Cassirer as Revolutionary:
Semiotics as Embodied Worldview

Appreciating the Other in Ourselves

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> *A distinguishing characteristic of phenomenologists is the pursuit of understanding that improves our interactive comportment in the social world.*
> —Richard L. Lanigan (2011)

Abstract: This article examines the meaning of interactive comportment as identified by Richard Lanigan and the role fundamental analysis of this facticity (communicology) can play in improving social life. The role of communicology as exposed by this non-naïve sense of responsibility is examined. The contribution of Ernst Cassirer's work on symbology generally, and the primitive more specifically, is explored as a case that supports Lanigan's assertion that fundamental examination of comportment can expand our understanding of ourselves and others, facilitate tolerance, foster creativity, and enrich our lives. Rigorous examination and appreciation of comportment, including the relationship between identity and difference, has implications for, and reverberates throughout, the lifeworld. A non-naïve understanding that social studies take place within a social environment and have consequences for that environment prompts us to self-consciously interrogate the implications of such work for life. Cassirer's work demonstrates the potential for communicology to facilitate change.

A Question of Centers

According to the eminent historian James Burke (1985), Wittgenstein was standing in a university quad with a colleague who opined at how utterly dimwitted medieval Europeans living before Copernicus must

have been to look at the sky and believe that the Sun was circling the Earth. As the story goes, Wittgenstein's colleague commented that even a tiny bit of decent knowledge would have told them that the opposite was true. To this Wittgenstein is said to have replied, "I agree. But I wonder what it would have looked like if the sun *had* been circling the earth." (quoted in Burke 1985: 11).

No other animal on Earth can raise such a question. And as such we are dealing with a high level of abstraction, reflection, and shared wonderment—all sustained through symbolic communication and extending beyond immediate observation. And in this instance, we are dealing with a mode of comportment, *humility*, or in other words, low power distance. This means little acceptance of unequal power among members of a group or society with different rank without demonstrable reasons—legitimate, examined authority (Habermas 1981a; 1981b). Humility makes a huge difference. This leads to "allowing" things to show themselves, prior to reductionism or measurement. Phenomenology may result in improving social comportment, largely by demonstrating the viability of diversity, but it also inhabits an aconventional posture itself.

Raising questions at such a fundamental level is a unique form of "comportment", a word that means attitude or way of regard. The difference between our "dimwitted" "primitive" ancestors and us is not the immediately given empirical evidence but the way we approach and examine the given evidence. All life on Earth responds to sensory information. Basic empiricism is not profound in this regard. However, as far as is known, only humans wonder at what they see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. In short, one cannot have what I will call abstract observation without a reflexive observer, and his or her attitude makes essential differences.

One way to see Lanigan's (2011) point is not to see it as a desperate attempt to appear "relevant" within an industrial world. Rather the point is that the dualism between θεωρια, *vita contemplativa* (self-examination), and πραδις, *vita activa* is spurious. Yet the entanglement of one with the other as horizon can be blind or enabling. The contemplative, reflexive effort is a mode of being-in-the-world, a mode of comportment. One may say that the shift from *vita contemplativa* to *vita activa* has "consequences" for comportment but one can also say that comportment manifests attitude. The main difference is self-awareness, which in practical terms leads to responsibility for one's approach to the world/communicative posture. In short, know it or not, one is always inhabiting a perspective, a language game. An essential (dare I say objective) truth is that all cultures see "things" in the stars but they are all different. There is a facticity to subjectivity with essential qualities.

This is a fact that transcends differences, articulating a recognition of dif- ferences, seeing fixity through variance as it were: alterity. Truth is revealed when we are wrong, and vice versa. What is seeable via reflexivity is the fact of the attitudinal nature of observation itself, which always already incor- porates observer "bias", with the observed being constituted as a synthetic moment of perception. How does one know that one is biased? By being exposed to other perspectives, not by eliminating them. Perspectives can be blind and/or enabling but not eliminated entirely (Gadamer 1960). With self-awareness (the reflexive critical attitude) one can take a position and operationalize strategies of con-testation and argumentation. The preferred bias can be selected and maintained based on criteria that themselves can be interrogated. Once, recognized as such, then how one decides which observa- tion to privilege depends on many things including cultural context, practical necessity, consensual agreement, likelihood (given previous observations), provocation of more investigation, curiousness, strangeness, and incongruity.

The strange calls attention to "itself". Something does not look, smell, feel, sound, taste "right". We explore further. As Friedrich Nietzsche (1887a) noted, the effect provokes our search for the cause making the effect precede the cause in actual experience. But the Sun rising and setting never seemed problematic. How to problematize, how to see, the not merely mundane, but the taken for granted as utterly ubiquitous and dependable—"natural", becomes the methodical question, the scientific/philosophic question, the *critical/essential* question because what is presumed as utterly "normal" proves to be most disruptive if found to be naïvely presumed—merely arbi- trary—hypothetical rather than foundational. Comportment, what it is, what it does, and how to get at it, is complicated. But once breached, profound consequences unfold.

Burke observes that Wittgenstein's point is, even if the Sun did go around the Earth, "it would have looked exactly the same" (1985: 11). True, on a very mundane "physical" level, which is yet and always already another interpre- tation. However, in fact, they do not "look" the same because seeing always already involves for humans sense-making, which is profoundly complex. Human perception is always already infused with meaning even manifestly as "bottom up" provocation toward noticing, as sensational inattentive- ness. Consciousness (including prejudgment and so called sub-conscious intentionality-directionality) is always attitudinal/perspectival. This is why humans can attend to only a few phenomena at a time and with limited acuity. Efficient multi-tasking is a myth.

Bracketing his allusion to motive, we allow Burke to continue, "When we observe nature we see what we [want] to see, according to what we believe we know about it at the time. … This view of the universe permeates all aspects of our life" (Burke 1985: 11). In this way, we tend to reinforce our blindness. We reinforce our prejudices, sometimes, perhaps often as Burke says, because we "want" to. In some cases, cultural coherency may be a form of collective delusion. Deviance leads to troublesome yet stimulating incongruity. As Kurt Lewin and Ronald Lippitt (1938; 1939) published decades before Irving Janis (1971), group cohesion/identity often involves shared "delusions" such as group superiority, infallibility of beliefs, unquestioned loyalties, denial of alternative perspectives, and even defense of the delusion by those most passionate about the group and its viability. In practical terms, such are essential qualities of identity politics that suppress and supplant rational policy debate. Group cohesion is not all good. It often leads to irrational collective beliefs and behavior. And this tendency is not unique to the "dimwitted" ancestors. Only a rigorous reflexive attitude that questions its own foundations, a mode of questioning that examines what questions are asked and what ones may not arise and why, can protect against it.

Burke resumes, "All communities in all places at all times manifest their own view of reality in what they do. The entire culture reflects the contemporary model of reality. We are what we know. And when the body of knowledge changes, so do we" (Burke 1985: 11). Generalizable qualities enable us to identify groups as such, that is to say, by their worldview, which tends to be hegemonic. The, "body of knowledge", our "entire culture" and who "we" "think" "we" are and what we presume to know, is sustained through symbolic interaction/comportment. This means that our prejudices are sustained by, and as, a prejudicial modality. Communication has a perspective as it diffuses a perspective. It is a pattern that proliferates patterns—structuration. Deconstruction is a tactic that enables us to recognize such patterns as being cultural products and not objectively inevitable (beyond human agency).

The means of communication are at some level arbitrary yet conventionally consistent, and conventional thinking often appraises itself as "objective", "natural", "sane", "reasonable", and "prudent". "Fidelity" here is not about accurate reproduction but presentation of identity as the same over time. Devotion to faith becomes confused with trueness. Being true, loyalty, becomes confused with being accurate. Being consistent, dependable, sharing meanings that are unproblematic, harbors the conservative comportment that the radical and unnatural attitude of phenomenology and semiotics ruptures. One thing revealed is consistency itself as a temporal phenomenon,

as a contingency. Scholars debate the nature of language as being both thoroughly and totally arbitrary and yet conventional such that communication qua comprehensibility is possible at all. As Wittgenstein noted, to suggest that a one-person language is possible is to, ironically, stretch the meaning of language beyond recognition. The fundamental problematic encompasses the difference between permanence and flux. Languages, cultures, realities evolve. And this has been observed repeatedly. It is, as Aristotle might say, essential to their nature. Change is a permanent condition.

Semiotics is not an attempt to derive the one and only permanent, true meaning of a message and deny all others. It is champion neither of conventional interpretations nor of unconventional ones. It is aconventional. It recognizes how signifiers shift through time. This recognition of tolerances, improves human comportment. It allows for, even expects ambiguity and novelty that engenders evolving semantic frames and fields. It is the study of living signs and symbols within social, which is to say shared flux that is neither transcendent nor inherent but integral.

Occasionally, the order and meaning of things begins to change rapidly, usually from exogenous forces such as the appearance of an alternative culture. This is one consequence of globalization and this type of flux tends to unnerve many because the self-regulating mechanisms of semiotic systems can be disrupted and change accelerated beyond typical assimilative capabilities on a human scale. Modern technological systems spanning the globe are quite beyond the scale of communication our species "grew up" with over millions of generations in isolated Mesolithic and Neolithic hamlets (Kramer 2003). We are seeing the expansion of not a global village but rather a global city with very different atmospheric qualities of milieu (Kramer 2003). Multiplicities of semantic fields are proliferating. Accelerating change is proving stressful. Insofar as the "natural" presumed meaning of any perception or message is uncritically assumed, semiotics as well as phenomenology pursues an "unnatural", or shall we introduce a different adjective, unconventional or aconventional comportment, which examines that assumption itself. An aconventional posture is one that suspends commitment to the received view. It is not denial of convention (the popular sense and meaning) but rather a bracketing of acceptance/denial in lieu of an agnostic posture.

The communicologist who operates with full facility of hermeneutic, semiotic, and phenomenological insights, manifests an aconventional perspective on convention. She is an outlier by trade but not simply for the sake of iconoclasm but as a methodological assumption—to assume a posture that reveals the normal and abnormal as co-created and co-dependent deportment.

Investigation is a moment, a space within the system that shifts attitude/comportment toward reflexivity. Communicologists attempt to get outside the box in order to examine its limitations and trace open horizons. This is so not because they, like artists, seek the unconventional, but because they examine the flux of convention itself. A twenty-year-old biology textbook is woefully out-of-date because the truth, including and especially the scientific picture of reality, keeps getting "truer". How does this project, therefore, remain comprehensible? Congruity implies incongruity. The active and passive syntheses of adumbrations that belong together, according to a transcending expectation, are bound by a common sense. This expectation can of course be violated. In the desert, as I watched for several minutes; in the distance, it appeared that a human was walking toward me, but it "turned out" to be a camel. They look "the same" from that face-on angle and distance, but are not. Beyond this, from culture to culture and time to time, change itself is changing and what, and how we communicate with each other and with our environment communicate this.

How we comport ourselves "toward" the world includes the "natural". It is also constitutive of the world. And how various literatures convey and disseminate stories of reality are part of the grist for the communicologist's mill. Galileo was great, but with Hubble's discovery of galaxies only within the last century, the universe has changed dramatically. If we say our picture of the universe has changed, typically a duality emerges enabling a binary between truth and falsehood. However, something more complex emerges. We see not a simple duality but instead our researches have unveiled, what Nietzsche in his *Joyous Wisdom* (or *Gay Science*) has called "our new infinite".

> How far the perspective character of existence extends, or whether it has any other character than this, whether existence without interpretation, without "sense" does not just become "nonsense," whether, on the other hand, all existence is not essentially actively engaged in *interpretation*—these questions, as is right and proper, cannot be determined even by the most diligent and severely conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect, because in this analysis the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself in its perspective forms, and only in them. We cannot see round our own corner … I should think that today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner. Rather the world has become "infinite" for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations.* (1887a: Book Five, §374, p. 336)

This humility, that lies at the core of learning and which Wittgenstein interjected, makes communicology central to understanding human life and also

demonstrates the complexity of communicological analyses beyond traditional structuralism. Furthermore, we are not required to fall into the absurdity of an absolute relativism. Convention enables the self-evident fact that we do communicate and understand each other but at the same time we grasp that understanding is revealed by misunderstanding. Again Nietzsche succinctly states the position: "In so far as the word 'knowledge' has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is *interpretable* otherwise, it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings.—'Perspectivism'" (1887a: §481, p. 267).

