

## CHAPTER THREE

# *The Foundational Phoenix: Regrounding Theology in a Postmodern Age*

DONALD L. GELPI

---

Academic theology suffers from a certain amount of intellectual faddishness. The latest theological wind of doctrine to rattle the branches in the groves of Academe goes by the name of postmodernism.

Were John Dewey alive today, he would almost certainly rank the term “postmodernism” high on his list of weasel words. Weasel words have so many different meanings that one finds it extremely difficult to pin down the term’s actual referent in any given context. Certainly, the term “postmodernism” means many different things to different people. In general, it designates a vague and highly diversified movement in *fin-de-siècle* Western culture characterized by dissatisfaction with “modernity.” As a term, “modernity” enjoys about as much clarity as “post-modernism”; but in the present context, “modernity” usually connotes the presuppositions of Enlightenment thinking. Post-modernists tend to call into question the omnipotence of technology, to greet universalizing thought with considerable skepticism, and to deplore Enlightenment individualism.<sup>1</sup> I find myself in sympathy with these particular postmodern concerns, although I would want to qualify each of them.

Some scholars find postmodern themes anticipated in the major thinkers of classical American philosophy.<sup>2</sup> In the case of C.S. Peirce, I would agree, although I find William James’s

therapeutic individualism, his nominalism, and the nominalism of both Alfred North Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne as variations on standard modern Enlightenment themes. Peirce, however, really did see through the individualism and nominalism of Enlightenment thinking, and he understood well both the limits and the strengths of scientific, technological thought. In the course of this essay, I shall have occasion to return to Peirce's systematic deconstruction of the Enlightenment.<sup>3</sup>

More typically, postmodern philosophy displays an affinity for European deconstructionist modes of thought. In some of its formulations, deconstructionism deconstructs the subject of discourse. It tends to question the presence of intelligible patterns in history. It sometimes portrays language as floating signifiers without any external referent. Nominalistic resistance to universal generalization focuses much deconstructionist thinking on the concrete, the individual. In its most extreme formulations, deconstruction depicts a non-subject projecting contradictory meanings on a surd and ultimately unintelligible reality.<sup>4</sup>

In a lucid analysis of the theological issues raised by postmodern thinking, Thomas Guarino finds five sets of interrelated challenges which postmodernism poses for contemporary theology: 1) Postmodernism rejects all foundational thinking rooted in ontology. 2) That rejection fuels postmodernism's deconstruction of theological truth. 3) That same rejection raises hermeneutical issues. In deconstructionist postmodernism, texts enjoy historical stability but not their meanings. 4) The postmodern rejection of foundational ontology calls into question the ability of human language to grasp reality. 5) Finally, because deconstructionist postmodernism regards cultural-linguistic systems as incommunicable, it would appear to limit theology to mere intrasystemic coherence.<sup>5</sup>

Guarino finds some merit in the postmodern critique of theology. It challenges theologians to open themselves to the unfamiliar, to the "Other." It reminds theological thinking of the otherness of God and cautions theologians about making facile claims regarding divine and natural law. At the same time, Guarino discovers in deconstructionist postmodernism "a totalizing discipline with an (a)systematic view of reality." Guarino

correctly discovers at the basis of postmodernism's assault on theological thinking its systematic rejection of all foundational ontology, and he calls for theology to respond to this speculative challenge by formulating "an historically and ideologically sophisticated foundationalism."<sup>6</sup>

In this essay, I shall try to draw broadly on classical American philosophy in order to sketch a strategy for doing precisely that. I shall rely most extensively on Peirce's constructive criticism of Enlightenment presuppositions and on the foundations which he laid for a realistic, scientific metaphysics.

The new foundationalism which I shall defend also builds constructively on Bernard Lonergan's suggestion that a systematic, strictly normative exploration of the forms and dynamics of conversion lays solid foundations for the reconstruction of a theological tradition because it provides criteria for distinguishing between sound and unsound theological doctrine. The new foundationalism, however, uses insights gleaned from the classical American philosophers in order to nuance and correct Lonergan's own epistemology, logic, and metaphysics.

