fund; and 1273: 358b of *Hexaëmeron*

Coll. 5, n. 28), shows that fundamental to this understanding is the idea that things are not “accidentally or by addition, but by their very nature, reflections and signs of the Creator.” However (Bonaventure 1254b: 49a–b, in *De mysterio Ss. Trinitatis* I.1 concl.), because their symbolic meaning is integral to their very beings, things are also insufficient and unintelligible in themselves, if relegated only to scientific knowledge of their natures.

While created realities in and through their very natures are vestiges of God, without the “look” of the human knower they cannot *function* on the symbolic level. A sign needs to be “read” and reflected upon in order to be realized;<sup>18</sup> in the particular case, it is only the human person who can relate the creature to its Exemplar idea and discover its meaning. Bernard Landry (1922: 169) perceives a complement dynamic within the works of Bonaventure that makes such symbolic interpretation possible. There is a universal law of analogy in the constitution of essences that allows one inferior stage of creation to symbolize a higher level; at the same time man is able to find God in the world because analogy is the law of human nature, just as it is the law of nature around us. While there is no symbolization without the human person, Bonaventure is not constructing or super-imposing a symbolic meaning upon a one-dimensional reality, but rather perceiving the profound depth of a sacramental world.

Bonaventure states that, after its institution, the sign “has no more absolute qualities than it had before; but it is ordained to something to which it was not before. And because it has the effective ordination, it is said to have power . . . and nevertheless it has no more goodness in it now than before. If, then, you ask what power is in [it], they say nothing absolute, but towards something, i.e., a relation” (1250–52c: 23, = *IV Sent.* d. 1, p. 1, a.un, q. 4).

The sign as sign must remain itself. Bonaventure could not understand how or when an absolute physical quality could be added to the sacrament, whether to its words or its element, which would yet remain distinct from the uncreated power or divine action that accompanies every action. While Thomas Aquinas emphasized the contribution of the very physical qualities of the matter as instrumental cause of grace, Bonaventure emphasized that nothing physical is added to the material sign; rather the sign in its own concrete being is ordained to a new relation.

## 10. Following in the *footprints*

If the physical world (Augustine’s *vestigium*) symbolizes the Trinitarian God, then there must be a creature by nature capable of “reading” and

interpreting the symbol in order that both book and reader can be fulfilled in purpose. The “return” of the cosmos to its Creator requires a medium or a mediator, someone that participates in the natures of both of the extremes (matter and spirit) to be reconciled.

Bonaventure builds upon the axiom of Pseudo-Dionysius: *a medium must always exist between two extremes*, in order to make any relationship possible, but especially for the salvific relationship, i.e., the divinization of created being. Bonaventure, in defining man-as-image, expresses its constitutive dimensions in proportionality and order (1273: 378a, = *Hexaëmeron* Coll. 10 n. 7): *imago est essentialis dependentia et relatio*.

Merino elaborates on this definition, explaining being-in-itself as really a being-for-others, a being-toward — a relationship: “In a concentric, gradually expansive and communicative process, man lives and is realized in dialectical tension” (1974: 456). The innermost circle of this dialectical tension of relationship is his own substantial composition: the human being is a union of matter and spirit. As an incarnated spirit the being and ordination of the human person is essentially relational. God — in his infinite goodness, power, and wisdom — establishes a cosmos of relationships, with humanity (*imago Dei* and *imago mundi*) as the medium, ordained to be mediator, between the corporeal and spiritual worlds.

## 11. Revelation of the infinite

What shines forth in all created things is the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator.<sup>19</sup> Bonaventure posits that the revelation of infinite power requires the conjunction of the furthest extremes. So the human person, as “the intrinsic union of two things having a mutual inclination to constitute a third” (O’Leary 1931: 99), manifests the conjunction of diametrically opposed extremes — matter and spirit — into singularity, a conjunction that signifies, according to Bonaventure (1250b: 41b), the *infinite power* of God.<sup>20</sup> To eliminate one of the extremes (as did the Manicheans) is to limit the power of God as well as to destroy the principle of perfect order, i.e., extremes with a medium<sup>21</sup> — the triadic order that manifests the wisdom of God:

For the wisdom of the builder is manifested in perfect order, but every order of necessity has a depth, a height and a medium. If the lowest element is pure matter, and the highest is the spiritual nature, the medium must be a composite of both; unless God had made all these things his perfect wisdom would not be shown. (Bonaventure 1250–52b: 41b, = *II Sent.*, d.1, a.1, q.2, fund. 2).

The human person stands in the middle, not only as *imago Dei*, but also as *imago mundi*. It is this creative tension and communication between matter and spirit in the human person that Bonaventure perceives as the divine imprint. This theological rendering of the mystery of mediation corresponds to Peirce's philosophical explication of the sign function in achieving relation:

Genuine mediation is the character of a Sign. A Sign is anything which is related to a second thing, its Object, in respect to a Quality, in such a way as to bring a Third thing, its Interpretant, into relation to the same Object, and that in such a way as to bring a Fourth into relation to that Object in the same form, *ad infinitum*. If the series is broken off, the Sign, in so far, falls short of the perfect significant character. ("Minute logic," *CP* 2.92, c. 1902)

Deely provides the correlation between Peirce's semiotic theory and the multidimensional *signum* of Bonaventure:

For what signs do specifically is to mediate between the physical and the objective, where the object represents itself in knowledge (both as partially including and as transcending the physical environment) and the sign always represents an object other than itself. The sign depends upon the object in that the object provides the measure or content whereby and according to which the sign signifies. But the object in representing itself also depends upon the sign for being presented (the object determines *what* is presented, the sign *whether* it is presented), and the sign is, in its own being, indifferent to whether the object has also a physical existence. (Deely 2001: 585)

In Bonaventure's language, the Object is God, while both humanity and all creation act as signs of God to and for one another. In Deely's fine elucidation of this theory, humans and things both function as "sign-vehicles," while the sign itself is the relationship that exists between God, humans and all created things in a mutuality of communication.<sup>22</sup> Because of the human higher consciousness, i.e., their "species-specifically human"<sup>23</sup> capacity, they — as Bonaventure describes — act as a "conscious interpretant"<sup>24</sup> within this multi-sign relation. Then the human person as sign has the mission of mediating the return of the cosmos to God: "It is precisely because man is mediator between the world and God that he is also the interpreter of creation . . . that he is able to know it and understand it, to know it in its most profound sense" (Solignac 1974: 92).

## 12. The ladder of creation

But so also does the *ladder of creation* mediate human salvation: “The first Principle created this perceptible world as a means to self-revelation so that, like a mirror of God or a divine footprint, it might lead man to love and praise his Creator” (Bonaventure 1254–57a: 229a, = *Breviloquium*, Pars II, c. 11). For Bonaventure, it is inadequate to know *only* the nature of a thing (i.e., scientific knowledge) or to perceive *only* the symbolic nature of the concrete being (i.e., as revealed through scripture) and interpret it as a sign<sup>25</sup> or trace of the Creator. Unless a person knows the nature of the concrete created realities, those realities will never be understood as “divine footprints,” as *signs* embodying the diffusion of Divine Goodness. Conversely, unless someone knows each created reality as a symbol of the Creator, he will never understand the *full* meaning of its created nature. Because the human person is both body and soul, he or she is gifted with both exterior and interior senses, and is able to read the books written both without (i.e., creation) and within (i.e., Wisdom, the Divine Plan).

## 13. The significance of light: “Dynamic innatism”<sup>26</sup>

In the *Hexaëmeron*, Bonaventure alludes briefly to the second moment of mankind’s development as image of God, as that is presented by Augustine in *De Genesi ad litteram* and *De Trinitate*. The dynamic movement from *creatio* to *formatio*, from *capax Dei* to *particeps Dei*, from *imago* to *similitudo*, is the movement from absolute receptivity to the work of God alone — to what Solignac calls a “synergy of relationship, which is at least partially the work of humanity” (1974: 81). As *image* of God, the human being is *capax Dei*: capable, by virtue of an integrally symbolic nature as a body/spirit composite, of consciously *mediating* the communication ontologically present within the physical world. Bonaventure understands this in the Augustinian sense: human persons are capable from the moment of creation of receiving and carrying within themselves the spiritual light which is God.