Meaning is not a singular, permanent phenomenon best thought of (attitudinal vector) as a permanent positivistic fact-noun but a living process of conscious awareness itself. It is mutable but also conventional and the process of stable and shared sense originates in the very process of communication itself. It is not a meta-system of rules and laws governing communication as an exogenous eternal entity. Sense exists and is sustained through performance. Adumbrations of sense are ever-present.

What is the nature of such shifts between, among, and through interpretations/senses? The communicologist, who knowingly assumes the unnatural phenomenological attitude, notes that something more fundamental can be observed. Namely that change itself varies in quality. And we can see this through time as we trace a discourse or "picture of reality" as in our "standard" common sense of the universe (Koyré 1938; 1957; Polanyi 1958; Kuhn 1962). Without the fundamental shift in comportment, the way we intercourse with the world that Galileo and others initiated we would not have Hubble.

Therefore, the greatness of change is not the contingent facts, be they fascinating in their own right and the topic of regional fields, but the quality of change itself across all fields that enables not just new facts, but new types of facts to emerge—paradigmatic revolution. What then is revolutionized? The world. And what is the world? To the early Wittgenstein it was a simple summation of simple, established facts. He states:

> *Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist* [The world is everything that is the case]
>
> *Die Welt ist die Gesamthetit der Tatsachen, nicht der Dinge* [The world is the totality of facts, not of things] …
>
> *Die Tatsachen im logishen Raum sind die Welt* [The facts in logical space are the world]
>
> *Die Welt zerfallt in Tatsachen* [The world divides into facts]
>
> (Wittgenstein 1918: 1)

As is well understood and is illustrated by his response about the obvious "fact" that the Earth orbits the Sun, Wittgenstein went through a revolution

of his own worldview/thinking and came to see the world less mechanistically, and to appreciate the flux of fact and meaning, and the multivocality and of single words and propositions in lived performance (existential context as well as intent) and heteroglossia. Our worlds converse. Incongruity and incommesurability give birth to new meanings that are unintended and uncontrolled. As Mikhail Bakhtin put it, "I live in the world of others' words" (1929: 143) and "the word lives, as it were, on the boundary between its own context and another, alien, context." (1975: 284).

The Evolving Sense of Evolution

We live in the presence of other discourses. Signs and symbols are the sea we swim in and, like the fact that ninety-eight percent of our biological bodies are salt water, at least that much of our minds are manifestly idolic, signalic, and symbolic. To state that worlds are the sum of all facts merely begs the question because facts are complex. Many, including Ernst Cassirer, began to grapple with the issues of multiple voices (polyphonality) and multiple meanings (multivocality). The exemplar of logical positivism manifested by Wittgenstein's early spatializing, logical atomistic prejudice, could not imagine more than one thing or meaning occupying the same "logical space" at the same time. Hence, Wittgenstein's final effort, after realizing the failure of simplistic logical positivism, examined certainty itself (Wittgenstein 1951). The early presumption that we all live in the same logical space and the collateral presumptions about universal laws (imperatives) that govern this logical space such as the excluded middle and the law of non-contradiction, gave way to a more integral worldview in Wittgenstein's work as well as many others. Wittgenstein finally surpassed the old Aristotelian formalism as it is said that the multiplicity of meanings in metaphors for instance drove Aristotle mad. That which was insane and criminal (leading to the need to "arrest" time) evolved into the normal. Perhaps, if it had happened sooner Socrates could have tolerated living among non-Greeks.

The polyversality of multiple semantic fields and sharing spaces was demonstrated by existential investigations into real diversity across time and cultures. Cassirer's willingness to converse with the primitive constituted one important moment of openness to difference. Then he found it in himself, and not as a residual, marginal, or latent aspect of his consciousness, but as a vital and presumed facet of everyday life; the power to transform the world through imagination, flux, and difference—agency (speech acts)—which is necessary for freedom and responsibility to exist. Otherwise, everything is reduced to biochemistry and thusly predetermined. The correlation between

brain chemistry and phenomenological states is not uni-directionally causal. This is both the type 1 and the type 2 logical errors on a fundamental, metaphysical level.

Polyphony and multivocality are not problems unless one wants to have total control over meaning—to drive tolerance and play (the carnivalisque) out of communication in favor of the dictatorship of the dictionary—a modern invention. The fact that heterglossia was seen as a problem in need of resolution by structural imperative, tells us more about the prejudices of the judge and jury than the defendant. Cassirer's appreciation for the primitive violated this modern positivistic ambition to disambiguate the world, to impose a singular structure (*reich*), a "new world order". It was mirrored across cultural expressions as for instance impressionists and cubists began to abandon the laws of perspective in art and heretical efforts emerged in music by composers such as Arnold Schoenberg and Alexander Scriabin creating music that lacks a tonal center (atonality), music utterly different from Strauss, Mahler, Brahms, Ravel, Stravinsky, and others. The natural and normal "harmonies" were repositioned. New voices were arising with revolutionary consequence. Industrial labor and mechanized war were provoking resistance, affecting culture producing dissonant chords throughout.

The world we see shifts in sense before our eyes and this rapid change, an unprecedented rate of change and type of change is destabilizing our world creating what has been commonly called the "age of anxiety". Whole societies are, if not going mad, struggling to cope with flux. But uncertainty, unpredictability is the opening to hope and invention—the open horizon instantiates a new form of change that implicates the "future", a relatively new word for a new perspective. When we escape the iron clamps of metaphysical certainty that enable predetermination and pre-diction, we liberate potential and untold possibilities—untold and unspoken yet present as potential.

We step back to question the presumption of what constitutes a fact for facts are supposed to be things already done, but their sense-interpretation remains ever-present. Thus, we add to the proposition that while the world may be the sum of all facts, facts, like propositions, are products not things. The world is in flux. We do not just reflect it in our knowledge but produce it.

Efforts to promote and direct a progressive type of time itself increased as change, changed. The rate of change has become so prominent that several models have been developed to forecast technological progress such as Murphy's Law and Wright's Law. With the rapid spread of industrialization, in 1901, H. G. Wells pondered the "discovery of the future" and proposed a new field of future studies, "futurology", as a peer discipline to accompany

historical studies (Wells 1901). His 1906 work *The New World Order* would inspire the framers of the 1980 report *Many Voices One World* published by the United Nations and the concept of a New World Information Order. Nearly half a century before the United Nations Charter, Chapter 10 of Wells's book lays out a universal "declaration for the rights of Man [*sic*]", and another chapter discusses the issue of "unsated youth", and a generation "gap", as a major force for social change around the world, which today is augmented by social media and the rise of a global public sphere, or spheres.

Development became instrumental and the world was expected to evolve into the new temporal being, the "advanced Man". Left and Right Hegelians fought over the nature of this new creature, each claiming the correct direction of evolution. The "New Man" was to be produced according to ideological criteria that tried to claim natural status, rather than allowed to emerge. "The future" was not organic but manufactured according to plan. Agency demanded theory, reflectivity, and critical analysis, as well as moral and ethical evaluation.

Comportment itself can come to be seen as an achievement. Reality is hypothetical, a product of regard/attitude. This is a demonstrable fact. And so we question even the relationship between the Earth and the Sun, the world and ourselves, ourselves and our future selves. As for the practical consequences, modern wars are fought as much or more over ideology (worldview) than brute material resources. Utopianism and progress became motivating forces, virtues. But without a fully understood final solution, progress cannot be measured and can never end. Satiation cannot be achieved. A thirst for change for its own sake was one essential difference the new sense of change itself manifested.

The Question of Comportment and Communicating/Sharing a Worldview

Discourses of Reconciliation

So we proceed with the question, what qualities do all revolutions (including the communicative turn) have in common? Comportment itself shifts and with it, everything else. Here we have the domain of communicology because everything is fundamentally a human performance of understanding and degrees of com-pre-hension. Comprehension, prejudgment, bias is shared. Einstein was right. The most amazing thing about human awareness of the universe is that it is comprehensible to us at all. And as Stephen Hawking and Jan Hertog stated, our picture of the universe is "observer dependent"

and manifests an "amplitude of interest" (2006: 123527−8) leading to "observational consequences" (2006: 123527−1) revealing the inescapable perspectival nature of reality, communicative dimensions of comprehension itself, and the multiplicity of fluxing landscapes (Kramer 2013). What the universe looks like depends on from wherein you view it. Naïve objectivity, which suggests an external posture, external to time and space, is impossible because I am part of the system. What I can assume is not so much an un- but rather a-conventional attitude.

As is discussed below, taking an aconventional posture creates difference, alterity, which shifts perspective. Bringing a methodical approach is a function of agency. In that shift, in that difference, an opening to new revelation occurs. Like turning a kaleidoscope, the shift in attention, both its nature and intentional directionality, moves the shadows. One need not "move" but merely intensify or reduce the amplitude of interest, racking the focus, as it where in the depth of field. And through that shifting focus multiple perspectives are revealed as such and integrated via difference. An integral awareness emerges as a realization of time-alterity.

One adumbration is as true as all others, yet different. New details emerge as old ones fade unless recorded (but then the record is not the same as the thing it memorializes). The world is dark until the "glancing ray" of intentional consciousness falls upon it. Like a flashlight moving along the dark ocean floor, discoveries occur only when the light reveals the new. Groping in the dark can be frightening and indeed curiosity itself has been explicitly discouraged at different times, but without taking the plunge, that which lurks "out there" will remain unknown and our reality will remain that much the poorer.

Attitude is more than a shift in perspective. It is also the decision to commence, to switch on the light, which manifests the bias-vector of that beam of consciousness fluxing with shifting shadows and illuminations. Communicology does not seek to lock the same meaning in permanently but examines the biases and shifting nuances of being as a process of communication. Communicology does not tell us what the correct interpretation is but rather explores the very process of understanding and sharing itself.

In the above quote Lanigan (2011) dares to offer the verdict that we can "improve" comportment. One way is active, self-aware listening as the Other seeks to be understood. This requires suspending the world as we believe we know it in order to inhabit (not necessarily adopt) the world of the Other. What if the Sun did orbit the Earth? Would it look different? I can understand that view even without adopting it and with this a discourse of mutual respect and reconciliation can begin. Discourses of reconciliation begin with

reciprocal respect for the Other, her fears, arrogances, trepidations, desires. If you do not ask what utopia is for the Other, what their dream of the good life is, you cannot begin to appreciate their perspective and understand their efforts. So the phenomenological comportment is essentially communicative in nature. It is an effort to open up to the Other prior to judgment. This would improve social relations.

Backing Up

What is never asked is, what method should one use to select a method? Understanding the essential nature of the phenomenon of interest, such as comportment, guides our explorations. Hence, phenomenology, the study of essential properties, must come first and indeed, the term is used in the writings of many scientists from A. Einstein and W. Heisenberg to C. Geertz and N. Chomsky. There is nothing inherently wrong with a sphygmomanometer. It was designed to fit its phenomenon of interest, blood pressure. But it is useless for studying the stars. Likewise, a telescope is not much use for measuring blood pressure but there is no need to get emotional about those who use them. Foremost one must understand the essential nature of the "object" of interest. Phenomenology is the approach designed for this query. And as phenomenologists have come to appreciate the relationship between knowing and the codes used to articulate knowing, semiotics and hermeneutics join the enterprise. The choice of one tool over another, one method over another presumes (often naïvely) phenomenology. At this nexus of human comportment, as the animal that knows and shares understanding (what is often called knowledge) is where Cassirer's contribution lies.