Peircean logic distinguishes between the coenosopic and ideoscopic sciences.<sup>7</sup> Philosophy qualifies as "coenosopic" because it reflects critically on lived experience without the assistance of special instrumentation. The ideoscopic sciences, by contrast, use both special instrumentation and mathematical measurement in order to investigate carefully limited realms of experience. The different branches of physics, of chemistry, and of empirical psychology exemplify ideoscopic sciences.

Peirce distinguished five disciplines in the philosophical sciences: phenomenology; the three normative sciences of aesthetics, ethics, and logic; and metaphysics. In Peircean logic, these five philosophical sciences have an organic relationship to one another. Philosophical thinking begins descriptively by giving an account of whatever appears in experience without making any attempt to judge the reality or unreality of appearances. Moreover, Peircean phenomenology seeks to reduce whatever appears in experience to generic categories. Peirce argues that any experienced reality qualifies descriptively as a quality, a fact, or a law. He defines a quality as an instance of particular suchness. Sense qualities,

emotions, images, concepts, practical and moral values: all exemplify qualities. Peirce defines a fact as concrete, decisive interaction. Physical struggle, the decisions one takes in response to physical contact with one's environment or with other persons: all exemplify facts. Peirce defines a law as an instance of real generality. Learned skills, the laws of organic and of inorganic biology, any generalized tendency to act in a predictable way, whether one finds that tendency in living things or in physical nature: all qualify as laws (*CP*, 1.190-91, 280-82, 300-53, 573-615; 5.108-15).

Peirce argues that within the philosophical enterprise, the three normative sciences of aesthetics, ethics, and logic mediate between phenomenology and metaphysics. By a normative science, Peirce means the critical study of the kinds of habits which humans ought to cultivate in some realm of experience. Aesthetics studies the kinds of ideals for which humans ought to live, including the highest good they ought to espouse. In other words, not only does aesthetics study appealing ideals, but it also ranks ideals according to their relative importance for advancing the business of human living. Ethics studies the kinds of decisive habits humans ought to cultivate in order to live for the ideals to which they stand committed. Logic studies the kinds of interpretative responses one ought to cultivate in order to grasp significant reality correctly so that one may make the right kind of ethical choices.

The normative sciences mediate between phenomenology and metaphysics because they put order into human evaluative responses. Aesthetics deals with intuitive human responses. Human intuition grasps reality in imaginative judgments of feeling. In order to cultivate a healthy affectivity, one needs to deal with one's neuroses and psychoses. One also needs to reach initial judgments about those ideals which embody genuine beauty and excellence. Until one puts order into one's affectivity, one runs the serious risk of replacing sound judgments about reality with the rationalization of one's psychic disorders. Ethics puts order into the human conscience by teaching one to live concretely and practically for genuinely worthwhile ideals. Until one puts order into one's conscience, one's philosophical account of reality could all too easily rationalize personal and corporate

selfishness. Logic puts order into one's thought processes. Until one orders one's mind, one remains unable to deal adequately with questions of truth or falsity, of interpretative adequacy or inadequacy. As a result, one's account of reality remains riddled with fallacies, contradictions, and confusion. In Peirce's philosophy, logic, especially inferential logic, provides the final stepping stone from phenomenology to metaphysics by demonstrating that all three generic kinds of appearance which one described phenomenologically actually obtain in reality (*CP*, 5.77-111).

Peircean logic argues that all inferential thinking exemplifies one of three irreducible kinds of argument: abductive, or hypothetical, argument; deductive, or predictive, argument; and inductive, or validating, argument. Each kind of argument interrelates a rule, a case, and a result. A rule offers an account of some law, or generalized tendency, which allegedly shapes the way things behave. A result offers an account of data one is trying to explain. A case categorizes that data in a particular way. Each form of inference interrelates a rule, a case, and a result differently; and as a consequence, they remain logically irreducible (*CP*, 2.619-44).