Bettoni sheds light on the unique approach Bonaventure takes to the “innate” idea of God that is impressed upon the human mind and is grasped within the vital activity of human thinking itself. It is not an idea formed *by* the mind of any person; it does not depend upon the person’s thought, but is superior to it. “The term *innate* for Bonaventure means only this: that there is given an idea which is not derived by abstraction from sensible things, but is formed by an elaboration or devel-

opment which is completely interior to the soul, although only in contact with and on the occasion of experience” (Bettoni 1964: 102). It is a *dynamic innatism*. The reality is not inferred from a human idea, but the reverse: a reality is *discovered* that underlies and is manifested through an idea in which the reality acts. The idea bears witness to a real presence that is the source of my power to think! Thus:

The “similitudo” or idea of God which is impressed in us and raises our souls to the dignity of his image tends to repeat in our intellect the same order of knowing which is proper to the divine intellect and constitutes the model and the necessary rule of all knowing. God in knowing his essence knows all things in it. We, naturally incapable of an intuition of God and hence of knowing all things in him, must turn to experience and reasoning in order to acquire our cognition of things; but every movement of our intellect will be made in virtue of that innate idea of God which is the light and rule of all knowing. The essence of our knowledge, which is precisely that of being a living analogy of divine knowledge as all things are vibrant analogies of God’s being, is constituted by this “species Dei” impressed in our soul. It is this that renders our thinking possible and is actually the beginning of it in imitation of the divine thought. (Bettoni 1964: 99)

With the idea of a Supreme Being come concepts of unity, goodness, and truth; and with those come also theoretical and first principles — elements that enable the mind to elaborate an idea of God, but elements the mind is not even conscious of. These enable the mind to grasp implicitly the laws or formal schemas of rationality as we come in contact with experience.<sup>27</sup>

Just as God conserves human persons in being, so the divine light enables them to participate in knowing. God enters into the soul intimately and directly as the *ratio intelligendi* and is immediately united to the soul. Illumination does not enable the soul to see God in his essence, but it does allow the person to know God through a certain interior effect, i.e., through divine aid, while still not seeing or hearing him in the proper sense.<sup>28</sup> Since the idea of God is confused and inadequate, the only way human beings can arrive at a proper knowledge of things is that these very things come into contact with us and add the light or truth which they carry in themselves to the light which our intellect derives from the idea born of God. Experience is therefore a true and proper source of our knowledge of *sensible* things, Bettoni notes (1964: 100–101), even though it is only the *occasion by which* the mind passes from an implicit to an explicit knowledge of God and other first principles that invest and unify our knowledge gradually acquired through experience, giving to that knowledge the characteristics of necessity, immutability, and absoluteness which are proper to truth. Bettoni’s interpretation here is confirmed by



Bonaventure himself: “But if you ask, ‘What need was there for Him to have wisdom besides the divine?’ I will answer: in order that He might have experience” (1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 3, n. 15, in the DeVinck 1970 trans.).

While human persons cannot embrace God totally or comprehend him fully but only *in part* (*particeps*), still they bear within the memory the Divine as the “light” of reason, which is the source of the whole intellectual life. It is because the soul is “capable of God” that humanity is in God’s image; the soul images the Trinity insofar as it represents the *intrinsic* processions of knowledge and love. While creation establishes an absolute distance between God and man, similitude provides for communion between Creator and creature. It is in the moment when a human person knows and loves God as the object of his faculties that the soul becomes an actual image and a participator in the Divine Nature. The soul is an image of God only in the measure in which it knows itself and wills itself as such; otherwise, it sinks to the obscurity of vestige.

#### 14. Contuition

In mankind’s original conformation to God as *similitude*, the human person was able to “read” the symbol of creation at the level of wisdom — seeing its meaning within the whole Plan. After the fall, reduced to its natural capacity as image, mankind was able to read creation only at the level of knowledge, missing the meaning of the nature of things that exist as vestige, image, and similitude of the Creator. Understanding the meaning of creation requires what Bonaventure coins as the *contuition*<sup>29</sup> of its Exemplar. Speaking of the objects of our experience, Bonaventure says:

They are the vestiges, images, and displays presented to us for the contuition of God. These creatures are exemplars, or rather illustrations offered to souls as yet untrained and immersed in the sense, so that through these sensible things that they see they may be transported to the intelligible which they do not see, as through signs to that which is signified. (Bonaventure 1259–1260: 302b, = *Itinerarium* 2.11)

For the medieval theologian, particularly for Bonaventure, everything in creation was a natural sign of a transcendent reality that opened the knower to more complex levels of interpretation of the universe. The world in and of itself was intelligible by its approximation to an ideal *model*, and human persons acquired ideas from their experience of this world. Christ, the Medium and Exemplar Cause of all creation, *expressed*

himself, and all things came to be *impressed* or marked by the presence of the God of Life and Light.

While Bonaventure agreed that knowledge of the world comes *from below*, as in Aristotelian science, God as the transcendent Signified is grasped *from above*. Because humanity stands in the “middle” of creation, it knows the world first through the *ratio inferior* which depends upon the senses; it knows reality that is not sensible (i.e., God, the soul, the virtues) through the *ratio superior*, as Augustine (i. 399–422) called it. Each thing is made intelligible by expressing the light (i.e., the knowability of its substance) to another whose senses are created in such manner as to receive the impression of that light, and to transfer the image from exterior sense to interior sense to the very light of reason itself, the *interpretant* of the *sign*.

Bonaventure’s understanding of sensation differs from that of Augustine and Thomas because his insight into the relation of the faculties to the soul is different. For Bonaventure a real distinction does not exist between the faculties and the soul. Rather the faculties are *consubstantiales* with the soul; the distinction between the soul and its faculties is similar to the relation between the divine essence and its attributes. While sensation is a passive modification of the composite, it is inseparable from the judgment of this thing as beautiful, useful, delightful. Sensation begins in the senses but ends in the soul; rationality and sensation interpenetrate, making human sensation essentially different from that of other animals.

## 15. The status of *contuitio*

Within the spectrum of human knowledge there is, first of all, rational *demonstration* from effect to cause; and finally there is *intuition*, the direct and immediate knowledge of God in beatitude; but *contuitio* is *the intermediary form of knowing* that embraces *both* intellectual abstraction of the sensible *and* illumination of human reason through the impression of first principles that correspond to the Divine archetypes. Hence, in human knowing, *contuitio* holds that *center place* that is always the focus of Bonaventure’s thought.

In Bonaventure’s thought the *ratio creata* (the human concept formed by abstraction) and the *ratio aeterna* (the Divine Idea) always remain two distinct orders.<sup>30</sup> The difference between knowledge in this life and the knowledge of the beatific vision always remains.<sup>31</sup> Illumination enables the mind to apprehend the *ratio aeterna* only *cum ratione creata, et ut ex parte a nobis contuita secundum statum vitae*. Created reasons (the created object as formal cause, the interdependent agent [abstracting, but second-

ary] and possible [receptive, but active] intellect as efficient cause) are proper and distinct principles of knowledge, and without them the light of the eternal reason is insufficient of itself to produce knowledge as long as the soul is in this wayfaring state (Bonaventure 1254a: 23, = *De sci. Chr.* q.4c).

The Divine Idea is not attained through a causal argument that postulates it as the exemplar of the creature known through an abstract concept. Rather the Divine Idea is a light present within and reflected by the object known, either through an abstract concept or through the mind's immediate awareness of itself. Illumination of the mind by the eternal reason, Bonaventure says (1254a: 24), is operative only in and through the created reason. The human intellect elaborates its own concepts, which are as distinct from the divine ideas as the creature is distinct from the Creator. Through *contuitio* the human person is able to have an *immediate*, though not perfectly objectifiable, awareness of the divine presence in the experience of the finite.

Whereas Thomas procures knowledge of God through *a posteriori* arguments (see Deely 2001: ch. 7; Deely 2004a), Bonaventure attains it through *contuitio*: a conscious awareness of the presence of God, possible because of a simultaneity of form in creation and in the Eternal Exemplar. Since the intrinsic form of the creature is an extrinsic expression of the Divine Exemplar, the very being of the creature is, simultaneously, a *sign* of Another and yet ontologically distinct from the Signifier. Bonaventure states that all created things “manifestly proclaim that in them as in mirrors can be seen the eternal generation of the Word, the Image, and the Son, eternally emanating from God the Father” (Bonaventure 1259–60a: 301b, = *Itinerarium* 2.7).

This *likeness* (*similitudo*) between God and creature, according to Bonaventure (1250–52a: 43), is neither univocal nor equivocal but can only be analogical, meaning that there is a likeness of proportion without a unity of nature.

## 16. Contuitio and intuition

Houser distinguishes intuition from *contuitio* by stating that

*Intuition* is immediate and direct knowledge of an object, generally a universal essence; *contuitio*, a Bonaventurian term of art, signifies knowing something else in the course of knowing the first object. In this way, knowing the essence of a creature is the occasion for understanding something about God. But it is not merely

an occasion. Rather, contuition of God is a *necessary condition* for intuition of any created essence. (Houser 1999: 103)

Jay Hammond sees these two terms in a different relationship. He defines contuition as a

concomitant insight into the relationship of everything to God who is the *primum*. For Bonaventure, all knowledge is concomitant because it is the concurrent recognition of both the created and the uncreated. Contuition as contemplation of God present within each of his creatures opens to *intuition*, the direct knowing of God, face to face, in heaven. In effect, *contuitio* is an intuitive grasp of the divine order permeating all reality. (Hammond 2001: 209)

In contemplation the person is not distracted by the multiplicity of analogical traces of God; rather, the last (the *ultimum*) becomes like the First (the *Primum*) closing the intelligible circle.