What attitude is and its consequences on communication and knowledge are bigger game. Failures to "communicate", to appreciate the humanity of the Other, are often rooted in comportment (conscious and especially subconscious) and hence the practical implications of phenomenology, which is to say the uncommon or unnatural attitude for our everyday lives. Indeed, as the old saying goes, attitude, a spatial-vector term of orientation adequate for our investigations, is everything for it determines what is revealed and what is concealed. The flashlight of intentional awareness is directional. We "concentrate" on only a few things at a time. Shadows shift and something different emerges. Alterity forces the issue of what is the case. It pries open the blinders, effects attitude as the strange calls attention to itself. Alterity challenges horizons and dogmatic slumbers. And for the methodologist who must be self-vigilant, self-conscious, rigorous, prying eyes that appreciate the Other reveal the perspective that is the self. The Socratic insight about

"observer dependent" understanding and the biases inherent therein is thus directly and honestly addressed. One must have a perspective to see but that also involves limits. Knowing the nature or those limits informs how we interpret the view.

Of Models and Theories

A model is not a theory. The latter questions after first, founding (ever-present originary) essential principles. But such inquiry is possible only if theory is regarded as merely contingent and testable. Theories, like methods, harbor presuppositions—axiomatic prejudgments—ideologies. Naturalism in theory is a form of fatalism. A model offers an explanation of some framed set of conditions. The frame itself may be presumed and that leads to superficial understanding. While, for instance, the Chinese had a working model of, and several recipes for gunpowder, they did not have a more fundamental theory of combustion. Experimenting with various components, not unlike mining "big data" without theoretical rhyme or reason, can yield "results" such as new colors in fireworks or significant correlations but such craft does not yield understanding at the more fundamental level. New colors or correlations are not explanations of anything, let alone themselves. They explain nothing. For instance, to say that one group is seventy percent more likely to live to be 100 years old than another group explains nothing. Such "data" may appear "self-evident", but only for those not reflecting toward first principles. Such information is not useless however and we should not be intolerant here for knowing this enables us to question why.

Bracketing Prejudice: Appreciating the Primitive

While Kant accomplished a "Copernican inversion" demonstrating that the mind is active in the process of constituting consciousness/reality, he failed to fully appreciate two things. First that architecture (including his architectonic) is a metaphor with limitations. Second, he failed to appreciate that socio-cultural and historical influences impact the process of architectural design. The physical brain, its networks of neurons, is a cultural product. Communication builds the mind. Anthropological studies have repeatedly demonstrated that while the social world is constituted, it also influences the process of constitution even inflecting the categorical dimensions of space and time (Gebser 1949, 1953; Hall 1966; 1983). Hence, the dialectical aspect of living systems and of lived comportment, as such. The realization of certain architectural schemes is limited by the materials available, and engineering can enhance new ways to use old materials.

The point here is that operationalization has a hermeneutic structure. Transducing a virtual mechanical drawing and theory into an actual working water pump has a logical path (while converting concepts into numbers—code switching—is not operationalization, a mistaken claim very commonly made in the social sciences).

Cassirer, and others such as Jean Gebser, took their inspiration from rigorous and detailed study of "primitive" archaic and mythic forms of expression that differed essentially from modern egoism. They started with the actual (which is how all proper science works) and worked backwards to understand functional relations. Cassirer wrote his great three-volume work *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* while teaching at Hamburg, the home of the famous Library of Cultural Sciences founded by the distinguished art historian Aby Warburg. This became an invaluable resource for Cassirer. It enabled him to generate what Eric Kramer has called a "relative relativism", meaning that there are "many truths, rather than many nontruths" (1997: 28). This stance disrupted the vital but old modernist notion of a single timeless truth positively and definitively revealed. This work generated a new sense that appreciated how Other ways and semantic systems operated, worked, endured and replicated themselves.

Relative relativism recognizes change while also recognizing the existential fact of convention. The issue is the boundary conditions for semantic fields. Within communities sense is shared. Herein is the essence of in-group/out-group difference. And where shared understanding falters, sense becomes incongruous, incommensurate, indeterminate, even sometimes conflicting. As a result, all sorts of consequences cascade including art, anxiety, the ecstasy of writerly texts, fear, innovation, and even violence. Indeed, the evolving nature of life is at the edge of difference. Just as discovery requires the unknown, so too sight requires the invisible, and sound requires silence (Merleau-Ponty c.1960). Having been influenced by Hegel's notion of internal contradiction, in relation to the formation of the human ego during the mirror stage, Jacques Lacan (1966) argues that understanding is always accompanied by misunderstanding. This is the play at the edge (or core?) of bounded field that Joseph Campbell (1972) speaks of and of which Ernest Becker (1973) calls culture—"the symbolic".

Through examination of many forms of expression across cultures and times, a relative relativism emerges. Cassirer came to appreciate the voracity of the notion of multiple logics efficiently and robustly functioning within different cultures. While Kant believed he had discovered the universal rules for the synthetic constitution of consciousness, Cassirer, and others recognized

that there may be more than one architectonic, more than one formal manifold expressed across cultures and history—more than one type of space and more than one type of temporal awareness enduring and vital. Validity in this sense has to do with efficient as compared with deficient consciousness. Poliversality emerges. Many ways to live emerge.

Intolerant Comportment Leads to the Extinction Vortex

Intolerant and hyper-arrogant positivism, which allows for no alternative discourse, throws all but one baby out with the bathwater. The result is a collapse in the quantity of worldviews, of vital and operant meanings (living, meaning scriptive of embodied agency). We see the very practical consequences in the simultaneous mass extinctions of languages and cultures and diversity in flora and fauna (Kramer, Adkins, Kim, and Miller 2014). This planet-wide collapse in diversity is the result of a dangerously aggressive comportment, a radical positivism that reduces success to ever more efficient accumulation of material wealth and might. This collapse is a profound narrowing of what counts as real and valuable. Confronting this rising tide of sameness (destruction of difference) that allows for an extreme perspectivism leading ironically and tragically to nihilism was the primary target of Nietzsche's critique. And Cassirer's appreciation of diversity helps to mark an early warning of the catastrophe that is the extinction vortex.

Cassirer sought to work backwards from certain givens in science and, indeed, everyday life, to the presuppositions that make polyversal facticities possible. These presuppositions being largely taken for granted, what Hans-Georg Gadamer (1960) would call "blind" as compared with "enabling" prejudices (the inevitability of perspectivism already being profoundly established through the reflections of Nietzsche), began to destabilize traditional explanations for not only what we think we know, but also for why we do what we do. Beyond Gadamer, who defined blind prejudices as ones it never occurs to us to question, we can argue that all prejudices are both blind and enabling at once, until and unless we become aware of our own failures to understand—a rare thing.

Kant's "Copernican inversion" in epistemology started a testing of foundations that culminated with a few watershed reflective accomplishments we find in Paul Ricoeur and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, but earlier in Ferdinand de Saussure (from the field of linguistics) and Cassirer. While Edmund Husserl focused on consciousness being transcendental or, to flip the metaphor, the asubjective foundational ground of all experience, others such as George

Simmel, Max Scheler, Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, et cetera, began to suspect in a more overt way that consciousness itself may be a cultural product. The question, what is consciousness, became more intensely problematized. This led to the linguistic turn, the realization that if consciousness is a cultural product it must then be structured through communication. George Mead, Charles Cooley, Alfred Schutz, Thomas Luckmann, and others vitalized investigations into the possibility of the social (including identity as a construction), as an existential process—a process that never ends until communication ceases.

This can be seen as a revitalization of an insight at the very core of human freewill. In the fifth century BCE, Athenians were living in a world ruled by magic, blood-based living gods; pharaohs, emperors, chiefs, and priest-kings. From China to Persia, from India to the Inca, power was a status based on the inherency of "royalty". The temporal and eternal were not yet fragmented, nor were the secular and sacred forms of power. Isocrates disrupted this Pharaonic worldview by suggesting that we think in words and therefore consciousness, our minds, could be enriched through self-cultivation; education.

This led to the revolution, perhaps unsurpassed in consequences for humanity, of meritocracy and the belief in the mutability of human individuals and humanity collectively. We could change ourselves. An unwritten future, a "vision" emerged with individualism as personal hopes and directionality were conjured. The novel is invented, as is silent reading. Novel comes to mean both "unique", and "narrative". The combination of the two is modern directional prose—style (which is an ironically presumed and necessary condition for reversibility in the linear structure that allows for the "post" modern novel). Supernatural predetermination gave way to liberation and the liberal arts on a human scale. Material determinism has threatened this revolution as caste has been replaced by eugenic intolerance but the idea of choice remains robust. This is because we are not predetermined by material or spiritual criteria. Rather, symbols are inherently mutable and so are we because we are symbolic creatures.

Cassirer's work on the nature of human consciousness led to the breakthrough conceptualization of *homo symbolicum*. This is far more than Aristotle's notion that the human is the rational animal or that only humans use language ala Vico. Cassirer's understanding of the seemingly simple phenomenon—symbol—paralleled the breakthrough analytics of sign. It forced a reorientation of fundamental questions about communication and its role in consciousness/world. While Heidegger in his conceptualization of humans as *Da-Sein* fell into his own version of reductionism we might refer

to as lingualism, Cassirer articulated a much more complex understanding of the process of communication, sense-making, the problem of meaning, and how signs and symbols function. Cassirer sidestepped the ontological fatalism—the reductionism of Heideggarian ontology—that conceives the human as spoken through language to, in a sense, a return to the more profoundly radical formulation of dialects found in Hegel which explores the creative and sustaining interplay between social and individual consciousness—silence and voice.

The issue of ground led to the quip that it is turtles all the way down. But what Cassirer and de Saussure grasped is that that is the wrong question. It is not a matter of up or down but continuous interplay that is structuration, something Merleau-Ponty (1960) approached as a net of concepts that has no "ground" and is not a ground but yet sustains us by enabling us to communicate. We are, as the old saying goes, building our ship while at sea. Having said this however, it is also true that we inherit forms of consciousness as we are born into language/culture. Ultimately the Other demonstrates the arbitrariness of my world. But that does not negate my world including its enduring net of conventions. Fear of the Other need not dominate our comportment. In fact, the Other can encourage my devotion to and preservation of my worldview identified via the difference enabled by the existence of the Other, while also appreciating and borrowing from the world of the Other—cultural fusion.

Our consciousness is, to put it clearly, semiotic. Cassirer helped to think through, to blaze the trail to this conclusion. This makes him a pivotal moment in human understanding. And this is a fundamental change to our comportment.

Cassirer's Revolution: The Fact of Arbitration

Cassirer's effort to think more fundamentally moved the project of explaining human comportment toward a symbolic turn, which in many ways is more impressive than the "linguistic turn" that Edward Sapir, Benjamin Whorf, Heidegger and others were exploring. Wittgenstein falls silent at the edge of language. Thinking comes to an end, at least modern propositional logic. But Cassirer understood communication, essentially, to encompass much more than literary criticism, or philosophical analyses of the ontic consequences of grammar and logic and/or nominalism, pragmatism, or linguistics in general—the dominant foci of his times.

Cassirer turned his attention toward something Other and thus revealed a more fundamental, essential quality of human being and communication. One

can paint, dance, punch their intentions. A sigh, a hand slammed onto a table, alien sculptures that mean enigmatic to us if nothing else, all have locution-ary force that nudges us into communication before we know it. Silence can be a powerful message. Emptiness in a room or painting can express mood.

Punctum Archimedis

What Cassirer suspected was afoot, was the *Punctum Archimedis*, the Archi-medean point of sense-making itself. A radical image came into view. Ideas, consciousness, have history. We are all already part of a flowing cultural world. Each word (speech itself), each sculpture (sculpting itself), each song (singing itself) has a history that extends into the transcendental (sustained as the symbolic), which is to say, far beyond the history of its own performance here and now. Each conversation presumes that I know what a conversation is and that they permeate and sustain the world for myself and Others, un-present past, present, and un-present future. The empirical present makes sense only in the vast context of the presumed. We all have inherited the world, a world. All animals are empirical beings. They are trapped in the here and now, but human being is something fundamentally, essentially different. *It, humanity, sui generis, is symbolic in nature. It is an inherency that works through arbitra-tion/invention. It is never fully present or finished in empirical terms. It is a fact of mutable quality. What we are and what we become is in flux.*

Cassirer came to admire Giambattista Vico as being correct in suggest-ing that "primitive Man" lived a more poetic and aesthetic life of song and symbolic crafts that still lingered in modern creative vitality. While styles and forms fluxed over time and space, a fundamental urge to express infused human being. Expression itself, the medium of comportment, changed. The individual will found voice that deviated from dogmatic, collective traditions. With a future, a personal future, came a past that one could draw upon while moving toward innovative modes of regard and articulation. The new and the old, as such emerged together as a tandem realization manifesting linear-ity—progress. The past inspires the present and future. Vico's view inspired many, most notably Friedrich August Wolf, Wilhelm von Humboldt, Johann Gottfried Herder, Goethe, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Leo Spitzer, Isaiah Berlin, Campbell, Mircea Eliade, and Edward Said.