For example, as ocean-going ships approach their harbor, Columbus, sitting on a dock overlooking the sea, sees first the top of a mast, then the whole mast, then the whole ship, tiny at first but getting larger and larger as the ship approaches. These observations provide Columbus with a logical result in need of hypothetical explanation. Columbus reasons abductively, or hypothetically, that if the surface of the ocean were flat, he would not see the ship piecemeal as he does. Instead, the entire ship would appear in the distance and get larger and larger as it approached. The fact that the ship appears initially piece by piece means that it is sailing on a curved ocean surface. The curvature of the ocean suggests that it in turn lies on a curved ocean bed and that the earth has a round rather than a flat surface. If so, then the laws which determine the shape of the planets have made the earth round rather than flat. In Columbus's abductive argument, the notion that the laws of nature make planets round rather than flat exemplifies a rule. The roundness of the earth to which the abductive argument concludes exemplifies a case. Abductions, then, conclude to a case on the basis of a rule assumed to obtain in reality.

Having reclassified the shape of the earth abductively, Columbus then makes a deductive prediction. He reasons that, if the earth has a round rather than a flat shape, he can reach Asia by sailing west rather than east. In other words, on the basis of his original abduction he predicts that other facts not in evidence will appear, if indeed nature follows the rule on which his abduction rests. Deductions, then, conclude to a new result, not to a case, as abductions do.

Inductions validate or invalidate one's deductive predictions. Having made such a prediction, Columbus must now get in a ship and sail west. If he has categorized the shape of the earth correctly, his vessel will carry him to Asia. If the predicted result appears under the conditions specified in one's deduction, then one argues inductively that the rule which grounded one's abduction actually obtains in reality. In other words, a successful induction concludes to a rule, not to a case or to a result.

Peirce's logic of inference justifies a realistic metaphysics because it shows that the scientific mind perceives real generality inferentially. The qualities, or evaluative responses, which shape one's inferential thinking exemplify unverified possibilities until one validates them inductively. Validation transforms them into the inferential perception of both factual actualities (the results about which one reasons) and real generalities (the laws which explain those results) (*CP*, 5.93-115).

From these insights, Peirce drew a variety of philosophical conclusions. First of all, he rejected categorically the nominalism on which modern Enlightenment thinking rests. Peirce distinguished two kinds of philosophical nominalism. Classical, medieval nominalism categorically denies the existence of all universals by reducing them to a *flatus vocis*. Conceptual nominalism, which characterizes modern European philosophy since Descartes, allows for the existence of universals in the mind but denies their existence in reality (*CP*, 1.16-27, 59-66). To the extent that postmodernism denies real generality and portrays reality as concrete and surd, postmodernism too offers yet another tired European variation on modern Enlightenment nominalistic themes.

In refuting Enlightenment nominalism, especially in its Kantian formulation, Peirce also repudiated Enlightenment

subjectivism. Reality will in fact teach us what it is by the way it behaves provided we take the time to think clearly about it. Peirce's pragmatic maxim provided a rule for clear inferential thinking: "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (*CP*, 5.402). He offered the pragmatic maxim as a definition of inferential meaning. In effect, the maxim asserts that the sum total of the predictable operational consequences of any hypothesis exhausts that particular abduction's meaning.

Peirce's logic of inference led him to another epistemological conclusion. The human mind cannot understand anything without interacting decisively with that reality. Having categorized the world as round, Columbus had no other way to verify his hypothesis than to get a ship and start sailing west. Peirce acknowledged the speculative aims of scientific thinking; but the operational character of inferential meaning and the utterly practical character of inductive reasoning undercut yet another fundamental presupposition of the Enlightenment, namely, its fallacious sundering of theory from practice.