Timothy Johnson explains the concept of contuition in Bonaventure's thought as

The greatest knowledge of God, albeit indirect, which the intellect can acquire. In the systematic consideration of divine truth, the gift of understanding purifies the heart, thereby preparing the intellect for the contuition of God. As the intellect considers the vestiges of material creatures and the images and similitudes of rational creatures, it ascends to the knowledge of the Trinity. When the intellect arrives at this point in contemplation, it can go no further; instead, it is called to rest from all speculative labor and entrust itself to God. A deeper knowledge of the divine is possible only through the gift of charity by which the soul is united with the Trinity. (Johnson 1999: 169)

Contuition is the bridge that links human intellection and divine illumination and is the continuity between them.

D. Connell says:

*contuitus* expresses the outcome of that subtle relation between illumination and the operations of the mind in virtue of which it grasps with certitude what is presented to it either in its abstract concepts or in its immediate experience of itself, not simply, however, in its own mutable light, but in the light of the eternal reasons, which shine through the objects of its knowledge in consequence of the illuminative presence of God. (Connell 1974: 304)

And Connell later continues:

St. Bonaventure's God is always at the same time both manifest and hidden; manifest because he is the light apart from which nothing would appear to the understanding, hidden because what the light manifests directly is not the light itself but that in which the light is reflected. Every understanding of being is bathed in the light of being itself which is brought into focus for the mind when it forms, not

simply its abstract concept of being but its assent to the reality of being as *He Who Is*, utterly separated from all that in any way is not, reflected for it in the mirror of the divine name. (Connell 1974: 308)

Poinsot describes something akin to this spiritual *contuition* of God in and through the sensible sign-vehicle through the example of the relation between proper and common sensibles within natural experience:

Wherefore, we respond simply that sense cognizes the significate in a sign in the way in which that significate is present in the sign, but not only in the way in which it is the same as the sign. For example, when a proper sensible such as a color is seen together with a common sensible, such as a profile and movement, the profile is not seen as the same as the color, but as conjoined to the color, and rendered visible through that color, nor is the color seen separately and the profile separately; so when a sign is seen and a significate is rendered present in it, the significate is attained there as conjoined to the sign and contained in it, not as existing separately and as absent. (Poinsot 1985 [1632]: Book I, Question 6, 308/34–47; cf. Deely 2001: 533)

## 17. Divine ideas, seminal reasons, and light

It is significant that, in the creation sequence of *Genesis* 1, what is made on the first day is light, that created participation in God who is Light, and hence the symbol of the presence of God within everything that is to follow. In *Genesis* 1, God creates through the Word, the *Verbum*: “God said, and so it was. And God saw that it was good.” The *Verbum* is also referred to in Scripture as the *Logos*, the Reason or Mind of God, and “All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (*John* 1:2–5).

It is this *Verbum*, this *Logos*, who is the Exemplar Cause of all creation that is at the center of the *metaphysics of manifestation* of St. Bonaventure. The psalmist prays: “let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord.” And John testifies that Christ is the “true light that enlightens everyone who has come into the world.” (*John* 1:9) Light, the substance of all being, is the necessary condition for distinctions and knowledge, as well as the principle of moral goodness.

According to Bonaventure the first form of all bodily beings is light, and the hierarchy of bodily beings is determined by the degree to which each is informed by light.<sup>32</sup> The empyrean sphere of the medieval cosmos is the realm of pure light, but Bonaventure believes (c. 1250–52a: 321,

= *II Sent.* d.13, a.2, q.2) that all bodies naturally participate in the light. Since light is the most general and substantial form, and acts as the intermediary between matter and form, it is the actualization of an additional form or forms that characterize and make each individual being unique. Through the collaboration of matter as the principle of passivity, and light as the principle of energy and activity, all future forms of bodies come into being and develop. Through the influence of light, matter is prepared to receive other possible and progressively more complex forms present within matter itself.

Zachary Hayes states that, according to Bonaventure

material reality is not inert and passive but is full of active powers [seminal reasons] virtually present from the beginning and educed into an actual diversity of beings in the course of history through the agency of specific creatures. All forms, with the exception of the human soul, are co-created with matter and have resided in matter since the creation of the world. (Hayes 2002: 227)

These seminal reasons within all things created are reflections of and correspond with the Divine Ideas in the Mind of the Creator.<sup>33</sup> These Divine Ideas are, in fact, the self-knowledge of God, the Uncreated Word, who expressed the Divine Being into the “other” of creation (i.e., Matter). God knows these “others” through representative likenesses which are, in fact, ontologically identical to God himself, since what God knows he knows in himself.<sup>34</sup> Hence, in God the Divine Idea is one; while in creation the Divine Ideas (likenesses) are multiple, since this reflects God’s knowledge of these likenesses. God knows each thing by these ideas in the Divine Mind; these ideas are the eternal forms of things and are, in fact, God himself (Bonaventure 1250–52b: 11 and 17b, = *II Sent.* d.1, p.1, a.1, q.1 ad 3 and 4). God is, then, “like” the creature, even as the creature is “like” God. Bonaventure then distinguishes between these two forms of likeness by specifying that the way God is like the creature is *similitudo exemplativa*, while the way the creature is like God is *similitudo imitativa* (see 1254a: 9a, *De sci. Christi* q.2 concl.).

These correspond with Bonaventure’s two ways of knowing: one that causes things to be; the other that is caused by things, i.e., that is the way of the creature.<sup>35</sup> God’s knowledge is an expressive similitude that provides the *ratio expressionis*, but does not enter into composition with matter (Bonaventure 1250–52a: 601b, = *I Sent.* d.35, a.1, q.1, resp.).

The universe is, then, what Hayes calls “the external language-system in which the content of the immanent Word is expressed outside of God” (2002: 229). Each creature is a word spoken by God and an expression of God, but it is neither God nor in God; it is a creature in rela-

tion to God (Bonaventure 1250–52a: 483a, = *I Sent.*, d.27, p.2, a.1, q. 1 concl.). Every word of the universe is the embodiment of God’s self-communicative love. “*Verbum divinum est omnis creatura, quia Deum loquitur*” (Bonaventure 1254–57c: 16, = *Comm. in Eccl.*, I, II, q.2, concl.: “Every creature is the Divine Word, because every creature speaks God.”). All four of the elements constitutive of these created words are within the human body (the most complex example of Bonaventure’s plurality of forms), and so it is a “summary” of the universe, a microcosm of the macrocosm. The human person as embodied spirit is thus subjectively apt to read and interpret the universal analogy of God’s language of love. Hence, it is in the form of the human body that God fully reveals himself in Christ, as he unites all of creation in his body: the perfect “summary” of the universe of God’s self-expressive Word.

### 18. Contuition and *Ordo*

The capacity of creation to be a universal analogy of God indicates the basis for what Bonaventure terms *contuition*<sup>36</sup> — in Hellman’s summary: “a co-recognition, a co-knowledge of one object together with another, so that one cannot recognize one without also recognizing the other” (2001: 15). The basis for this co-recognition is an underlying structure that is common to both the Uncreated and created orders. Hellman hails this as “Bonaventure’s basic insight” (2001: 14). What the human person recognizes in everything created is the presence of God in a particular *ordo*. Contuition is a simultaneous realization that the same order exists in both the created and the Uncreated, though one is imperfect and the other perfect. The most perfect experience of contuition occurs in contemplation, when the metaphysical structure of created beings is grasped as a vestige or image of God.

What is this underlying structure or *ordo* that is common to both created and Uncreated Life? Hellman continues to elucidate Bonaventure’s schema. Order consists of three elements, since three is the first number that indicates both unity and plurality. These are called by Bonaventure the *postrema*, *media*, and *summa*; or also the *principium*, *medium*, and *ultimum*. One, by itself, is unintelligible, since “first” can only be understood in terms of “second”; two introduces duality and distinction, but distinction cries out for unity, since distinction cannot be realized unless one and two are related. Three allows for distinction but resolves the extremes into unity, harmony, and proportion. Bonaventure’s theology is inexorably Trinitarian and Christological, therefore, just as the extremes of any created order are first and last with a middle that joins them. One