With a nod to Gebser, Cassirer may be (to this point) the most sub-limely incisive voice tracing the influential presence of epochal symbolism as diaphanous expression of the strange yet familiar—of the "distant" early human mind and our universal ability to resonate. No matter how distant in worldview, we rarely mistake human creations for natural forms. And

whenever anyone enters Gua Tewet, the Tree of Life in Borneo, or Blue and Red Hand Caves in Australia, or the Gargas Cave in the French Pyrenees, or Cosquer Cave near Marseille, or other Paleolithic caves around the globe, the first impulse is to put one's own hand over a 25,000-year-old stencil of another human hand (Fig. 1).

What is shared is not the specifics of a worldview but worldview as a human experience. Many of the "hands" are painted over depictions of beasts such as Mammoths and Bison. Transcending wonderment occurs before thinking. Then, we speculate on many things including the postulate that the overlaying hands suggest touching the powerful beings just as we seek to touch those touching hands.
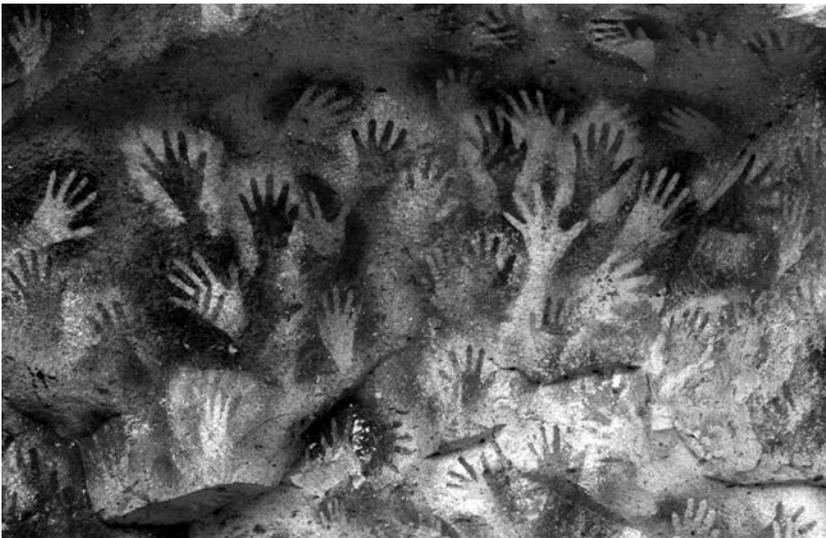

Figure 1. Cueva de las Manos, Argentina.
Smithsonian Public Domain. Retrieved July 14, 2016 from http://www.
smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/ancient-women-artists-may-be-responsible-
for-most-cave-art-1094929/?no-ist

What sense can be reliably assumed, for both social interaction and currency with nature alike? Because phenomenology is sensitive to metaphysical ideology it is very effective at analyzing such stories, as such. But also, phenomenology often has another target of investigation requiring that it ignore metaphysical ideologies thus enabling all experience not only available for investigation, but also encouraging curiosity. Following the likes of Heinrich Zimmer, Richard Wilhelm, and Carl Jung's psychological explorations of ancient and non-Western art and symbolism, Cassirer's work in communicology

dramatically expanded the scope of appropriate, indeed exigent investigation. "Primitive" expression became fair *and worthy* game, in fact a necessary target for a fuller understanding of ourselves, even as it *acted* as a vital inspiration to artists such as Picasso, Matisse, Gauguin, Klee, and Rousseau. The ray of investigative interest was turned onto a whole new field of previously ignored phenomena, including the category "primitive" itself.

To understand "primitive" expression and communication, we must be able to communicate about communication itself and not merely how we communicate to avoid anxiety, how we deceive each other, how we demarcate private from public selves, how we present the self on social media, and so forth. Explicating the deeper and broader nature of the process, which is presumed in all such contexts, presents no small task. *Homo Interneticus* is merely one adumbration of the animal interacting with a particular technological complex of its own making. Too many communication studies are obsessed with means rather than the process of meaning-making generally/ fundamentally. It is the difference between knowing how to make green firecrackers and understanding combustion.

Generating statistically significant correlations does not constitute first science. Indeed, such activity has nothing to do with science but instead the formulaic recognition that two things happen with a frequency that is not random, and nothing more. Surveying how visitors react to a 10,000-year-old fertility figurine does not even address the figurine itself. They may likely spend more time in the museum gift shop than gazing at the artifact. It is akin to surveying teenagers' reactions to Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* only to learn that they prefer the latest music on the Internet. We confuse the finger with the moon, market and opinion research with science.

Cassirer's conviction was that a (if not *the* most) sublimely important quality that sets human beings apart from the rest of the natural world is complex and abstract communication, which encompasses all modalities and channels of expression. Aristotle was wrong. The human is not so much (or so little) the rational animal as essentially and uniquely the symbol maker. Indeed, we turn ourselves into symbols. Opinion research tells us something about opinions and little about the human being.

Symbolicum

Logic can be complicated. But symbolic comportment is far more encompassing and fundamental to defining the nature of human existence. Logic can be traced by computer algorithms, but human symbolic comportment cannot because it is inventive. Nor can insight into human communication be reduced

to algorithmic deduction. Humans are not a bundle of algorithms. Human reality exists as a transcending semantic field, semiotically sustained and articulated. The cultural field reproduces itself in the way literal physical brains are formed through socialization. We are talking here about what a human is and how they are self-sustaining through symbolic systems of their invention.

The binary nature and nurture collapses here. Even investigation into the development of children's brains requires semiology.[1] Human comportment is defined and enabled by a symbolic dimension as much as Kant's founding dimensions for the synthetic *apriori*—space and time. Indeed not "as much as", but by means of, symbolic comportment. The architecture of the consciousness manifold itself is thus shown to be more complex than Kant (or Chomsky, with his dedication to reductionist and fatalistically innate deep structures, we might add) realized. Kant, being very parochial, may be forgiven. But others who have been exposed to globalization, to difference across the board, and who yet discount the symbolic process in human existence are negligent as investigators. Cassirer not only recognized the importance of "the symbolic" for humans, but he went radically farther and insisted that to be human is to be a nexus of symbolic conscious activity. What makes us human is our symbolic consciousness—not the awareness of symbols but the realization that awareness is enabled through and by symbolic systems.

This brings to the fore the necessity of socio-cultural studies as dimensions of the communicative, human mind. Consequently, Kant's revolutionary turn is continued not only through studies of brain biology, as one side of an outmoded dualism between nature and nurture, but this path of insight can be advanced only when semiological work is included. The mind is both nature and nurture simultaneously. The synthetic product cannot exist without both pillars and in fact neither pillar makes sense without the other. The cultural activity of brain surgery undertaken to "correct" a "deficiency" is based on prejudgments about what types of experience are preferred and what types are not preferred and for what reasons. People make such choices all the time when seeking to alter their conscious states through drugs, alcohol, meditation, fasting, and so forth. A particularly rigorous aspect of Jesuit training meant to provoke altered states of awareness is but one out of countless examples of long, often revered, traditions of purposefully provoking radical shifts in comportment. Humans literally "play" with their minds.

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[1] To be clear, this author recognizes the historic and geo-national origins of the terms semiotics and semiology. As is widely recognized, they are often used interchangeably. Semiology tends to be seen as the older, European term. In this paper, I prefer to use semiology as a more restrictive connotation pertaining not to the broad process of sense and meaning making but more narrowly to the process of the methodical investigation thereof.

The nature/culture division has interesting consequences but it is not a universal experience. Cultures without notions of culture also do not understand what "nature" is. For culture is that which is not nature and vice versa. Likewise, neurons encode and form patterns that are interpretable. As Cassirer's student, Clifford Geertz, would say, the plot "thickens". Rigor is demanded.

Eteon

In this effort Cassirer continued the Kantian investigation into human reality/awareness. What was discovered was that consciousness is not only constitutive but that all socio-cultural and historical influences mediate (modulate) our understanding while also being mediated. Systems thinkers such as Anthony Giddens, Niklas Luhmann, and Ludwig von Bertalanffy owe much to Nicolai Hartmann's, Jung's and Cassirer's investigations of emergence and the *eteon*. The *eteon* means, as Gebser (1949, 1953) referred to the new integral understanding of properties (categorical phenomenon presentiated through and by cases—*categorial novum*), a transparency given in/by means of temporal experience—the mutual articulation and sustainability of principle and event (meaning in/through flux). To generalize means to transcend the given. Case and category are perceivable only as one through the other and are identifiable by temporal qualities, or the lack thereof.

> *Case and category manifest together as sign/symbol. Human consciousness, with its power of categorical thinking (leading to nomenclatural knowledge or knowledge as such), is thusly understood as being essentially symbolic in nature.*

The rescendant, temporally contingent has meaning by and through, even as it manifestly expresses, the transcendental categorical. If sense-making were easy, then learning a language would be simple. But learning a contingent language requires the ability to occupy a new sense as it unfolds in time, to enact and embody a symbolic system in an infinite set of contingent cases and to do so "appropriately", "correctly" and even with "style". Profound differences are presentiated through linguistic systems—their enabling and blinding perspectives. For example, Asian languages do not think in terms of case and category the same way as article-laden languages do. For an English speaker to say that *a* cat jumped off the fence as compared with *the* cat jumped off the fence makes a profound difference, a difference Chinese does not articulate.

The rescendant exhibits immanence. Existential speaking brings transcendental language to life. Whole and part are not merely contiguous but synchronous. Categorial, "objective" *eidetic* intuition enables contingent utterances to make sense, even utterances never before empirically extant

and ones with the sense of being silly such as, furious bearded penguins spin on their heads to the sound of Mozart played on imaginary bongos. Long before the neo-Humboldtean, Chomsky talked of sleeping colorless green ideas, Husserl (1913) had delved into and analyzed case/category processes including transcending awareness and adjectival awareness. The *eidetic* and *noetic* are made available to us, one through the other. This includes the *eidetic* manifold of primitive regard.

The whole is perceived through the manifold continuity of sides, perspectives; adumbrations across time and space, aspects and profiles. I use the same word in different contexts linking them forming a meaning reinforcing intent, building a story or argument. The human mind transcends moments synthesizing a coherent flowing awareness. Conversations sharing a focus continue for years, even centuries among people and books. Categorial intuition enables understanding. Beyond this it is essential, meaning inconceivable, that it not be so. The subjective and objective moments of perception are thus mutually sustained and emergent qualities evinced, one through the existence of the other atemporally, which is to say not "in time" nor "out of time" as infinity, but timelessly—essentially.

The "primitive" is one aspect that fulfills all worldviews, especially those that deny its veritional viability (from *veritas* meaning speaking self-evident truth, self-exposure of being as such—not a derivative truth via reduction or some other productive process) and influence in a defensive ... primitive manner. The world is sustained and understandable because of a fluxing synthetic process among atemporal dimensions. They include one-dimensional magic idolic, two-dimensional mythic symbolic, as well as three-dimensional dissociated signalic ways of understanding and communicating (Kramer 1997; 2013).[2] Recognizing the essential structures renders variation (difference) transparent. Identity is understood only through difference and vice versa.