Moreover, by analyzing the way the scientific mind works, Peirce also demonstrated the radical limitations of scientific thinking. Peirce's theory of inference entails the logical doctrine of fallibilism. Logical fallibilism teaches that one has a much better chance of understanding the laws which govern the behavior of things if one admits one can err than if one does not. In investigating any question, the thoroughly finite human mind must first decide how much time it has to consecrate to the inquiry. In any complex question, one must therefore formulate one's hypothesis before one knows that one has taken all the relevant data into account. Moreover, even after one has validated an hypothesis inductively and in a preliminary way, one has no assurance that facts might not turn up which call one's hypothesis into question. Nor has one any assurance that a smarter mind might not create an entirely new frame of reference for explaining the relevant data. The emergence of a more adequate frame of reference for understanding a problem will almost certainly force one to revise one's preliminary conclusions about it. In other words, at the two

points at which scientific thinking deals directly with reality, that thinking enjoys no logical necessity (*CP*, 1.141-75).

Two elements in Peirce's philosophy kept his fallibilism from degenerating into the relativism in which much deconstructionist postmodernism currently wallows: his doctrine of belief and his critical commonsensism. Let us consider each of these doctrines in turn.

Peirce defined a belief as a proposition for whose consequences one takes responsibility. In other words, belief requires commitment. That commitment further blurs the sundering of theory from practice. Only commitment to standing by the practical consequences of what one asserts will enable one to find out whether the proposition in question qualifies as true or false. Moreover, one stands committed to one's belief until one finds a good reason to question it. New facts which contradict the belief, logical contradictions between two simultaneously held beliefs, or the emergence of a novel frame of reference which forces the revision of a belief — all these things count as good reasons for calling a belief into question. The commitment which belief requires lends, therefore, stability to human thinking (*CP*, 5.370-73).

So does Peirce's doctrine of critical commonsensism. Critical commonsensism teaches that if one takes doubt seriously and if one reflects critically on one's learned beliefs, one finds a number of beliefs which one cannot call into question. These basic beliefs, which Peirce suspected to obtain in all cultures, give thinking a stable base from which to operate. Critical commonsensism thus teaches one to focus investigation on truly doubtful questions. Stable beliefs also provide critical thinking with premises from which to work (*CP*, 5.497-537).

Peirce's critical commonsensism dramatizes the futility of universal doubt (*CP*, 5.264-317). Like deconstructionist thinking, universal doubt finally deconstructs itself, for it allows one to doubt anything but universal doubt.

Critical commonsensism also calls attention to another limitation of scientific, inferential thinking. People live most of their lives, Peirce argued, not on the basis of abstract inference but on the basis of commonsense intuition. Indeed, with G.K. Chesterton, Peirce seems to have realized that lunatics have lost everything but

the rationality with which they explain away their madness. Those who would attempt to live exclusively on the basis of inferential thinking alone would indeed, Peirce argued, lead lunatic lives. For example, on returning home late at night one might hear one's sister's voice crying out of the darkness, "Help! Rape!" One could respond inferentially by asking oneself whether one spiritual being can really communicate with another through the physical medium of air; and one could begin to recall the arguments for and against such a proposition; but, if one did, one would respond like a person utterly daft. A practicing scientist, Peirce recognized the importance of scientific thinking, but he also gave a much more nuanced and realistic account of its limitations than does deconstructionist postmodernism (CP, 1. 616-77).

Like postmodernism, Peircean realism calls into question certain forms of foundational ontologism. It questions any ontology which rests on Kantian transcendental logic, and it calls into question any foundational ontology which rests on essentialistic presuppositions. Let us try to understand the precise terms of Peirce's challenge to these forms of foundational ontologism.

As a young man, Peirce read Kant every day for several hours until he could recite by heart long passages of *The Critique of Pure Reason*. He stopped reading Kant when he recognized the indefensible character of Kantian transcendental logic (CP, 1.4-6). Transcendental logic recognizes only one kind of inference, namely, deduction. In writing his various critiques, Kant had in fact performed a philosophical abduction, but he had presented it as a validated induction at the same time that he called it a transcendental deduction. If one endorses Peircean logic, as I do, one must also reject the foundational ontologies of both Karl Rahner and Bernard Lonergan in their endorsement of Kantian transcendental logic.