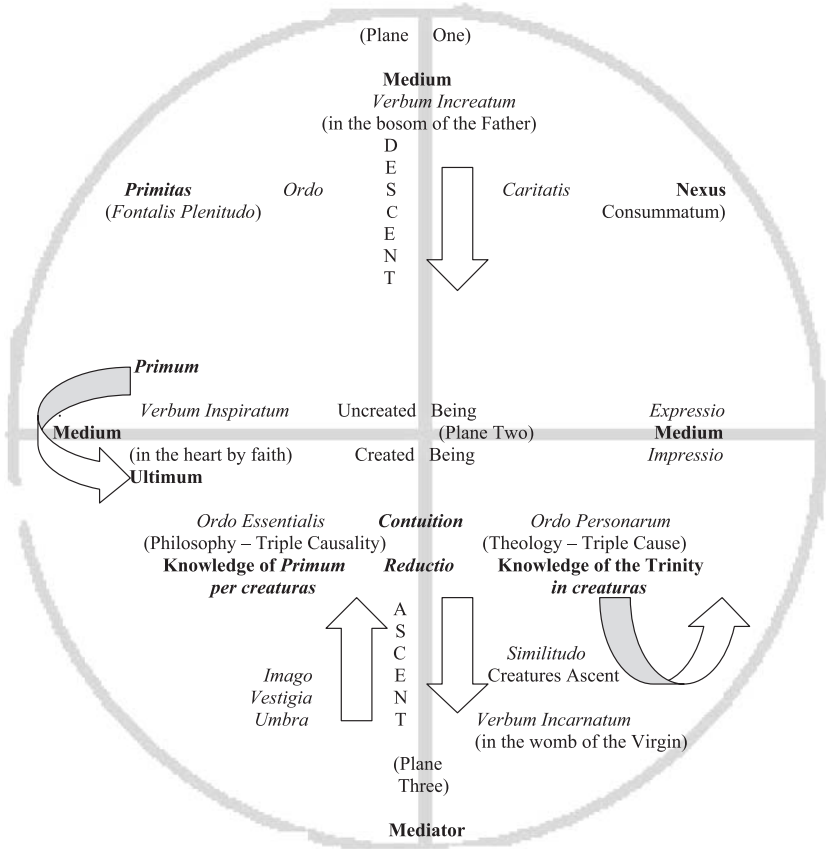


Figure 2. *The intersecting planes of Trinity, Exemplar, and Verbum Incarnatum*<sup>37</sup>

contuits the perfection of this order within the Uncreated Order, the inner Trinitarian life of God.

Here I may ask the reader to refer to Figure 2.

The Source of the Trinity is the *Primum* or First, which of necessity implies the Consummation or Last; and these two require a Center or Medium that joins them and brings them into Communion, closing the Intelligible Circle. The circle is a perfect form of Order since its starting point and ending point are the same. Within the *Ordo Caritatis*, this Uncreated Order overflows (*egressus*) into creation through the *Verbum Increatum* (the *Medium*), and the created order now becomes the *ultimum* of a second intelligible circle.



Hellman explains (2001) that *in the order of knowledge (Ordo Essentialis)* the consummation of this second circle is the return (*reductio*) to the *Primum*, which is able to be known philosophically as the First Being *through* understanding of the creatures investigated as shadow, vestige, image, and similitude (a Vertical Order).<sup>38</sup>

In the order of salvation the return through theology is to the Trinitarian God, to the *Primitas* — the name given by Bonaventure to the Father, the *Fontalis plenitudo* — who empties himself into the Son (Image/Uncreated Word), and through the Son into the Holy Spirit — the *Nexus* or Bond of their Love (a Horizontal Order). In this salvific order (*Ordo Personarum*) the *reductio (conformitas)* or consummation into union with the Trinity is achieved — in faith and theology — through the *Verbum Incarnatum* (the Mediator, the God-Man). The Incarnate Word, Jesus the Christ, gives the Holy Spirit to all humans and the Spirit introduces them to the Divine Order of the Communion of Persons present and acting *in* all creatures through Christ. The *reductio* of the created person within the *Ordo Personarum* occurs at the level of *similitudo*.

The Center of *descent* in creation, and the Center of *ascent* to the *Primum* through triple causality in the *Ordo Essentialis* (vestige, image, likeness) is the *Verbum Increatum*. The Center of *descent* through the incarnation and the Center of *ascent* through the *Ordo Personarum* to the Triple Cause — the *Primitas*, *Verbum*, *Nexus* — is the same: Christ the Lord, the Medium, the *Verbum Incarnatum*.

The sevenfold development of the *Journey of the Mind* into God forms the ultimate *Signum* of Bonaventure's theology: The Intelligible Circle whose Center is found only through the Cross of Christ. "For the center is lost in the circle, and it cannot be found except by two lines crossing each other at right angles" (Bonaventure 1273: 333b, = *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 1, n. 24).

## 19. Contuition in the Itinerarium

In the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure applies the experience of St. Francis, as he grew in knowledge and love of God, to the journey of human knowing. The Medium is a crucified Christ because, as Bonaventure states: "our soul could not rise perfectly from the things of sense to a *contuitum* of itself and the eternal Truth in itself unless Truth, assuming human nature in Christ, had become a ladder, restoring the prior ladder that had been broken in Adam" (Bonaventure 1259–1260: 306a, = *Itin.* 4.1). Hammond observes that "The mind must be redeemed (i.e., reordered)

so that it might know the divine order reflecting in the created order” (2001: 210).

Bonaventure creates an intriguing system of *reductio* (a ladder of horizontal and vertical “wings”) that consolidates the created order of being (*specula* — *mirrors*) and the order of knowing (*speculatio*). This ladder provides the possibility of *contuiting* the Uncreated Order as the means of return. Each of the first six chapters of Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium* (1259–60a)<sup>39</sup> describes the journey into God through human knowing in three sets of pairs — referring to the mind’s three principal orientations of physical (*sensus*), spiritual (*spiritus*) and mind (*mens*) — that correspond to the six wings of the Seraph that appeared to Francis on Mt. Alverno and impressed his bodily being with the likeness of the crucified.

The first two chapters of the *Itinerarium* treat of *contuitio* through the *vestigia* of creation (God as efficient, formal, and final cause) — co-recognizing God first through creatures and then in creatures. The second set of two chapters examines the human person’s *contuitio* of God through his own spiritual powers, and then *within* his own spiritual powers (*imago* — God as triple cause and object). Finally, the last set of chapters treats of human experience beyond itself in likeness to God through grace (*similitudo* — God’s indwelling presence as source of faith, hope, and charity). Each of the mind’s illuminations is a co-knowing of God’s presence. These six illuminations, together with the seventh of Christ on the Seat of Mercy as the Medium of all Illumination, constitute an iconic introduction to *Sign Relation*<sup>40</sup> in the thought of Bonaventure.

## 20. Illumination, contuitio, abstraction

Bonaventure assumes Augustine’s theory of illumination as the foundation for his theory of knowledge through sign, but Bonaventure complements the concept of illumination with both Aristotle’s theory of abstraction and his own theory of *contuitio* in order to account for the *Expressio-Impressio-Expressio* metaphysical relation that exists between God as the *Object Signified*,<sup>41</sup> creation as the *sign-vehicle*, and the human person as the *sign-vehicle/interpretant* (to use the language developed in subsequent centuries by Peirce, Peirce, and Deely).

Here a Figure may be helpful to the reader in visualizing Bonaventure’s semiotic synthesis: see Figure 3.

Since the human person is *impressed* by God as image of the Exemplar having the light of reason, but also with physical senses capable of receiving the *expressio* of all things (sign-vehicles), human persons are capacitated to be mediating signs in relation with the Object Signified —

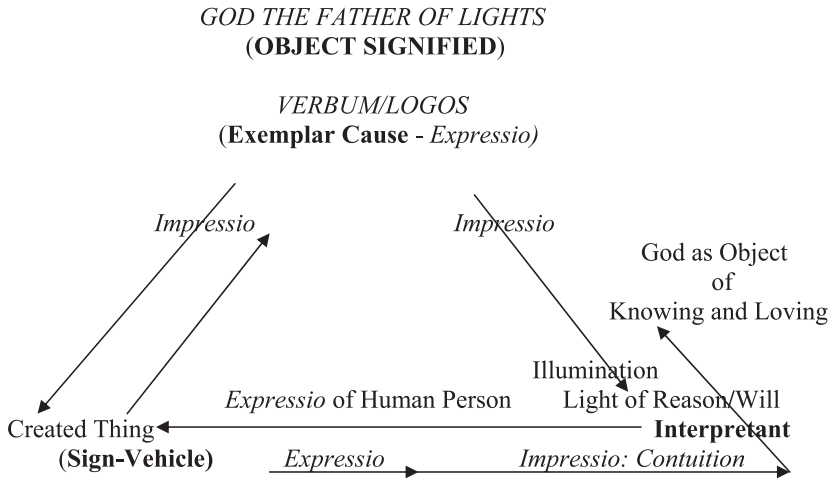


Figure 3. Bonaventure's synthesis of illumination, abstraction, and contuitio

God the Father of Lights. The human person is able to *receive* the physical expressions of created things and *contuit* the presence of the Object Signified.

As the created thing becomes (in Peirce's words) the *representamen* of the Signified, the thing-now-object (since known in its own reality, even if also in relation to the Signified) serves as a *ladder* by which the human person is able to ascend to the Signified.<sup>42</sup> And the Signified becomes, through *contuitio*, the Object of the human person's spiritual powers of knowing and loving.<sup>43</sup>

For Bonaventure, knowing always involves the affect as well as the intellect — apprehension involves the perception of beauty and the judgment of a thing as helpful or harmful. The ascent to God is an ascent of the heart (*ascensus cordialis*) — an ascent of mind and affect (Bonaventure 1259–60a: 300b, = *Itin.* 2.5). At this point, according to Bonaventure, the human person becomes a True Image, as he/she participates in God's own power of knowing himself *immediately and directly*, not through senses. Like Augustine,<sup>44</sup> Bonaventure insists that it is only because of the prior illumination by God through Christ the only Teacher that the light of human reason is able to know at all — know the thing in its own nature, as object and knowable, and as sign-vehicle of the Signified.