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[2] This nomenclature of non-progressive (for progress as a value judgment is not presumed) one-dimensional idolic, two-dimensional symbolic, and three-dimensional signalic forms of communication/comportment comes from E. Kramer's (1997; 2013) theory of Dimensional Accrual and Dissociation which synthesizes Lewis Mumford's work on dissociation with Jean Gebser's work on comparative consciousness structures, demonstrating a common, essential axis of variance of intensity of association—dissociation; identity and interest—fragmentation and disinterest. For instance, in a predominantly idolic attitude a statue is not a statue of a god but is literally a god and if one disturbs the "statue" acolytes may well become extremely emotional. By contrast two-dimensional symbolic attitude is a world of ambiguity with metaphor dominating via literal and figural meanings existing simultaneously. In a predominantly signalic attitude stark fragmentation leads to the objective precision and disinterested observation whereby emotion and value are ironically devalued as "subjective nonsense". As dissociation increases care decreases.

Thus, the hermeneutic circle is neither vicious nor uninformative. Rather, it is a necessary condition for communication and, by extension, communal living because understanding is both immanent and transcendent simultaneously. Understanding and "preunderstanding" are mutually ever-present aspects of consciousness. Magic idolic conflation of a word with its "referent" as in the transformative process of oath-taking, cursing, naming, pronouncement and identification such as "I now pronounce you" married, guilty, innocent, my love, my enemy (identity), occurs daily in our lives. The idolic power of language is how it enables and limits conception and perception. As social beings, we are what we are called. The invocative and incantatory power to name a thing or situation as good or bad, a disaster or boring, desirable or repulsive, beautiful or ugly … identifies adjectival aspects of identity as a meaning. It is not a matter of inherency but of communicative function. Multiple interpretations of the "same" thing do not exist within idolic communication. What you "see" or think you see is based on how you think and it is what you get. When a child says, "I am hungry", interpretation is greatly restricted.

The "problem" of interpretation occurs in the symbolic world where language itself begins to fragment into literal and figural properties, qualities. For idolic communication identity is nonnegotiable, unintentional, inherent, inescapable. This *is* Ganesha (the elephant headed Hindu god गणेश, also known as Ganapati and Vinayaka) or Mazu (媽祖Ma-tsu … Fujian benevolent goddess of the sea, among many other monikers). To Hindu devotees Ganehsa is not a statue (referentially realistic or abstract) of Ganesh. Nor is Mazu just a statue of a Bodhisattva, goddess, or heavenly protector. In China people buy tickets for airplane seats for Mazu so she can travel between temples.

By essential contrast a crucifix is symbolic/am-bi-valent. It is not god but yet it is not just any altarpiece or necklace. It is both a work of art and an object of reverence (not worship at least according to Catholic doctrine). A crucifix holds emotional valence for the believer. For symbolic communication identity fluxes between literal and figural.

As dissociation increases from idolic to symbolic to signalic forms, identification and emotional attachment wane. For signalic communication, identity is arbitrary. Understanding the various forms of language and communication enables us to see them through their essential differences and to understand variability in comportment. Individual persons can, and almost always do, exhibit aspects of each modality to varying degrees and across time. The adumbrations flux and are evident in comportment and as communicative behavior shifts.

The idolic, "primitive" modality is ever-present. So too is the two-dimensional symbolic dissociation of the literal from the figural and the three-dimensional separation of signifier from signified as being "merely arbitrary" (without emotional import). All modalities inhabit our ways of thinking and comportment and their ratio; which mode dominates at any moment, varies. All three; idolic, symbolic, and signalic modalities function as categorical architectonic structures that wax and wane, moment to moment in our everyday lives (Kramer 2013). Temporalizing the Kantian frame enables us to see how and why "minds change", people *become* sentimental, an individual such as a surgeon brackets emotion for analytical purposes. I may take an analytical regard toward your emotional outburst, or respond in kind. Comportment is attitude. Existential, immanent "moments" are infused and enabled by deeper, older structures that constitute our most fundamental "programming" as human beings. As so many have observed; the past is not past.

Another Order of Time

When I utter words such as the English "fish", or "ma", or "sky", I am using very ancient words. When I say them, operationalize them, it is as if I pick up a Paleolithic stone hammer and begin to build with it. They "still work". But they operationalize me too for without them I cannot express what I am and what I mean. Our consciousness is an inheritance as a symbolic process. When I reach to touch the stenciled hand twenty-five millennia old, and say "mano", it is likely that the root word I utter is itself very ancient. When I say mother, ma, I am uttering a very ancient phoneme that conjures a sense and meaning as a variant of it is found in many languages from Balto-Slavic to Indo-Iranian families, from Portuguese to Hindustani (Hindi and Urdu), across continents dating back at least to the Proto-Indo-European language migration. The magic moment of utterance (the will to physically change the world through expression) is part of our universal communicative effort to transcend space and time and mortality, an effort unique, so far as is known among the *homo symbolicum*, and it is an urge sustained by symbolic consciousness and sustaining of that consciousness.

While all other animals are trapped in the empirical here and now, humans escape time and space. Humans have temporal, historical consciousness. Here Kant did not fully comprehend the transcendental nature of awareness. It is what is not "empirical" about us that makes the human unique and enables the production of things like logic, methods, science, history, poetry. … As Sigmund Freud (1920) noted well before Becker's (1973) interest in the

mortality salience of "the symbolic", communication is more than immediate intercourse among individuals (bird calls). It is a shared, communal habitat that gives shelter against the presence of death. It is also the plenum whereby and wherein we reflect in pensive solitude. This is why we speak more accurately of linguistic communities, semantic fields, than of cultures. And even in "collectivistic" "high context" cultures, the individual is given voice as a unique presence with, and as, *a place within the whole* communicating group. *My place* is far more than an empirical spatio-temporal coordinate or economic designation. It is purely symbolic, even mutable via discursive markers (including economics) sustained across generations, which is as "real" as real gets for humans.

I speak and am spoken in time by accessing a transcendental system that exists on an entirely different temporal and qualitative scale. James Crutchfield puts it this way, "Defining structure and detecting the emergence of complexity in nature are inherently subjective, though essential, scientific activities" (1994: 1). Principle is expressed through the novelty of case. Language lives through speech even as speech is structured by rules that are not themselves spoken but enacted in speaking. And each utterance is a unique moment in history. Alfred North Whitehead observed:

> Order is not sufficient. What is required, is something much more complex.
> It is order entering upon novelty; so that the massiveness of order does not
> degenerate into mere repetition; and so that the novelty is always reflected
> upon a background of system. (1928: 339)

Perception of the novel requires transcending the immediate given and comparing it to absent cases. Contingent cases vary and allow for change/ flux but are at the same time comprehensible. Culture is passed on from one generation to the next through shared systems of symbols. How to comprehend those systems is achieved by interaction within them. Languages come to inhabit us even as they give us communal shelter within a world that "makes sense", even, and especially in the face of mortality. Nothing more "practical" is imaginable. Com-prehension, to understand together not only enables comportment, but reveals the meaning of comportment/attitude within existence meant/perceived as mundane or extraordinary, fleeting or enduring, miserable or delightful. ... Thus, a phenomenological analysis is theoretically never finished. Teams of analysts can continue work for years, as was the purpose of a series of "Yearbooks" (an ongoing project and forum for shared research that began in 1913, was suspended in 1938, and reinitiated in English in 2001).

And, conversely, that process of communication/sharing sustains the conventional stability of signs and symbols across time, a stability that is sustainable and sustaining per human scale—and interestingly scales of time and space understood but not empirically present to any one human or even the species as a whole. Cosmology, geology, biology—histories of various kinds—are the stories of scales we write but cannot experience first-hand. They are the grandest stories.

Comprehension involves far more than direct empirical, which is to say, personal experience. Place within grand stories inform even the most mundane things or actions, even granting them "mundane" status as such. Human reality is an origin and an invention that has no inventor. The world, my world has many authors. It is a process and product that is a community product and constantly operating—ever-present. My consciousness as well as self-consciousness is a communal product extending far into the distant past as an ever-present well of inherited sense. Every moment human reality is sustained, as a semiotic process and even as that semiotic process, that is human reality itself, enables continuity and its twin discontinuity.

Of Terms: Words and Time

Here we have continuity and discontinuity given simultaneously, but not as an oppositional duality of dialectical mechanics. While conventionality may not be eternal, it is reinforced through human comportment and self-regulating commerce in signs and symbols. And with conventionality comes the ever-present, and complementary possibility of the unconventional. This allows for evolving meanings against the parallel fact of enduring sense. Like contrasting colors, change and permanence illuminate each other as such. They are as much complementary as oppositional. Difference enables complement, synchronicity/asynchronicity. The presence of one implies the presence of the other as "absent".

Fundamental semiological work to some may not necessarily seem "practical", but it is profoundly, inherently (necessarily) practical in the so-called *long* and *short terms*—or more accurately in neither term but atemporally. It is instructive that time is designated as and by the word "term", which also means word. Semiological processes are how "things work".

By analogy we can understand the ("practical") influence semiological analyses of culture has on culture. The Nobel Committee could not recognize Einstein's monumental work on relativity but instead his relatively minor mathematical explication of the thermoelectric effect because the latter work fit the requirement of short-term practical application established by

the inventor of industrial dynamite, Alfred Nobel. One changed the way we move dirt and kill each other. The other theory not permitted by the awards committee for consideration, relativity, changed how we see the universe, including ourselves. Similarly, Cassirer's work on the primitive had the most consequential, "practical impacts" on life *because* of its far-reaching influences on culture—its meaning and self-sustaining comportment. Nothing is more intimate or practical than how we see and understand ourselves. It suggests the "terms" (existential conditions) of comportment.

The semiological exploration of human nature is both practical and theoretical. Cassirer understood that insofar as "primitive" magic and mythic expression are modes of communicating/being, they were not merely relevant as fields for academic study but fundamentally informative of the human condition and a source of sustaining vitality and inspiration for modern culture. From "high art" to homemade tattoos, from the fetish of nuclear submarines and moon landers to family photographs, hobbies, and toys, a "primitive" emotional dimension and mode of expression is demonstrably ever-present and totally functional in the sense of our current and self-sustaining lifeworld.

Humility and curiosity are the essential postures of rigorous investigation. What has made science possible (and relatively rare), indeed all rigorous investigations into first principles including semiology, is the philosophical attitude, the Socratic self-questioning that opens us to the possibility that our perception might be limited, that it may contain elements we ignore or even dislike; that new learning is possible; an attitude that supports a posture, a way of regarding things, that in most cultures is seen as childish or impractical, if not shunned as evil—"idle" curiosity.

Beginning with Thales, the know-nothing philosophers took a very risky path and began to challenge the know-it-all priestly class, a group who in practically every society from the Inca to the Aztec, the Chinese to the Persian were blood relatives of the one and only living infallible god (emperor, pharaoh, king, chief …). In archaic societies morality and legality, political and religious powers were not separated. But according to the radical proto-modern philosophical posture, elders may be competent at one form of knowledge but not another, or that they be wrong about everything being discussed. Institutions may perpetuate falsehoods. The king's son may, under examination, be found demonstrably unworthy to ascend the throne. A semiotic, or as Ricoeur (1970) refers to it, a hermeneutic of suspicion, that appreciates alterity within discursive structures always presupposes positionality and therefore partial revelation (the visible and the invisible). This is fundamentally the difference of time-passage. It is also common to culture-specific discourses that

problematize discourse itself and which denies the question of fallibility in that all positions are both infallible as pure verition, and fallible with equal predetermination. Time makes all positions contingent. The foundation of certainty, direct observation, is always personal and pro-visional.

Exploring the life of signs and symbols is the method for such rigorous examination of the process of a system reproducing itself but never as exactly "the same"—that reproduces enabling and blind prejudices. It makes it possible (is a necessary condition for) one to escape what Whitehead meant by an order "degenerating" into "repetition" (1928: 339).[3] Suspicion and skepticism are of course heretical to those who uphold orders. For those dedicated to ordination, time, as a criminal, must be arrested. But, ironically, this positively *proves* to be futile.