One must also reject the essentialism which mars Thomistic metaphysics and anthropology. The first to the twelfth centuries witnessed the Platonization of Christian theology. Aquinas platonized Aristotelian philosophy sufficiently to render it acceptable to Christianity. Since the twelfth century, some form of Christian Aristotelianism has tended to give metaphysical shape to Catholic theology. Unfortunately, both Platonism and Aristotelianism

endorse the fallacy of essentialism. Every metaphysics offers an abductive elaboration of a root metaphor for reality. Both Plato and Aristotle endorsed the root metaphor that reality resembles an idea. Plato located those ideas in the transcendental realm of spirit and explained the intelligibility of material things by their participation in those eternal ideas. Aristotle rejected a Platonic doctrine of participation and located ideas in things. Both Plato's transcendent forms and Aristotle's immanent forms exemplify the fallacy of essentialism because they both treat ideas as metaphysical principles instead of as modes of perception.

The fallacy of essentialism leads one to view the universe as the great chain of being, as a hierarchically ordered set of fixed and unchanging essences. Such a world view does indeed, as post-modernists complain, "close down" effective history and historical consciousness. Peirce's realistic metaphysics, however, does not "close down" either. On the contrary, it insists on the developmental character of nature, of history, and of thought. Peirce avoids essentialism by confining essences to the realm of quality, which shapes the way we become present to reality. In other words, essences belong to the how, not to the what, of human experience. One experiences an essence when one abstracts a specific evaluative response from the reality perceived and from the one who does the perceiving. I experience the essence "giraffe" when I abstract the idea of a long-necked, long-legged, brown-spotted, horned, herbivorous animal from the giraffe I see and from myself, the perceiver.

By equating real generality, not with ideas, but with dynamic tendencies, Peirce conceived reality as dynamic, as evolving, as thoroughly historical. With the emergence of protoplasm, laws, subsisting habitual tendencies, exhibit the characteristic of habit-taking (i.e., of organic self-development). Peircean realism accordingly endorses the developmental, evolutionary character of both organic nature and of human history (CP, 6.7-34, 102-317).

Peircean realism also acknowledges the historical and cultural conditioning of all human thinking. Peircean fallibilism requires that one renounce any claim to having found an unrevisable starting place for thought. All thinking begins *in medias res*. Finite humans can think philosophically only when their minds acquire

the mature ability to do so. By that time, they have acquired a host of uncritically held beliefs. Critical commonsensism has the capacity to transform many of those beliefs into critically held beliefs, but never does thinking have a presuppositionless character. Fallibilism also requires one to "keep the conversation going," as postmodernism desires, since one can challenge settled beliefs for a good reason. In contrast to some forms of deconstructionist postmodernism, however, Peircean realism provides human minds with something to converse about besides their own conversation. Indeed, the scientific study of history and of culture reveals that, while neither repeats itself, both rhyme because analogous dynamisms shape both (*CP*, 5.213-63).<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, unlike Lonergan, Peircean epistemology does not confuse a normative insight into the way the mind ought to think with a quasi-metaphysical generalization about the invariant structures of consciousness. In addition, Peirce replaces the turn to the subject, which characterizes transcendental Thomism, with the turn to community. The Peircean turn to community once again follows logically from a fallibilistic understanding of human belief. In his essay "The Fixation of Belief," Peirce weighs the pros and cons of typical strategies humans use in fixing their beliefs. The dogmatic fixation of belief fails because personal dogmatism blinds itself to evidence which contradicts one's beliefs. The attempt to force people to believe something through authority also fails when people recognize contradictions between what those in authority say and reality. The fixation of belief through taste, or personal preference, has the advantage of relying on the instinctive workings of the mind but remains too haphazard and unsystematic. The human mind fixes its beliefs most surely and adequately through shared systematic inquiry. Commitment to shared systematic inquiry not only demands commitment to discovering the truth about reality; it also requires commitment to the community of minds who share that commitment. The finitude and fallibility of the human mind also demands the turn to community, since the experiences of other people can fill important gaps in one's own experience, just as their insights can enlarge and enrich one's own insights. This social, dialogic characterization of human thinking also undercuts Enlightenment individualism (*CP*, 5.358-87).