Illumination is that presence of the Light of God to human reason that enables human reason to know, for the light of reason is but a

participation in Divine Reason.<sup>45</sup> Bonaventure states clearly that the Divine Light does not act before our intelligence but with it, at the same time. The Divine Light is not the object that we contemplate but the power that, penetrating our spirit, transforms it and renders it capable of seeing. Participating in Divine Reason, human reason is capacitated to discern whether the expression of the created thing is coherent with the Object Signified, and therefore to choose whether or not to receive the impression into his/her own understanding of Truth.

For Bonaventure as a theologian, there is only one possible model for each created thing that will enable it to be coherent with the Object Signified: the Trinity. Hence, for him, the model of the Trinity *necessarily* illuminates every created reality. This corresponds with Peirce's designation of every reality as triadic in nature. Differing from Aristotle in his understanding of *necessary reasons*, Bonaventure means that he has found a correspondence between human experience and the Trinity, and he considers that correspondence the only possible explanation of what we experience. This is an argument that shows necessity not in the sense of compulsion, but rather as a *logical consequence* of what is self-evidently true. Bonaventure first states what is logically necessary, and then he looks to human experience for an analogical manifestation of that truth, which manifestation he formulates as the necessary, or justifying, reason. He thus makes faith intelligible through recourse to the "book of life."

Faith is, for Bonaventure, a loving summation of a Formal Object, achieved through a complementarity of intellectual penetration and personal adherence. Those impressions judged as coherent with the Signified Trinitarian model and assimilated into the *intellectum* of the human person are then mediated into a return (*regressus*) to the Father of Light. The capacity of each created thing to *express* its own unique light and then *impress* itself upon the human senses, and so enter into the human light of reason, initiates through the sign relation the possibility of the return of things, both nonhuman and human, to God.<sup>46</sup> Hence the natures of both (non-human and human, material and spiritual), comprising the whole of creation, find fulfillment.

## 21. Peirce, Bonaventure, semiotics, and God

Does Bonaventure's analogical understanding of Faith through Sign correlate with anything Peirce himself expressed regarding semiotics as a way of knowing God?

I believe that it does, beyond even the overarching understanding of God as Love, as discovered by both writers in the Gospel of John.

Michael Raposa, in his study of Peirce's philosophy of religion (Raposa 1989: 130–154), uses language and draws conclusions that cannot fail to bring Bonaventure to mind. Peirce calls the world God's "argument" or his "great poem" that forms the basis for his "theological semiotic." He too concludes, like Bonaventure before him, that "though we cannot think any thought of God's, we can catch a fragment of His thought, as it were" ("Answers to questions concerning my belief in God," *CP* 6.502, c. 1906).

How do we manage to catch this fragment? Through what Peirce refers to as Musement, a deliberate process of *abduction*, or forming hypotheses that enable a person to see the three universes (the semiotic triad) in a new way while engaged in meditative thinking.<sup>47</sup> New categories and classifications emerge as the Muser "plays" — connecting, disconnecting, and rearranging data continuously. Peirce admits readily that the great beauty of the *summum bonum* exerts great power over the mind that compels the affirmation of the Divine Reality. Peirce explains (Letter to William James, *CP* 8.262, 23 July, 1905) that "the human mind and the human heart have a filiation to God" that makes the gentle influence of God irresistible and acknowledgement of God as "living" necessary.

Abduction forms a triad with induction and deduction as ways of knowing, but abduction is the primary logic of sign-interpretation, while deduction is concerned with the mitigation of their vagueness, and induction tests their adequacy. To interpret the meaning of some thing, one has to form a certain hypothesis about it. "Hypothesis substitutes, for a complicated tangle of predicates attached to one subject, a single conception" ("Deduction, induction, and hypothesis," *CP* 2.643, 13 August, 1878). Abduction suggests the hypothesis by resemblance — the resemblance between the observed configuration of facts and the system of beliefs and habits of life of the Muser is the source of the abduction.<sup>48</sup> The hypothesis can come by a long process of reasoning, or through immediate and unconscious perception, but experience is always interpreted experience. Experience itself is not the source of ideas. Experience presents us with the *objects* but not the *meaning* or interpretants of the objects as signs. Grasping the meaning requires abductive insight; experience provides only the occasion.

Experience remains mute apart from the creative input of the human intellect. Perception (the cognition of meaning) is a process governed by the law of the mind — the law of the association of ideas — and is itself a communication event. Peirce observes, at the young age of twenty-three: "A man looks upon nature, sees its sublimity and beauty and his spirit gradually rises to the idea of God. He does not see the Divinity, nor does nature prove to him the existence of that Being, but it does

excite his mind and imagination until the idea becomes rooted in his heart" ("The place of our age in the history of civilization," *W* 1: 108–109, 1863).<sup>49</sup>

The meaning of the symbol of God is too vast and complex to be embodied in the life of a single individual, and so requires an unlimited *community* of interpreters destined to discover and to embody the meaning of the divine poem only in the long run. Individuals catch but a fragment of God's thought.

Like Bonaventure, Peirce's understanding of God does not remain in the realm of thought, but extends through meditative prayer into the realm of praxis — in belief-habits that shape human conduct as they do perceptions. The method that Peirce outlines begins with an act of interpretation, a reading of signs presented in human experience; it proceeds through exploration and clarification of that interpretation as it utilizes it as a rule for living, a habit of action.<sup>50</sup>

For Peirce, universal semiosis is the dynamics of objective mind — a continuous relation of object and interpretant in signs. It is the means by which God relates to and communicates with lesser minds; and if all reality is continuous, then everything is potentially a sign of God's presence, and semiotics is in a real sense theosemiosis. But for Peirce all theological reflection must be attached to praxis and the role of the community. Religious meditation, theological inquiry, and moral practice need to be continuous in order that truth will be discovered in the long run by the unlimited community of inquirers.<sup>51</sup> Since every sign has an infinite number of interpretants, and individuals are themselves signs communicating in reciprocal acts of interpretation, Raposa concludes that persons, communities, sacred texts and traditions are each the living embodiment of meaning and the fragment of more complex systems of meaning.

As Gilson observed, Bonaventure, the Mystical Theologian, posits in *thought* — in this case a theological semiotics — what St. Francis *lived*: an intimacy of relationship with God, the human community, and all of creation established through a *metaphysics of manifestation*. Christopher Cullen (2000) summarizes this well when he explains that all the things of the world must be signs because, if they were not, it would mean that there is a cause other than God, or that God did not know. But clearly both of those options are impossible, for God is the only source for reality and God knows and the knowledge that God knows is one with himself. Truth is the one divine essence, and the multiform wisdom of God lies hidden in all knowledge and in all nature. Cullen concludes:

Bonaventure's doctrine means that creation itself is a theophany — a manifestation of God. There is total identity between the world and God and total differ-

ence. There is a total identity insofar as the whole world is a sign from God as the Signifier; and there is a total difference insofar as God is completely beyond the sign he has given. Insofar as God is immanent, he is also transcendent. Indeed, only God's radical immanence preserves His utter transcendence. Everything is a sign of its Signifier, but he is a Signifier who is utterly beyond what any sign could mean. (Cullen 2000: 324)

## 22. Summary and conclusion

*Omnia enim vera sunt et nata sunt se exprimere per expressionem illius summi luminis* (Bonaventure 1250–52a: 151b, = I Sent., d.8, p.1, a.1, q.1 ad 4 et 7).

Bonaventure's *Metaphysics of Manifestation*, developed in the mid-thirteenth century, anticipated the core theories developed by Poinset and Peirce centuries later. While Bonaventure does not focus on elucidating the theory of sign introduced by Augustine, he presupposes it, exfoliates Augustine's foundational terms, and so contributes a theology that is hailed as the culmination of the Augustinian tradition. It is, thus, the common source in Augustine's thought that provides the link between the symbolic theology of Bonaventure and the semiotics of Poinset and Peirce.

“*For all things are true and are born to express themselves by means of the expression of that highest light,*” as Bonaventure summarized in our quotation which opened (and which will close) this “concluding summary.” This insight, lavished upon Bonaventure while meditating upon the life of St. Francis, summarizes also his contemplation of the cosmos and his semiotics. Within it, we perceive Deely's central premise that “Every sign consists in the three-cornered *relation itself* connecting the sign at one and the same time to the mind and to the object signified” (2001: 219). Because of this three-cornered relation, the human knower (Peirce's *interpretant*) is able to judge and integrate into himself the truth of every sign-vehicle (*the knower becomes that which he knows*). The sign-vehicle is integrally capable of expressing itself, both in its own nature and as integrally related to the Object Signified, *because* the Object Signified is *related to and present within both the sign-vehicle and the knower*.