The "practical implications" of theoretical exploration and critical examination are more serious than often suggested as when questioning of first principles is derogated as being "merely academic". Even as there are those who opine such a negative attitude toward academic work, they proudly exhibit their academic credentials for the sake of authority, and if they do not have them, they will falsely claim them. When it comes to questioning presumptions about social relationships, power, rank, status, the act of critical examination itself can be more than radical—a profanity—heretical—a word derived from *hairetikos* meaning "able to choose" among differences; the

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[3] Of blindness and insight, Foucault would have done well to more carefully reflect on Nietzsche's proposition of—"something for the industrious", namely a genealogy/archaeology, "a history of love, of avarice, of envy, of conscience, of pious respect for tradition, or of cruelty. Even a comparative history of law or at least of punishment is so far lacking completely" (1887a: Book 1, §7, p. 81). Foucault took up the call but failed to fully understand Nietzsche's radically self-reflexive nature of genealogy. Or Foucault might have studied Whitehead who, like Nietzsche, would have enabled him to escape his "embarrassment" at Sartre's criticism of his all-encompassing prison-house episteme, which he, Foucault, had miraculously exited without understanding the nature of the escape itself. What enabled him to spatialize, step outside of, and analyze at the transcendental level? The instant one realizes one is a person of one's times (or gender or race or class …), an opening presents itself. The meaning conveyed by race, class, tribe, implies limitation, which invites examination and liberation. Once such a limitation is recognized, even if one does not change, one is forevermore responsible for choosing to be conservative—assuming the identity of the intransigent—repeating received truths—Whitehead's fractal repetition of the same unto death. The presentation of a door does not mean one will go through it. Freedom and responsibility co-exist. Foucault bolted the episteme to critically reflect upon it. But he did not reflect on how he managed the exit until Sartre suggested that necessary conditions for this great escape were received from both Nietzsche's and Husserl's implausibly (given their temperaments) common guidance. A rigorous genealogy/archaeology exposes the path. This reflexive move generates difference and it is radical such that many societies shun such a move as nothing less than evil. Nothing more "practical" or consequential can be stated. In the "real world", such resistance to alterity is sometimes violent and identified as "blowback".

penultimate quality of the modern individual that belies the post-positivistic
certainty of choice itself, the inescapable freedom of being (Sartre 1943).

   Questioning first principles threatens foundations and individual impos-
ters, quacks, and charlatans. Theoretical insight, which is more fundamental
than modeling, always involves a basic shift in attitude, which may have
far-reaching, and very "practical", implications emergent from difference
(deauthorization). Cultural shifts in mind greatly outdistance technological
changes.

   This is so for the critical thinker Cassirer as he began to take a heretical
posture for his time, suggesting that the arrogance of industrial modernity is
not only limited but also constricting of human potential. Along with others,
Cassirer manifested an opening in the European mindset. Through the new
perspective his critical work revealed, he enabled a different, innovative ap-
preciation of the primitive as manifesting more than Europeans perceived. He
began to understand for us all, human psyche and culture in a way divergent
from the inertia of his own society—a shift in thinking that he and a few
others gropingly explored, making him an edifying figure. Herein we trace
the context of this shift that has had far-reaching implications for how we
perceive and engage each other and understand ourselves—"our interactive
comportment in the social world" (Lanigan 2011).

Revelation: A New Regard or Way to Behold and to be Beheld

In his work *Experience and Judgment* (1939), Husserl explored the meaning
of evidence and it presented an archeology of self-evident prejudgments. His
effort was profoundly radical in that he refused to accept the self-evidence
of formal logic as anything other than a form of pre-predicative, *qua*, passive
(uncritical) presumption. He insisted on pursuing an "archeological" inves-
tigation into the grounds of objective self-evidence, to dig into his own and
his culture's unquestioned beliefs.

   A generation later, Cassirer follows a similar path. This is a comportment
of humility, which is the alogical foundation of rigor. Only a very arrogant
person would argue that perception is reality (phenomenalism). We all know
when we have been mistaken, when we could swear we had left our keys by
the door but they turn out to not be there. Doubt, questioning, curiosity leads
to exploring not just "reality", but first principles and challenging presuppo-
sitions that found that "reality" as "authentic" and diaphanous. This process
is what Husserl (1913) called questioning the "natural attitude", which once
critically reflected upon, opens up the possibility of learning something new,
especially about how one's own prejudices effect our awareness as a synthetic

fusion of beliefs and perception, while exposing the "received view" as a mere "thesis" to be tested, a "mythology"—a mere contingency (such as fake news or conspiracy theorizing) that may even be motivated out of an attempt to avoid responsibility for a message while still conveying that message—playing the literal against the figural (Barthes 1957). Husserl championed an unconventional, unnatural attitude thus enabling new sights and insights. Cassirer would bring this approach into the socio-cultural fields.

Coming out of this milieu that Husserl helped to ignite, Cassirer's work manifests just such a radical regard; an alternative way of regarding modern reality as not merely harboring, but presuming "primitive" qualities. Just as Husserl insisted that phenomenological investigations are never finished, Whitehead (1919) agreed that it is a hard fact that knowledge formation is an endless process; that synthesis calls forth anti-thesis—turned synthesis, moving the center of things around from a fixed flat Earth to a fixed sun around which a spinning Earth orbits, to a solar system that orbits the center of a galaxy which itself is moving. … Thence, we have the shifting of the meaning of the word connoting the rotation of an object, *revolution*, to connote the radical nature of change itself and in relations generally.

Centrality, and therefore periphery, become fluid. Science is relativistic. The iron clamps of classical reason with the intolerance of the excluded middle, and non-contradiction gives way to play among the parts; tolerances expand, freeing mobility. Science "advances". Mechan(ism) as ideology and worldview dissolves into evolving systemism. A systems approach requires an appreciation of how identity depends on difference, meaning and sense on relational/relative orientation—semiotics.

The counterintuitive point *here* is that this captures the transcendental truth, which Gadamer noted in *Truth and Method* (1960), that *we all* (universally) have enabling and blinding prejudices, *qua* direct observation/ perception, which is *personal*. Direct observation is always personal observation. Yet those personal structures such as my place in history, my gender, my educational background, et cetera, such structures that facilitate and limit are mutable. Positionality is a certainty. And positionality changes. And beyond these existential facts, the broadest agreements as cultural norms, when regarded from outside their purview, are rendered parochial. This rendering is a product of effort. In order to see this quality of parochialism in cultural norms, one must be able to acquire an alternative perspective.

Such fluxing structures, tolerable or not to those seeking to arrest criminal time, constitute who we are. And we are all "in play". Tolerance means wiggle room—the opening for change. The way to expose those limitations, bit by

bit (methodical), is an unnatural, impractical (insofar as "practicality" means predictability, stability, redundancy) attitude that seeks communication—communication with nature and other people—the alterity of the Other (Levinas 1995; 1947). It involves risk—risking one's truths, one's reality, one's identity. Cassirer taught us that the primitive is Other and the same, that within us we can differentiate dimensions that contrast to each other exposing facets of our lives helping us to understand why and how we are incoherent, inconsistent and often indeterminate. Life is not a simple algorithm.

Insight comes out of the effort to understand the alien, which involves asking myself, why I did this or that or how I came to be who, where, and when I am. Socrates opens the door to the reflexive turn and Cassirer, along with others such as Husserl, revitalized this profoundly important aspect of the Western tradition. While such reflection is found in other traditions, to be sure, analysis is the way to put yourself in another's place and ask, if the Sun was in fact circling the Earth how would it look differently, and more profoundly, how did we ever come to question this "self-evident" truth?

The First Examination is Self-examination: "Turns"—Linguistic and of Self

Neitzsche's analysis of perspectivism led him to conclude that we cannot "look around our own corner" and yet (it is worth reiterating) that he says,

> I should think that today we are at least far from the ridiculous immodesty that would be involved in decreeing from our corner that perspectives are permitted only from this corner. Rather has the world has become "infinite" for us all over again, inasmuch as we cannot reject the possibility that *it may include infinite interpretations.* (1887a: Book Five, §374, p. 336)

We may "shudder" at the thought of the "monster" of an unknown world, which the positivists have created with their age of anxiety or we may embrace exploration and the gaiety of surprise. We may become "weary" of endless new interpretations, a failure to be able to endure the "mosquito bites of existence", but redundancy spells the end of meaning.

The visible and the invisible, sense and nonsense trace each other with common liminal boundaries (Merleau-Ponty c.1960; 1948). What this means is that at the boundary of differentiation is the point/moment when identity emerges. Understanding as the criteria for "successful" communication is always also misunderstanding. This is the play in the system. What if all conversations were the same? Surely, we would stop talking. The best conversationalist is the one who tells me something I do not know. And what of murky tales and ambiguous plays on words—the delight of the double

entendre, the art of innuendo and coquettish life that flirts between serious-ness and lighthearted gestures?

Cowardly Positivism as Self-Righteous Violence

We can understand misunderstandings, and vice versa, but we cannot avoid either. Interpretation/translatability is never perfect, pure, or totally transpar-ent (Derrida 1977). This, as *aporia*, is clear. All codes have perspective. None are "innocent". Likewise, my perspective influences my reality. And time not only allows for "the same" but makes "the same" impossible. Insofar as time is inescapable, to the conservative attitude, anxiety becomes a culture, a con-stant existential state. Here is the essential *aporia*, which makes of consistent reality a memorial and the Nietzschean refusal to be intimidated by the "sin" of self-contradiction.

Those who long for the same prove to lack will-power-drive. From a Nietzschean view, they lack the mettle to endure the new. In fact, they may react to the new by attempting to avoid, persecute, and eliminate it (Becker 1973). An irony emerges here. Those of authoritarian stripe, who put forth a "tough guy" "not going to take it anymore" attitude, are actually those who cannot tolerate change. They are hyper-sensitive. They are inflexible, lacking athleticism of attitude/comportment. They have trouble building complex repertoires of dance, songs, cuisines, ways of living and seeing. They avoid debate (especially contrarian facts) and seek to reinforce their prejudices. The truth, ironically, is not what they are after, even as they may claim that as a motive. Rather permanence of worldview, identity, and comportment is what they demand. When alterity fails to disappear, they complain that they are being threatened, even persecuted.

Discourses of fear, anger, and self-righteous victimage, even claims of per-secution mark conservative worldviews that paint themselves as True, Natural, Sane; and are used to justify reactionary tropes and violence (symbolic and physical). Violence becomes a kind of generosity and sacrifice. Hence, I may have to kill you in order to save your soul (Lifton 2000). No price is too high to serve the sacred. Threats to the sacred must be met with all means available. Hence, out of fear of difference, a mentality of persecution emerges and is used to justify all manner of reactionary violence. Communicative means used include exaggeration, denial of the Other, deception, lying, and equivocation. Persecution exaggerates the justice of the righteously innocent. Tropes of innocence defending itself proliferate.

Persecutions, if real at all, are greatly exaggerated to justify reactionary violence and to bolster the identity of being a victim and a member of an

innocent, victimized group (Moss 2014). This attitude, this mode of comportment is, ironically, often used by majority power to maintain power by characterizing alterity as a "threat to our very way of life". "If *they* don't like *our* way of life they are free to leave." Identity politics presumes that there is only one reality and to allow it to evolve is profane, a betrayal of "who we are" and "what we stand for". Soldiers become the effect of the sacred cause.

Often such victimage transforms into calls for heroic destruction, including sacrifice against evil threats as the trope takes on the elevated significance of a struggle that manifests nothing less than the sacred versus the profane. Once this rhetorical line is passed discourses of reconciliation become nearly impossible because to respect the Devil enough to discuss ways to deescalate fear and hate amount to identifying with evil itself, a total betrayal of the sacred. Talk, compromise, diplomacy, all become impossible as righteous indignation depends on an unyielding and singular truth. Any effort at cooperation, détente is viewed from such a mode of comportment as worse than the enemy, who we know are Other, but as betrayal of the cause itself.

From a conservative comportment, the essence of evil is inconsistency, deviance; time. But, as noted, progress, which positivism claims as its virtuous motive, *requires* deviance. The Devil is the all-encompassing detail. Perfection, heaven, is nihilistically, infinitely boring.