Peircean realism also endorses theism. Peirce's neglected argument for the reality of God weds a pragmatic logic of relations and religious belief, but it does not require one, as Thomistic metaphysics does, to regard God as *actu infinitus* (CP, 6.428-521). In my judgment, critical reflection on religious experience suggests that supremacy rather than actual infinity offers the best way of approaching the divine reality. As supreme, God exemplifies that reality which always exceeds any finite conception of it. With postmodernism, the idea of divine supremacy reminds theologians to recognize that their peanut brains will never comprehend the deity. In other words, the notion of supremacy acknowledges the otherness of God, as postmodern theology does, without, however, making God so wholly other that the divine reality defies historical revelation. A theology of divine supremacy need not, then, make the turn to apophatic mysticism which some Protestant postmodern theologians have done. The notion of supremacy, moreover, as Anselm of Canterbury saw, invites theological reflection on the richness of the divine reality and excellence without ever pretending to exhaust it. In a theology of divine supremacy, infinity means that which comprehends all things and is comprehended by none.<sup>9</sup>

With contemporary postmodernism, Peirce's epistemology and metaphysics deconstructs ontologies of substantial essentialism and ontologies based on the Kantian transcendental subject. Unlike deconstructionist postmodernism, however, it replaces both with a dynamic, realistic metaphysics and epistemology. It does not, then, demand, as deconstructionist postmodernism would seem to do, that theologians abandon the quest for theological truth. Instead, with Lonergan, it insists on the shared, communal character of the human search for truth and on the social dialogic character of all human thinking (CP, 6.428-51).

Moreover, Peircean logic undercuts the fallacious distinction between theoretical and practical reason which distorts much of postmodern thinking. In the world of Peircean realism, one need not choose between theoretical reasoning and practical *phronesis* (CP, 5.180-212). The intuitive character of all abductive reasoning requires it to invoke prudential deliberation in the initial speculative fixation of belief. Moreover, one understands the theoretical

meaning of any proposition by explicating deductively its practical consequences.

Peircean realism also overcomes the subjectivism which characterizes many postmodern accounts of human language. With postmoderns, Peirce correctly argues that the human mind needs language in order to reason, but Peircean logic also demonstrates the fallacy of describing conceptualization as “the first falsehood” (*CP*, 5.250-63). Those deconstructionists who cannot distinguish between true and false conceptualizations of reality need to learn Peircean logic. Their failure to invoke Peirce’s pragmatic maxim in order to clarify the speculative meaning of conceptions by naming their predictable operational consequences only betrays the muddled state of their minds. The pragmatic maxim even elucidates the speculative meaning of human conceptions of God by explicating their lived, practical consequences.

I have been arguing that Peirce not only deconstructed modernity more effectively than any so-called postmodern thinkers of today, but he also offered a realistic ontological alternative to the least tenable presuppositions of “modern,” Enlightenment thinking. The theistic character of Peirce’s dynamic, realistic ontology leaves it open, moreover, to theological exploitation. Indeed, it provides an admirable foundation for what Bernard Lonergan has called foundational theology. By foundational theology, Lonergan meant critical, strictly normative reflection on the different forms of conversion.