Bonaventure under-girds this insight with a unique intertwining of multifaceted understandings: of Light as the principle of physical, intellectual, and spiritual knowing; of the Trinitarian relations as *Primitas*, *Verbum*, and *Nexus*; of the Medium, mediation, and reduction; of the Divine *Ordo Caritatis*, *Ordo Essentialis*, and *Ordo Personarum*; of the dynamics of *expressio-impresio-expressio*; of dynamic innatism; of

exemplarity (Divine Ideas/seminal ideas); of *umbra*, *vestigia*, *imago*, and *similitudo*, and of contemplation through illumination and *contuition*.

Light — the principle of energy and activity — provides the key to Bonaventure's semiotics, a *metaphysics of manifestation*. It is light that physically makes manifestation possible — the *impressio* and subsequent *expressio* of the sign-vehicle; the *impressio* in the knower and subsequent *expressio* (“*Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to the Father*”: Matt. 5:16). These are both rendered possible by the *Expressio* of the *Verbum* of the Father of Lights, the *Primum* and the *Fontalis plenitudo*, in the mode of Exemplarity.

It is light that *intellectually* makes knowledge possible — through the light that renders natural human reason capable of discerning whether the *expressio* of the sign-vehicle coheres with the Object Signified; through the innate idea of God which the human person *discovers* as the capacitating model of his/her own thinking process; through Christ the Light who has come into the world to enlighten every human being and mediate the final communion with the Trinity in the *Ordo Personarum*.

It is light that *spiritually* makes knowledge possible — through *contuition* (the simultaneous co-recognition of sign-vehicle and Object Signified), the human knower is capable of making God the object of his knowing and loving powers in contemplation. This *contuition* is possible *only because* of the truth recognized only much later by semiotics — that the sign-vehicle is not equivalent to the *signum* (see Deely 2002b). Rather, the Sign is the three-cornered RELATION of Object Signified, sign-vehicle, and interpretant; it is this co-inhering relation that makes *contuition*, as Bonaventure understands it, possible.

Bonaventure recognized this fact when he stated that “everything exists toward something — a relation.” It is this integrally triadic nature of all reality that is the common basis for the semiotics of Bonaventure and of Charles Peirce. Both unequivocally agree that the correspondence between sign-vehicle, object signified, and interpretant in triadic relation constitutes the only possible explanation of human experience; the logical explanation of what is self-evidently true. Through *contuition*, Bonaventure, a theologian, goes one step beyond the *musement and abduction* of Peirce, the philosopher. Bonaventure names the Object Signified as the Triadic Nature which is the Source of all communication and communion: *Primitas*, *Verbum*, *Nexus*.

For Peirce, Poinset, and Augustine, as for Bonaventure, human experience and human knowledge are ultimately about and for communication, communion, and Love. For Peirce, semiotics explains *What Is*; for Bonaventure, the sacramental nature of the cosmos reveals *Why it is how it Is*. Through *musement and abduction*, Peirce experiences the “great poem”



of the world as the gentle but irresistible influence of God pressing human beings to acknowledge him as “living.” Through contuitio, Bonaventure knows that all things that exist exhibit this truth — that they have come into existence in order to manifest that they are a reflection of that highest light (*Omnia enim vera sunt et nata sunt se exprimere per expressionem illius summi luminis*, Bonaventure 1250–52a: 151b).

## Notes

1. If one looks at the Annual Proceedings volumes of the Semiotic Society of America (beginning with *Semiotics 1980*, and continuing each year thereafter), in the *Semiotics 1983*, *1984*, and *1985* volumes one finds sections on “Neglected figures in the history of semiotic inquiry,” with discussion of Ramon Lull (1232–1314), Francis Suarez (1548–1617), Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Gustav Spet (1879–1940), Thomas Reid (1710–1796), Michael Polanyi (1871–1976), Martin Buber (1878–1965), Kazimierz Twardowski (1866–1938), Conimbricenses (sixteenth-seventeenth centuries), Philipp Wegener (1848–1916), Konrad Lorenz (1903–1989), John Henry Newman (1801–1890), Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), Gaston Bachelard (1884–1962), Prague, Graz, and Vienna schools (early twentieth century), Josiah Royce (1855–1916), John Dewey (1859–1952), and Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898) — a rather distinguished list. To that list, no doubt far from complete, the present essay adds St. Bonaventure.
2. . . . there is a threefold help for rising to the exemplary principles, that is, the sensible creatures, the rational creatures, and the sacramental scriptures: and this help contains a mystery. As regards the first, the whole world is a shadow, a way, and a trace; a book with writing front and back. Indeed, in every creature there is a refulgence of the divine exemplar, but mixed with darkness: hence it resembles some kind of opacity combined with light. Also, it is a way leading to the exemplar. As you notice that a ray of light coming in through a window is colored according to the shades of the different panes, so the divine ray shines differently in each creature and in the various properties . . . Every spiritual substance is light. Hence, the Psalm: The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us. At the same time it is a mirror, for it receives and represents all things; and it has the nature of light, so that it may even pass judgment on things. For the whole world is described in the soul. It [the spiritual creature] is also an image. Since it is both light and mirror containing images of things, it is image too. . . . But the third help is that of sacramental Scripture. For the whole of Scripture is the heart of God, the mouth of God, the tongue of God, the pen of God, a scroll written within and without. Bonaventure (1273, *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 12, n. 14, 16 in 1970 DeVink trans.)
3. As cited in Deely (2001: 221, from *De doctrina Christiana*, Book I, ch. 1): “A sign is anything perceived which makes something besides itself come into one’s awareness.”
4. = *IV Sent.*, d. 1, p.1, a.1, q.2. Poinot captures this point (1985 [1632]: Book I, Question 3) by saying that the sign respects its significate directly (*id quod*) but its interpretant only indirectly (*id cui*).
5. “And since presenting objects is exactly the function of signs, the action of signs is a species of this last distinguished extrinsic formal causality, called ‘specificative,’ rather than a species of either final causality or exemplary causality” (Deely 2001: 631–633).

6. "Si ergo sua bonitas consistit in communicatione actus nobilissimi, qui est vivere et intelligere, decuit, ut non tantum daret alii potentiam vivendi et intelligendi, sed etiam potentiam alii communicandi" (1250–52b: *II Sent.* d. 1, p. 1, a. 2, q. 2, fund. 3).
7. "Et ideo intelligendum quod cum creatura ducat in cognitionem Dei per modum umbrae, per modum vestigii et per modum imaginis differentia eorum notior, a qua etiam denominator, accipitur penes modum repraesentandi. Nam *umbra* dicitur, in quantum repraesentat in quadam elongatione et confusione; *vestigium*, in quantum in elongatione sed distinctione; *imago* vero in quantum in propinquitate et distinctione" (Bonaventure 1250–52a: 73a, = *I Sent.* d.3, p.1, a.1, q.2 ad 4, italics added).
8. See Aristotle c. BC348/7b, *Physics* 6.1 (231b1–5) and c. BC348/7a, *Analytica posteriora* 1.23. In Bonaventure, see 1254–1257a: 243a, = *Breviloquium*, Pars IV, c. 2.
9. See Aristotle c. BC330: *Metaphysica* 10.7 (1057a–b), and c. BC335/4: *Ethica Nichomachea* 2.8–9. See Bonaventure (1250–1252b: 561, = *II Sent.*, d.24, p.1, a.2, q.1, arg. 6; also 1273 [= *Hexaëmeron*], e.g., page 334).
10. "And so it appears that the whole world is like a single mirror, full of luminaries that stand before divine Wisdom, shedding light as would live coals" (Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 2, n. 27, in 1970 DeVinck trans.).
11. "And so, in the end, the universe as a whole, in terms of medieval semiotic theory, exactly as Peirce later projected, comes to be 'perfused with signs, if it does not consist exclusively of them.' For now we see that there are signs and there are signifieds, and that whatever is signified can itself become a sign in relation to other objects signified!" (Deely 2001: 435).
12. Ontological relation: a relation may have a source in nature or in thought, but in either case the relation as such remains a pure relation. Pure relation: what exists not as or within an individual but with its whole being between other things. See Deely (2001: 423).
13. "Dicendum, quod cum imago dicatur ab actu repraesentandam imago refertur ad prototypum, ut dicit Damascenus et repraesentatio dupliciter possit convenire alicui: vel per formam *naturalem*, vel per formam *artificialem*; quod duplex est imago, *naturalis* scilicet et *artificialis*. Et cum homo non repraesentet per formam *artificialem*, sed per suam formam *naturalem* et potentias ei naturaliter inditas; homo non est imago *artificialis*, sed *naturalis*" (Bonaventure 1250–52b: 397b, = *II Sent.*, d.16, a.1, q.2).
14. "Aliae creaturae possunt considerari ut res, vel ut signa" (Bonaventure 1250–52a: *I Sent.*, d. 3, p.1, a.1, q. 3 ad 2).
15. The "great divide" here, of course, is Kant, with his proposal of the world as unknowable Ding-an-sich, and God and the soul as unknowable *noumena*. See Deely (2001: ch. 13).
16. "Morbus autem est originalis culpa, quae per ignorantiam inficit mentem et per concupiscentiam inficit carnem . . . Ad hoc ergo, quod medicina correspondens esset omnibus supradictis, oportuit, quod non tantum esset spiritualis, verum etiam aliquid haberet de sensibilibus signis, ut, sicut haec sensibilia fuerunt animae occasio labendi, ita essent ei occasio resurgendi" (Bonaventure 1254–57a: 265a, = *Breviloquium*, Pars VI, c. 1).
17. See Breton (1943: 79); Bonaventure (1250–52a: 72a–73b, = *I Sent.*, d.3, p.1, q. 2).
18. Cf. "Basis of pragmatism," *CP* 5.448, 1906: "The October remarks made the proper distinction between the two kinds of indeterminacy, viz.: indefiniteness and generality, of which the former consists in the sign's not sufficiently expressing itself to allow of an indubitable determinate interpretation, while the [latter] turns over to the interpreter the right to complete the determination as he please. It seems a strange thing, when one comes to ponder over it, that a sign should leave its interpreter to supply a part of its meaning; but the explanation of the phenomenon lies in the fact that the entire

universe — not merely the universe of existents, but all that wider universe, embracing the universe of existents as a part, the universe which we are all accustomed to refer to as ‘the truth’ — that all this universe is perfused with signs, if it is not composed exclusively of signs. Let us note this in passing as having a bearing upon the question of pragmatism.”