The Tragedy of Violence is the Fact that Time/Difference Cannot Be Arrested

Gebser (1949, 1953) notes that the essential condition the Modernist finds herself in is an endless and escalating, "tragic" war with time, and therefore life itself; a time and life spatialized as measure. The Modern tries to defeat time by accelerating everything from the blitz of war to reading, calculating, thinking, accumulating. … The tragic irony is that the Modern is thus caught in a chronic sense of urgency and anxiety that disrupts the personal, even denying its existence (Kramer 1997; 2013). This means relationships are ill formed, poorly maintained, and memories are also lacking. Research has shown that the more accelerated a person's life, the fewer memories they can recall later, thus making that life seem meaningless in retrospect—a problem for aging folks who have little to reflect on (Carew and Magsamen 2010). Redundant and rapid activity at an assembly line or at a computer workstation does not generate, in any sense, the classical notion of the "good life". Thus, the Modern is obsessed with memory, with archiving and accelerating searches. "Databases" become the mass prosthetic for crippled lives—an artificial replacement—deficient simulacra.

Informatics is tragically superseding communication despite Claude Shannon's (1993) protest against the misapplication of his mathematical model of machine information exchange (developed with Warren Weaver) to human comportment, insisting that informatics and human communication are qualitatively, and profoundly different phenomena. Indeed. Nevertheless, the trend continues with the diffusion of signalic forms of, attitudes towards, communication as meaningless fragmented quanta. How we see and characterize communication itself has been influenced by our technetronic culture, a process that Edward T. Hall (1977) called "extension transference", a potentially tragic process whereby we take a technology, such as the mechanical clock, and begin to apply its qualities to ourselves in a sort of feedback effect. This is more than fetishizing a technology. It means we begin to see ourselves and evaluate ourselves using qualities and criteria originating in technological constructs. For example, being punctual, which originally meant being terse and rude, has become a virtue and is often used in descriptions of people's character in letters of recommendation and such. This is a magic identification of humans with their inventions. Acceleration of change is changing change in a feedback process.

Reductive efforts that presume some final ground that would stop interpretation/communication, ironically in the service of perfect repetition of the same, actually disseminate new meanings. As noted, codes—languages—are not "innocent". Innocence implies death prior to life, the avoidance of even original sin. Unarrested time/life is mischievous, playful. All codes and languages have formal limitations that make them both useful and blind. If there were no limitations language could not function. Lexicology exposes the endless generative possibilities language enables. Time/difference *essentially* enables the emergence of dialects, daughter languages, and so forth manifesting existential conditions prompting proponents of the embodied mind such as George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1999) to ask what is *not* a metaphor, what is not positioned and yet moving, what meanings are *not* in play? Because even law is conventional, the mutability of things requires that we "just keep talking", as Stephen Hawking (2013) implores us to do, and that talking keeps changing things. Who would not? Nietzsche gives us a brief description.

Nietzsche describes those who seek disembodiment, who prefer the absurdity of life after death and long for "equilibrium", a zero energy state, those pessimists who seek the "alleviation of existence" who seek to escape pain, who "make even the inevitable mosquito bites of the soul and the body seem much too bloody and malignant" (1887a: Book One, §48, p. 113), those "positivists"

who emit "the vapor of a certain pessimistic gloom, something that smells of weariness, fatalism, disappointment, and fear of new disappointments—or else ostentatious wrath, a bad mood, the anarchism of indignation, and whatever other symptoms and masquerades of the feeling of weakness there may be … a collapse and disease of the will" (Book Five, §347, pp. 288–289). To talk takes energy, effort, and will. And one never controls the meaning for it has a life of its own within social interaction. Speaking (*parole*) is where language lives as an embodied performance (Merleau-Ponty 1952; Gusdorf 1953). The transcendental truth is that meaning is immanent in speech and gesture—ex-press-ion (Gusdorf 1953: 35–36).

The spatial metaphor of transporting the same meaning from one code into another is both revealing and obscuring of an ambition—a "shipwreck" of an ambition as "first philosophy" (Bruzina 2004). And yet, we *know* this—*categorically*. The Neo-Nietzschean, Jacques Derrida (1977) is clear (indeed crystal clear) in his conviction that there is *absolutely no way* to avoid multiple readings, *qua* pluralism (Kramer 1997). Long before Derrida was on the scene, Erwin Schrödinger demonstrated that uncertainty is intrinsic to physical existence, in 1931 Kurt Gödel proved that logic is inherently incomplete, and Russell and Whitehead proved the unavoidable fact of incommensurability in their monumental failure to purge ambiguity from mathematics (Nagel and Newman 2001; Whitehead and Russell i.1910–1913). Like all human articulation, mathematics exhibits idolic, symbolic and signalic modes of expression. This is a truth of our existence. And, no system can prove its own consistency. But beyond this constant it is also a truth that in an effort to transcend (rather than positively reinforce) perspectivism, *we, especially in the Western tradition, seek out multiple readings*—to be original, to escape the "anxiety of influence" (Bloom 1973). The Western tradition is a constant threat to conservative efforts to maintain permanence. The West embraces change (often elevated to the virtue of progress).

Inconsistency proves to be valuable. It is how we escape ourselves. Change, including "progress", requires, essentially, deviance. Even in sensation, perception requires deviation in the optic field, in tactile pressure, in audial volume and tone (Kramer 2000a; 2000b). The "same" is not only impossible to maintain but if we did, it would lead to meaningless redundancy, or worse. … It would be not just utterly invisible but extant as nothing but sheer and untestable hypothesis. The permanence of permanence is essentially a delusion, perhaps the greatest of all, or at least some such as Buddhists suggest.

Is redundancy truly meaningless as information theory would have it? No. The same can be established for the sake of predictability and control but we

find such a condition to not necessary allay anxiety, for anxiety is most fostered by inevitabilities such as death and taxes. Rather arresting change leads to what Nietzsche recognized as the worst (meaningfully so) of all human conditions, boredom followed by nihilism. Hence, we constantly invent difference in all things. Confinement, especially of the mind, is a terrible state to be in. The mind will construct its own reality if deprived of stimulation. Curiosity is given value, even promoted, in the Modern Western tradition. Curiously, established institutions encourage their own supersession. People are taught that from art to science, to topple a paradigm is worthy of highest praise.

Deviance: The Necessary Condition for Progress

To be an outlier is often ignored by statisticians, because in a society obsessed with mass consumerism, they concern themselves with averages as the most valuable derived result; *derived*, for empirically speaking the average family of 2.1 people does not actually exist. But the actual deviant is essential to change.[4] And this includes deviation in regard and comportment.

To see things, including myself, again it is useful to defamiliarize ourselves with/from them, to destabilize, deconstruct typical ways of seeing. Russian formalists referred to this process as *ostranenie*, to de-habituate, de-automate, to make strange, perhaps difficult what was once unquestioned and familiar thus enabling us to see it again. This is why running the closed course of algorithmic circuitry is not thinking. This turns knowing upside down. Nietzsche observed that most equate knowing something with being familiar with it. But such familiarity actually makes us overlook it. This is the

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[4] This dedication to a virtual value as opposed to actual measures can lead to curious results. In a highly homogenous population, sampling works. One need not drain all of my blood to tell me I have measles. A tiny sample is fine. Hydrogen atoms behave the same under the same conditions across space and time. But humans exhibit great variation. Furthermore, certain ideologies are often applied to actual conditions ignoring, ironically, empirical facts— even totally displacing them ontologically and taking priority over them metaphysically and as claims of knowledge (Husserl 1936; O. Becker 1923; Gurwitsch 1974). Of course, the mathematization of nature as such is a magic activity whereby a thing is regarded as identical with its measures resulting in a manifold that is a creation—an artifact of a culture particularly obsessed with instrumentality (Gurwitsch 1965; Natanson 1962; Heelan 1983). An example is when a teacher insists on applying a bell curve to a class while ignoring the empirical fact that an actual group may measurably demonstrate a high concentration of excellent (or lazy) students. This is the imposition of an ideology masquerading—articulated as mathematical manifold and as such privileged—as "objective truth". Such a creation as the bell curve literally ignores as irrelevant actual measures for a belief and value system. Confusion of this ilk has become part and parcel of the modern industrial worldview. This is why ideas like a "fair" and simple "flat tax" persuades so many, even as it results in vastly different actual monetary amounts adding to, not narrowing, gaps in income inequality. Again, the practicality of comportment is self-evident.

"virtuous stupidity, stolid metronomes for the slow spirits, to make sure that the faithful of the great shared faith stay together and continue their dance" (1887a: Book 2, §76, p. 131). While most trudge on, staying on course, the deviant wanders *off*, gets out-of-step.

The revolution of the style of regard commonly called modern, is to appreciate deviance, of being out-of-synch as valuable. Pre-scripted patterns of thinking and behaving save energy and eliminate the need to reflect. The unnatural attitude, the techniques of making strange what was once "known", these eliminate the shortest distance between two points and replace self-evident certainty with an indirect path to a more diaphanous insight. Plunging into the murk, reaching into the unknown is not the style of risk-averse, conservatives. Tradition was a target of Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers. Taking the long way requires rigor and grit. But its intrinsic reward is sight itself, for as we know, we do not see "it" until it moves.

This is the essence of the method of purposeful violation of expectations developed by Harold Garfinkel (1967) and later liberally borrowed by others as a theory of expectancy violations. Garfinkel understood expectancy violations (as does just about everyone alive) but went further to develop a methodological process later called "breaching experiments" in psychology in order to "make the commonplace visible" (Garfinkel 1967: 36). For instance, we typically do not reflect on the norms about what constitutes morning as compared with evening food, or wearing matching shoes, until we violate them. Some violations are met with cheers for the unexpected voice or gesture, others with social sanctions. How we comport ourselves has a social dimension and it can be reinforced or punished.

Comportment itself, like perspective, is unavoidable. The difference involves everything from the social evaluation of "character" to our self-esteem and sense of courage impacting phenomena such as the spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann 1980). Prior to this and following a similar logic, Cassirer would eventually make the link between basic expression and modern political activity as a personal and collective process. Opinion, that very personal of positions, has a powerful public aspect as well as a fear of losing social relationships (hence, this can go a long way to explain the coarseness of social media slander based on a lack of social responsibility—anonymity—not the "hyper-personal" but rather the post-personal, opinion, as the line between private and public, front-stage and back-stage comportment is erased) (Goffman 1956).[5]

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[5] Application of Goffman's and Garfinkel's work to media environments was developed by Joshua Meyrowitz in his 1985 work No Sense of Place. This work is a far more sophisticated exploration of blurring identity boundaries and presentation of self through media than later

Getting to know another way, such as "the primitive", and to assume its perspective, can be a goal in itself. The relatively queer view unleashes the joy of discovery. Understanding is the ability to see, and to make the mutable modern via differencing. Fascination is kindled as when one returns to a childhood haunt and realizes everything is small and uncanny. The most impractical acts, such as going to the bottom of the ocean just to see what is down there, reconstitutes our reality. Extending our minds restructures consciousness.

When we do not know then we can commence inquiry, questioning, exploration. Around the world and across history an essential pattern repeats. The know-it-all priestly classes seek to silence, even literally murder, the know-nothing seekers. But the seekers persist and not just to usurp the power of god-kings so much as to delight in the ecstasy of difficult reading (Barthes 1970). Roland Barthes explains this seduction:

> the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable … ; the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language (1970: 5–6).

Here I suggest to Barthes that this should not be a description of the "ideal text", as he put it (1970: 5), but of reality, which is more in keeping with his notion of a universal semantic. To be fair, Barthes suggests this in his observation of the "infinite play of the world" (5). And as Barthes recalls Nietzsche's gay sense of interpretation, to interpret a text "is not to give it a (more or less justified, more or less free) meaning, but on the contrary to appreciate what *plural* constitutes it"(5). The world is not a mere imitation. And as the old saying goes, life is not a dress rehearsal. Appreciating this has consequences for social comportment, and for those who tragically wait for life to happen.