In fact, conversion comes in five forms. One converts when one passes from irresponsible to responsible behavior in some realm of human experience. Responsibility implies accountability. The converted stand accountable first of all to themselves because after conversion they measure their subsequent conduct by norms which they have interiorized as personally binding. The converted stand accountable to other people because responsible conduct recognizes that both one’s conduct and its motives affect the lives of other people as well as one’s world. The religiously converted stand accountable to God, since the historical self-revelation of God demands that one respond to that self-revelation on the terms God sets. In other words, one must respond to God’s gratuitous, historical self-revelation in faith.

The affectively converted take responsibility for the health and aesthetic quality of their intuitive responses to reality. As a consequence, both psychology and the normative philosophical science of aesthetics supply criteria relevant to affective conversion. The ethically converted take responsibility for the morality of their decisions. As a consequence, the normative philosophical science of ethics provides criteria for initial and ongoing moral conversion at both a personal and a sociopolitical level. Personal moral conversion invokes rights and duties correctly understood as norms. Sociopolitical conversion invokes the common good as a moral norm in questions of public morality. The intellectually converted take responsibility for the truth and falsity of their beliefs and for the adequacy or inadequacy of the frames of reference in which they choose to fix their beliefs. The normative philosophical science of logic provides, then, important criteria for initial and ongoing intellectual conversion.<sup>10</sup>

Lonergan requires that one pursue foundational theology in an interdisciplinary context. Similarly, Peirce requires that a fallibilistic metaphysics develop in an ongoing dialogue with the results of the ideoscopic sciences. Theological thinking which invokes philosophical, theological, and scientific categories in order to understand the complexities of human conversion needs to come to critical clarity concerning what each of these different scientific pursuits contributes to foundational thinking. In order to reach such clarity, one needs to go beyond both Lonergan and Peirce. After a professional career devoted to the development of a postmodern theology of conversion rooted in Peirce's metaphysical semiotic, I have learned to name the contribution which each discipline makes to the pursuit of foundational thinking.

A successful philosophical metaphysics interprets, integrates, and contextualizes the results of the ideoscopic sciences. A philosophical metaphysics will interpret scientific results when its categories apply to those results in the sense in which one has defined them philosophically. Peircean realism, moreover, invites the development of a metaphysics of experience. One develops a metaphysics of experience by taking experience as a root metaphor for reality. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, one does well to ground a metaphysics of experience in Peirce's triadic realism,

which constructs the real from qualities (values), facts (decisions), and laws (dynamic tendencies).<sup>11</sup>

Metaphysics successfully integrates foundational thinking by articulating a fallible theory of the whole, which has the characteristic of being logical, coherent, applicable, and adequate. Logical thinking contains no contradictions. In coherent thinking, all one's key metaphysical terms imply one another and therefore remain unintelligible apart from one another. The synthetic character of religious insight requires philosophical coherence in one's theory of the whole. Experiential metaphysical thinking contextualizes the results of the ideoscopic sciences by providing an integrating frame of reference for locating the specific realm of experience on which any particular ideoscopic science chooses to focus. Experiential metaphysical thinking also allows one to ponder the relationship among the results of different ideoscopic investigations into reality.

The ideoscopic sciences complete and validate a metaphysical theory of the whole. Metaphysical thinking, like all philosophical thinking, reflects on lived experience as lived. Spelling out the practical consequence of one's metaphysical beliefs clarifies their speculative meaning and allows one to test those beliefs against lived experience. One also needs, however, to test one's metaphysical beliefs against the verified results of close scientific studies of reality. The fact that the ideoscopic sciences validate or invalidate metaphysical beliefs ensures the open-ended, dialogic character of metaphysical thinking.

Because metaphysics reflects on lived experience in order to formulate a theory of the whole, it requires an adult mind. Ideosciences like developmental psychology complete a metaphysics of experience by providing plausible, initially validated accounts about how an immature mind develops into an adult one. Thus, developmental psychology not only validates a sound metaphysics of experience, it also provides a more detailed account of how the immature human mind develops than reflection on adult lived experience can provide. In the process, developmental psychology fleshes out, or completes, one's descriptive account of the stages of human development.