19. “Relucet autem Creatoris summa potentia et sapientia et benevolentia in rebus creatis secundum quod hoc tripliciter nuntiatur sensu carnis sensui interiori” (Bonaventure 1259–60a: 298b, = *Itinerarium* c. 1, n. 10).
20. “Ergo ad hoc, quod divina potentia manifestatu plene, necesse fuit substantiam spirituales et corporales producere, rursu productas unire” (Bonaventure 1250–52b: 41b, = *II Sent.*, d.1, p.1, a.2, q.2, fund.1).
21. For extensive treatment of mankind’s position as medium in creation, see Schaefer (1965).
22. “The sign-vehicle, thus, in contrast to the sign-relation, is the representative element in the sign, while the relation arising from this foundation, obtaining (or obtainable) *over* and *above* the foundation, and *terminating* at a signified object, alone makes this representative element a representation of *something other than itself*. In the absence of this relation, hence, the foundation becomes merely virtual or material as a foundation and is then experienced simply as a *self*-representation or object” (Deely 2001: 638).
23. “So the knowledge of being may depend on the prior action of signs; but being must become known before signs can become known, and the investigation of the action of signs must await the establishment of the reality of what is acting, if the science is not to be empty. And what comes first, *before or into our awareness* is not a sign as such but being as a distinctive object, the ‘formal object’, as we may now say, distinctive of understanding as species-specifically human” (Deely 2001: 341). See also Deely (2002a); and Guagliardo (1993, 1994).
24. Interpretant: “that to which the Significate is presented through the sign-vehicle” (Deely 2001: 434).
25. The very reason for this is well-stated by Deely (2001: 434): “The actual *signification itself* consists in the relation between the vehicles and the knowability of their objective content.”
26. It is critically important to note here that what Bonaventure speaks of as an “innate idea” of God differs radically from the modern notion of innate ideas as proposed by Descartes and developed within modern philosophy. Bonaventure’s process of dynamic innatism stands in polar opposition also to modern philosophy’s stripping away of sensible characteristics in order to formulate the abstract concept.

According to Bonaventure, the human mind — upon the occasion of experiencing created realities, and particularly in this instance, of itself as created mind — immerses itself in the *incarnational* nature of its own thinking. In this experience, the mind perceives its own thinking process and simultaneously *contuits* the Reality of the Divine Mind intimately present to its mental operations — as the Exemplar Model and Source of its activity (see section 14, Contuition, and following); it does not begin with a direct apprehension of “the idea of God,” as Descartes interprets innateness. What is *directly known* by the human mind is the human thinking process; what is *indirectly known* (contuited) in a confused, ambiguous manner, but known all the same, is what Bonaventure terms the *innate idea of God* that has been *impressed* upon it, enabling the human mind to *express* itself in human thought. This Real Presence of God to the human mind is the Light and Source of its own natural light: human reason.

This confused, ambiguous idea of God develops some specificity as the human mind forms concepts of oneness, truth, beauty, goodness, and first principles. Even as the

mind recognizes these principles of its thinking process, it, in turn, contuits them as necessary principles of the Source and Model of human thought.

It is in this most intimate manner that human reason is a *participation* in Divine Reason — not simply as a distant image of its Exemplar — but the “repeating in our intellect of the same order of knowing which is proper to the divine intellect,” as Bettoni (1964) observes. Bonaventure’s innate idea of God is both Transcendent to the human mind and Immanent — the Light and Presence that is ‘more intimate to us than we are to ourselves’ that Augustine ponders. Bonaventure’s “innate idea of God” is discovered within the mystery of the Incarnation — known in and with his creation, albeit transcendent of it.

Thus Bonaventure’s process of coming to know God ‘contuitively’ contrasts also starkly with the notion of reaching the ‘idea of God’ by any process of “abstraction” stripping away sensible characteristics in order to form an intellectual concept.

27. “She appears unchanging in the rules of divine Law that bind us. These rules filling the rational mind with splendid light are all the ways by which the mind knows and judges that which could not be otherwise . . . these rules are beyond error, doubt, and judgment for judgment is by them and not of them . . . They are also beyond change, restriction and cancellation . . . For these rules are so certain that they cannot be contradicted in any way . . . for they are rooted in Eternal Light and lead to it, but this does not make such light visible. Nor should it be said that they are founded on any created light . . . For these rules are unrestricted in that they offer themselves to the minds of all” (Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 2, n. 9, 10, in the 1970 DeVinck trans.).
28. “Unde dicendum, quod illam inspirationem et vident et audit, sed tamen ex hoc non sequitur, quod videat Deum” Bonaventure (1254–57d: 331a, = *Comment. in Ioan.* c. 6, n. 78).
29. The definition of the term *contuition*, as used by St. Bonaventure, will emerge throughout this paper. Bonaventure indicates a direct and simultaneous knowing of both the creature and the Creator, although the Divine presence is not completely objectifiable in the finite. In and through the particular sensible expression of the creature, its inner being is able to be known. The beauty of this inner being is a direct experience of the Divine Idea in Exemplar form.
30. “For certain knowledge, eternal reason is necessarily involved as a regulative and motive cause, however, not as the sole cause, or in its full clarity; but along with a *created cause*, and as contuited by us ‘in part,’ in accord with our present state of life” (Bonaventure 1254a: 23, = *De sci. Chr.* q.4c).
31. “In those actions which proceed from the creature as an image — and such are the intellectual actions by which the soul sees immutable truth itself — God cooperates as object and as motivating reason . . . if he were the bare and open ground of knowledge, there would be no difference between our knowledge in this life and our knowledge in heaven. But this is clearly false, since in heaven our knowledge will be face-to-face, while on earth . . . our knowledge depends on the sense phantasms. Finally, if he were the total ground, we would have no need of species and reception to know things. This we see to be manifestly false, because when we lose one of our senses, we necessarily lose one type of knowledge” (Bonaventure 1254–57b, in the Johnson 1999 trans.: 161–162).
32. “Again there are in angels some virtues related to rational souls through which they govern men. Indeed, they are the conveyors of light and the uplifters of intelligences so that illuminations may be received. And so there is in them a conveying power, because they are a certain light and transparency, and they temper the divine light within themselves for our sake, so that it may be proportioned to us. Second, there is in them