Theology gives concrete historical shape to one's account of religious experience. It also validates or invalidates philosophical

God-talk. Religious faith responds to some historical self-revelation of God. The historicity of that revelation endows philosophical God-talk with a concreteness absent from abstract, metaphysical generalizations about God. Moreover, what God says historically about Himself stands in judgment on any human hypothesis about the nature of the deity. The historical revelation of a covenanting God, for example, invalidates any philosophical attempt to talk about God as so absolute that the deity lacks all relationship to creation.<sup>12</sup>

One can, of course, develop these ideas in greater philosophical and theological detail. I hope, however, that the preceding reflections will suffice to suggest that Peirce's critique of modernity goes much further and much deeper than the post-modern critique of Enlightenment thinking. Peirce's critique also shows up the fallacious presuppositions of deconstructionist postmodernism. Moreover, it offers both a logic and a realistic metaphysics which regrounds foundational theological thinking without falling into the fallacies which postmoderns discover in classical and transcendental metaphysics.

#### Notes

1. See Albert Borgmann, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

2. See David Ray Griffin, John B. Cobb, Jr., Marcus P. Ford, Pete A.Y. Gunter, and Peter Ochs, *Founders of Constructive Postmodern Philosophy: Peirce, James, Bergson, Whitehead, and Hartshorne* (Albany: SUNY, 1993).

3. Unfortunately, Peirce never collected his philosophical thought within the pages of a single volume. His insights lie scattered throughout the pages of his voluminous papers. Any reader unfamiliar with Peirce's thought will find a helpful introduction to his thinking in the following studies: W.B. Gallie, *Peirce and Pragmatism* (Edinburgh: Pelican, 1952); Murray G. Murphy, *The Development of Peirce's Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1961); Francis E. Reilly S.J., *Charles Peirce's Theory of Scientific Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1970); Vincent G. Potter, *Charles S. Peirce on Norms and Ideals* (Worcester: University of Massachusetts Press, 1967); Philip P. Wiener, ed., *Charles S. Peirce: Selected*

*Writings* (New York: Dover, 1958); Justus Buchler, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce* (New York: Dover, 1940).

4. See Madan Sarup, *An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Post-Modernism* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1993); Philppa Berry and Andrew Wernick, eds., *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion* (New York: Routledge 1992); Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1989); Joe Holland, *The Birth of Postmodern Culture: Challenge to Catholic and American Identities and Conservative and Liberal Explorations of the Postmodern Stage of the Human* (South Orange, NJ: The Warwick Institute, 1989); Alan M. Olson, "Postmodernity and Faith," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 58 (1990): 37-50.

5. See Thomas Guarino, "Postmodernity and Five Fundamental Theological Issues," *Theological Studies* 57 (1996): 654-85.

6. Guarino, "Postmodernity and Five Fundamental Theological Issues," 685-89.

7. Peirce derived the odd term "coenoscopic" from Jeremy Bentham. It derives from two Greek roots and means "commonly viewed or known." See Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers*, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, 8 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 1.241. All further references to Peirce will be from this edition, abbreviated as *CP*, cited by volume and page numbers only in the text of my essay.

8. As for the analogy of cultures, see, for example, Beatrice Blyth Whiting and Carolyn Pope Edwards, et al., *Children of Different Worlds: The Formation of Social Behavior* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988).

9. See Donald L. Gelpi, S.J., *The Divine Mother: A Trinitarian Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984), 83-102.

10. See Donald L. Gelpi, S.J., *Committed Worship: A Sacramental Theology for Converting Christians*, 2 vols. (Collegetown, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 1:3-181.

11. See Donald L. Gelpi, S.J., *The Turn To Experience in Contemporary Theology* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1994).

12. See Donald L. Gelpi, S.J., *Inculturating North American Theology: An Experiment in Foundational Method* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 147-70; *Experiencing God: A Theology of Human Emergence* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1987).