- an uplifting power through which they make us able, by condescending to us and raising us up, to receive this particular radiation, and yet not as achieving it themselves. Finally, there is in them a supreme power through which they turn themselves to God in the act of receiving splendors, and the eternal light they love; and all things lead back to this light in order that they may tend toward God through love and praise.” (Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 5, n. 27, in the 1970 DeVinck trans.) For an extended discussion of angels in semiotic perspective, see Deely (2004b).
33. “*Rationes exemplares* expresses these potencies from the viewpoint of their Author or Exemplar; *rationes seminales* from the viewpoint of that in which they exist in a manner comparable to seeds” (Bonaventure 1273: *Collationes in Hexaëmeron*, in the 1970 DeVinck trans.: 302). Both *exemplares* and *seminales* represent those potencies in matter that determine their development in God’s preordained plan, according to Bonaventure.
  34. “Tunc autem est immediata coniunctio secundum rationem cognoscendi, quando cognoscens cognoscit cognoscibile vel per essentiam cognoscentis, vel per essentiam cogniti; et tunc non est opus similitudine intermedia, quae differat ab utroque extremorum. Nihilominus tamen ipsa essentia, in quantum est ratio cognoscendi, tenet rationem similitudinis; et hoc modo ponimus similitudinem circa divinam cognitionem, quae non est aliud quam ipsa essentia cognoscentis” (Bonaventure 1254a: 10b, = *De sci. Chr.*, 2 ad 11).
  35. “The third level consists in this, that the intellect itself, considering the condition of being in the light of the relationship between cause and caused, moves itself up from the effect to the causes and passes over to eternal reasons . . . But intelligence is led to this light in a threefold manner: by reasoning, testing, and understanding; rationally, experimentally, and understandingly” (Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 5, n. 28, 29, in the 1970 DeVinck trans.).
  36. See Bonaventure 1254a: *De sci. Chr.*, q. 4, concl., also ad 16; 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 2, n. 9; 1254–57b: *Christus unus Omn. Magister*, n. 17.
  37. In what is diagramed in Figure 2, two dimensions actually must be envisioned as three intersecting circular planes. The first Intelligible Circle represents the Trinity in Relationship, with the *Verbum Increatum* as the Medium (Produced and Producing) between the *Primitas* and the *Nexus (Ordo Caritatis)*. In the second intersecting circular plane, the Divine Order is expressed/impressed through the Medium of the Exemplar (the *Verbum Inspiratum*) and is understood rationally and affectively by human creatures through the *Ordo Essentialis*. In the third intersecting circular plane, the Orders of Wisdom, Creation, and Salvation (the fullness of the Divine Plan) are mediated to the Created Order by the *Verbum Increatum*, *Inspiratum*, and *Incarnatum*, to bring humanity Full Circle into the *Ordo Personarum*.
  38. “Although the metaphysician is able to rise from the consideration of created and particular substance to that of the universal and uncreated and to the very notion of being, so that he reaches the ideas of the beginning, center, and final end, yet he does not attain the notions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For the metaphysician rises to one notion of this being by seeing it in the light of one original principle of all things, and in this he meets physical science that studies the origin of things. He also rises to the notion of this being in the light of the final end, and in this he meets moral philosophy or ethics, which leads all things back to the one Supreme Good as to the final end by considering practical or speculative happiness. But when he considers this being in the light of that principle which is the exemplar of all things, he meets no other science, but is a true metaphysician” (Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 1, n. 13, in the 1970 De Vinck trans.).

39. “Hic igitur sex considerationibus excursis tanquam sex *gradibus throni veri* Salomonis, quibus pervenitur ad pacem, ubi verus pacificus in mente pacifica tanquam in interiori Hierosolyma requiescit; tanquam etiam sex *alis Cherub*, quibus mens veri contemplativi plena illustratione supernae sapientiae valeat sursum agi; tanquam etiam sex *diebus primis*, in quibus mens exercitari habet, ut tandem perveniat ad sabbatum quietis; postquam mens nostra contuita est Deum *extra se* per vestigia et in vestigiis, *intra se* per imaginem et in imagine, *supra se* per divinae lucis similitudinem super nos relucentem et in ipsa luce, secundum quod possibile est secundum statum viae et exercitium mentis nostrae; cum tantum in *sexto* gradu ad hoc pervenerit, ut speculetur in principio primo et summo et mediatore *Dei et hominum*, Iesu Christo, ea quorum similia in creaturis nullatenus reperiri possunt, et quae omnem perspicacitatem humani intellectus excedunt: restat, ut haec speculando transcendat et transeat non solum mundum istum sensibilem, verum etiam semetipsam; in quo transitu Christus est *via et ostium*, Christus est *scala et vehiculum* tanquam *propitiatorium super arcam Dei collocatum* et *sacramentum a saeculis absconditum*” (Bonaventure 1259–60a: 7.1).
40. “Signs act through their foundation, but the actual sign as such is not the foundation but the relation which exists over and above the foundation linking it as sign-vehicle to some object signified . . . For the sign as such consists purely and simply in the *relation between sign-vehicle and object signified*, effected as such through an interpretant, an actual or prospective observer, as we might say” (Deely 2001: 431).
41. “. . . every significate is part of the sign-vehicle/object signified/interpretant trichotomy, never of a dichotomy, because no sign-relation can be binary in its proper being, and every object exists as the signified term of the three-term relation which constitutes the sign in its proper being” (Deely 2001: 682).
42. “Dicendum, quod visibilia possunt dupliciter considerari: vel ut res absolutae vel ut signa et nutus ducentia in aliud. Primo modo si amentur et considerentur retardant intellectum et affectum; secundo modo iuvant; et sic est in apparatione visibili, quia ibi consideratur creatura ut *signum faciens aliud in intellectum venire*” (Bonaventure 1250–52a: 281b–282a, = *I Sent.* d.16, a.1, q.2 ad 3).
43. “Recognition of the connection in every case depends upon our experience. But the *connection recognized* sometimes transcends that dependence and *is recognized so* to transcend. Part of what is recognized is the transcendence, the irreducibility to our experience” (Deely 2001: 719).
44. “. . . were there no illumination from within the mind of one who inquires, signs would avail for nothing whatever in knowledge and life. This illumination from within the mind alone enables us to see things as they are, signs and other objects alike (*signa et res*), so that only the Truth which speaks within the soul, which Augustine identifies with Christ, the only Teacher, not the use of signs as such, is able to instruct the human soul” (Augustine c. 397, as cited in Deely 2001: 218).
45. “Light clothes itself in four different ways. For it is seen as uniform in the rules of Divine Law, as manifold in the mysteries of divine Scripture, as assuming every form in the traces of the divine works, and as without any form in the elevations of divine raptures” (Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 2, n. 8, in the 1970 DeVinck trans.).
46. “And so, when the soul sees these things, it seems to it that it should go through them from shadow to light, from the way to the end, from the trace to truth, from the book to veritable knowledge which is in God. To read this book is the privilege of the highest contemplatives, not of natural philosophers; for the former alone know the essence of things, and do not consider them only as traces” (Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron* Coll. 12, n. 15, in the 1970 DeVinck trans.).

47. Compare Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron* Coll. 20, n. 10, where he describes “perfect contemplation” as a threefold Love that lifts us up to God. Peirce’s three universes call to mind Bonaventure’s three hierarchies: the heavenly (the three Persons in God); the created (angels and humans); the human soul (hierarchical acts of gradual illuminations and progressive expression by which they come to resemble God in their dispositions and actions).
48. Compare Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 10, n. 10–18. Bonaventure develops his hypothesis for the existence of God through a lengthy process of reasoning based upon interpreted human experience of every creature contributing to the making of the mirror by virtue of order, origin, and fulfillment and finally concludes “And so, these thoughts concerning order, origin, and fullness lead to this first Being which all creatures represent. But this name is written in all things: and it is upon these conditions of being that the most certain reasonings are founded. Hence it is said: ‘The first of all created things is being.’ But I say: the first of all intelligible things is the First Being.” See the discussion of dynamic innatism in section 13.
49. Compare Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 20, n. 8, in the 1970 DeVinck trans.: “Consider that in the contemplative soul the sphere of the universe is described, and a certain heavenly spirit that has inscribed within it the whole sphere. There is also described in it the supersubstantial radiation which contains both the sphere of the universe and the universe of the spirits. Wherefore within the contemplative soul there are marvelous lights and a marvelous beauty. And so, as the world, beautiful from top to bottom, from beginning to end, described in the soul produces a mirror; and any spirit is a mirror: so also in the soul there is a marvelous multiplicity, supreme order, and supreme proportionality . . . Again, the radiation which contains every disposition and represents every theory exists within the soul, and the soul is absorbed in it through a transformation of the mind in God . . .”
50. Compare Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 20, n. 15: “Likewise, the radiation of eternity cannot be faced as such, but if we look upon it as it exists in the Church, veiled under the sacraments and figures, we may perceive the One who shows us what has been done, what should be done, and what exists in eternity: what has been done, through allegory; what should be done, through tropology; what exists in eternity, through anagogy.”
- Bonaventure’s three hierarchies are correlated with three modes of interpretation: allegory, tropology, and anagogy. DeVinck clarifies: “Allegory refers to the symbolical prefiguration of a truth of faith or understanding. It is in the order of reason. Tropology refers to matters of ethics. It is in the order of human conduct. Anagogy refers to the ascent toward God. It is in the order of the Last Judgment and of union with God. It is both mystical and teleological” (1970: 309). These further correspond with nature, grace, and glory or image, likeness, and similitude. DeVinck continues: “Nature shows traces of God through acts of perception. Grace shows the likeness of God through the operation of the rational powers. Glory is the God-conforming final stage of the ascent” (1970: 329).
51. Compare Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 19, n. 10: “Man cannot attain the understanding of such things by his own power, but only through those men to whom God revealed them, that is through the original writings of the saints such as Augustine, Jerome, and others. It is fitting, then, to have recourse to those original writings: but they are difficult. Therefore there is need for the summas of the masters in which the difficulties are elucidated. But one must beware of an over-abundance of writings. Yet, since the philosophers quote these same writings, it is necessary for a man to know them or to take them into consideration.”

Cf. also Bonaventure 1273: *Hexaëmeron*, Coll. 9, n. 23, 1970 DeVinck trans.: “The fourth reason for the firmness of the faith consists in the solid opinion of witnesses [words of Scriptures, decrees of councils, and writings of saints]. This solidity results from the fact that reason agrees, for reason cannot contain contradiction. So the judgment rests on a demonstration of reason: that thoughts about God must be supreme and of the highest order.”

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