What is at stake is everything, including identity itself as it becomes unhinged and more a chiasm such as a body that touches itself or which sees vision, than a fixed and finished set of traits. It is not fraud for this becomes impossible. Rather, the flux occurs as the self is changed by self-reflection *and action, which is always inter-action*, which changes all future forms of reflection. Communion with the rest, the Other, if one prefers, is life and endless dissemination, deferring, differing, difference. The distinction between the

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simplistic social "scientific" efforts. The latter however have been vigorously networked by a clan of professors promoting themselves through poorly informed and less insightful graduate students leading too many younger students to not be exposed to Meyrowitz's original and insightful work in favor of such minor and poorly derived formulations.

explorer and the explored, the reader and the writer, fluxes between clarity and being blurred. Focusing is a movement within blurring. Experimentation and exploration become indeterminate.

Exploring a text is not just a "pleasure", but also a sometimes unpleasant, even horrifying process. Horror is exhilarating too, and quite motivating. Self-realization can make one unmoored, not found but lost, gloriously lost. But *because of the indeterminate quality* of exploration, it sublimely seduces as something to be not only and forever feared. What it is not, is boring. Repetition of the same is boring. Prediction and predictability is boring, or worse. Living life is not merely a referendum on the positively—fatalistic given. The West holds highest those who dare to explore the farthest, beyond the maps—those who the mapmakers try to keep up with.

Hearing the same joke, even an initially hilarious one, quickly becomes boring. The more conservative the group the higher their high context communication will be, meaning the less there is to say because nothing is changing. The modern world has an insatiable appetite for "news". The result of curiosity, of such an impractical radical attitude, is very fundamental in the most basic of pursuits—what we know and how we think we know. Dialogue is risky yet stimulating.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1943) grasped the existential impact of phenomenology and the phenomenological investigation of attitude including "the gaze", noting that Husserl had plunged philosophy back into the streets, radicalizing the mundane, taken-for-granted, everyday lifeworld. Initially the gaze attempted to "fix" the Other, but then it too became motion. What seemed fixed became provisional—theoretical. Reality became an attitude, a theory—questionable. Initially it was thought that this was due to Kant's failure to bridge the gap from consciousness to the *ding an sich*. Collapsing the two in the phrase, consciousness is always consciousness of something, or "to the things themselves" attempted to avoid the problem, but the duality remained as each phenomenon had its noetic object-referent and noematic act poles. This approach remained too passive. Semiological studies have shown the flux of transformation and the reversibility of act-referent on a plastic awareness. Language speaks us as we speak it.

But even more radical is the realization about the self that it is not a reversibility, which is still dualistic, but the same as difference. The conservative Platonists were reactionaries. They were reacting to the post-modern Heraclitus who chronologically preceded the formalistic modernists. Postmodernity happened before positivistic modernism.

All words mean across time. "Subject", "case", "contingency", all are infused with meaning that is categorial/transcendental. All subjects are understood as such because they share essential qualities. All cases are understood as such because they share essential qualities. The same is true for all contingencies. A contingency, any contingency, is a secular phenomenon meaning "of time". Its meaning as something fleeting is itself enduring. Likewise, the words "impermanence" and "difference" can be phenomenologically analyzed. The primitive also endures and remains operant in all human comportment. It is presumed, or was, until Cassirer began to phenomenologically examine it.

To the question of how the most rigorous examinations of formal logic could be related to the most mundane activity or daydream, existentialists responded, how could they not be? Like continuity and discontinuity being given simultaneously, the immanent and the transcendent are given together via the case/category sense of meaning across temporal moments. Philosophy was not an elitist activity. The bracketing of psychologistic ego in favor of describing modes of consciousness led to the non-sentimental exploration of ordinary freedom, identity, madness and sanity, as well as the limitation of linguistic structuration as *remarkable-once-seen*. Similar to the effort to counter the naïve belief that one must be taught how to read but need not be taught how to watch visual arts, phenomenology insists that analysis requires effort, an unnatural attitude and methodical suspension of naïve—passive impressionism.

The quest is not to escape the mundane but to recognize in it the temporal motion that continually opens into future horizons. This is the ever-present moment of magic transformation available as potential. The freedom it embodies also makes us moral beings. Even as we trace structures, comfortably presumed frames as enactments "enframing" (*Gestell*), we are "condemned" to take responsibility for them, which opens the possibility of stepping outside them (Sartre1943; Heidegger 1954). The abnegation of this freedom is the essence of reductionism and the possibility of what Husserl (1936 Ger./1970 Eng.) called a crisis in human comportment. Just as the First World War prompted Husserl to reevaluate the role of thinking in the world, the Second World War demanded reflection. Thus, Cassirer (1946) too followed this path to his criticism of denial of responsibility, just as Erich Fromm (1941) questioned people's seeming desire to "escape from freedom". Structure (including the linguistic manifold), what it is and how authority threatens individual agency and retards change became a central issue for many from Talcott Parsons to Michel Foucault, Paul Tillich to H. M. Hare, Reinhold Niebuhr to G. E. Moore. Kant's understanding of

time and eternity as fundamental duality led to his deontological ethics that privileges consistency of principle over existential consequences. The time/eternity duality is manifested in other dualities such as the individual versus society; freedom and historical determinism. Kant sets the stage for Hegelian idealism and dialects. However, once duality is abandoned and an atemporal mode of integration emerges principle is found in the identity of things and acts. Contrary to eudaemonic innatism, goodness and badness are evinced by not merely consequences but the acts themselves.

Prior to dualism, one does not "apply" judgment like painting a boat. Rather it, along with meaning, is always already present yet also mutable. Ethics and morality are thus of this world—of our world and our comportment. Bentham appears to take this tact but in fact he is arguing from the ideal of hedonic logic. Bentham ironically attacks the concept of the "natural rights of Men", as "nonsense on stilts". Arguing against the seditious texts of colonists such as Thomas Jefferson, the conservative Bentham (1780) denigrated the rights of equal citizenship and indeed of all humans. For Bentham equality of rights is perhaps a dream but not evinced in this world and hence, and this is the irony of this conservative posture, the need for critical comportment and rigorous evaluation of power, a "consequence" unanticipated by those like Bentham who sought to defend the status quo and to defuse the "rights of Man" ideology lest it lead to revolution. Critical comportment is itself ... utilitarian. It turns out being an ideal realized only as a secular phenomenon. David Hume (1748), argued that the incompatibility between determinism and free will was actually the result of our confusion about causation. Choice involves perceived structure that is an essential element of hermeneutic horizon, but horizons are mutable. Again, ironically, for Hume did not entirely see the consequence of his work, with determinism bracketed, ethical responsibility becomes more than a sentiment; it becomes an existential (*qua* temporal) inevitability.

Phenomena such as structure, values, beliefs, and such become available for investigation (including efforts to measure them) only when metaphysical prejudice is bracketed. Studies continue in this vein demonstrating a fundamental difference, for example, between self-identifying "liberals" or "progressives" and "conservatives" along value-orientations. Research has identified six "major" "morals" operating within US culture: care, fairness, liberty, loyalty, authority, and purity (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009). Of these morals, "liberal" individuals tend to rate highly on the first three (care, fairness, and liberty), while "conservatives" tend to rate highly on all six including loyalty, authority, and purity. Ideologies tend to narrow the focus so for instance,

libertarianism tends to manifestly value liberty higher than all other values while progressivism values care over other moral tenets (Graham, Haidt, and Nosek 2009). Regardless of the number assigned, the important issue is a fundamental difference in comportment based on phenomena that have no physical color, weight, or extension.

Questioning and reflection are given via a critical attitude toward the most "mundane" phenomena such as an "intuitive" sense of fairness or loyalty (no matter how much one values them). As one phenomenologist put it, the meaning of life is in a cup of coffee in the morning (conversation with Algis Mickunas). Once the mundane is seen, "the primitive" can be regarded with generous inquiry and not preemptively discarded as irrelevant—even meaningless. Once a breach in the arrogance of pre-judgment was achieved, the certainty that the primitive is unimportant, nonessential, was shaken. In the midst of strident colonial bombast, Cassirer and others such as Joyce, Picasso, Freud, Jung, and Gebser took this critical turn.

Comforting Uncertainty: Hope

Two important practical implications of the new effort followed. First, a recognition of non-Europeans as fully human was possible. Second, within the bounds of Europe itself emerged the vindication of the lifeworld and defense against a nihilism drifting with the "gloomy vapors" of dead materialism (Nietzsche 1887a: Book Five, §347, p. 288). Based on metaphysical ideology, by denying meaning existence, positivity, not relativism, threatened humanity in the most fundamental way.

Gadamer (1960) notes that communication is always threatening because it challenges our horizons. And as Nietzsche pointed out, it is profoundly difficult to "look around one's own corner" (1887a: Book Five, §374, p. 336). Therefore, communication with the Other including spirits, animals, natural and supernatural forces is vital (Levinas 1995). The Other impacts how we constitute ourselves. It shifts our self-regard as when a bully sees in the face of a victim something that makes him suddenly realize that what he has done is not a good thing, is in fact a terrible thing, or when a child sees the pride in the face of a parent and grows confident. Reading these signs effects our comportment within the lifeworld. And the Other need not be a human being. Witnessing a tornado can alter how one sees oneself, technology, nature, and human abilities. Semiotics is thus universal (universal semantization). Consciousness is consciousness of … meaning. And to be conscious is to have awareness of difference. We are "condemned to meaning" (Merleau-Ponty 1945: xix).

Exposing one's self to divergent views promises deviating self-enrichment. It can lead to painful self-contradiction but that need not be a "bad" thing. Colonial ambition was driven by demands for different tastes, materials, and styles. Hence entire islands were named for spices and the winds were labeled "trade". During Cassirer's time, the "White Man's burden" gave way to a vast expansion of life possibilities for Europeans as well as those they encountered outside those traditions. Unbeknownst to many Europeans, they were edging out from under their own shadow. Contact led to unexpected consequences and this is the ecstasy of communication.

But such a move requires that one resist any "collapse" or "disease" of the will (Nietzsche 1887a). Conservative positivism proves cowardly. It fears uncertainty. Insistence on predictability has its own horrors. The ancient story of Epimetheus, Prometheus's brother, is instructive. When Zeus gave humans the power of perfect foresight, the result was a world without uncertainty, without open horizons, without the possibility of misstep but also a world without hope or discovery. Life became rote based on the memorial knowledge of the future. Once humans knew all future states, including all future calamities as predetermined fatalism, including how they and all their descendants would die, humanity was defeated in spirit, and passively ceased to move and began to perish. The prophecy was horrifically self-fulfilling. Against Zeus's will, Epimetheus swooped in and took this power away from humans in order to save them.

The Gift of the Unpredictable

The Ancient Hellenes thus understood the dangers the power to predict all future states presented to human creativity, will, and enterprise and the suicidal folly of those who would pursue this power. Prophets were regarded with awe *and anxiety*. Uncertainty is not simply *a* source of anxiety but much more significantly it is *the* source of hope (Kramer 1997). Certainty is the source of fatalistic resignation. This is the *caput mortem* of facticity. The word fact means something already done. Husserl, like Nietzsche before him, challenges this nightmare dream by investigating the constitutive presumptions of facticity itself.

The fact that phenomenological inquiry never ends is not a tragedy but a salvation. Cassirer would reopen a whole field of research once discarded and do so by challenging the prejudices of his milieu regarding the *known truth of the immature primitive*. This inquiry would change how we see ourselves as well as the Other. He insisted that the Modern across articulations from cuisine to art, *could* learn from the primitive and thereby be revitalized.

Permanence guarantees predictability. Stability petrifies. Equilibrium is a zero-energy state—death. While *redundancy is boring onto death*, difference generates meaning. This is not a judgment. Meaning—differencing is not always pleasant. Rather it is an essential quality of change, which is an essential condition of consciousness itself. When things never change, consciousness ceases. If you paralyze an eye so the micro saccades movement, the involuntary quiver or ocular tremor is stopped, vision ceases and returns only when traces move across the retina again. We see things either when they move or our eye moves. Touch works when pressure changes. We quickly become numb to unchanging touch. But also, just as difference reveals identity, change reveals enduring sense. This is how nihilism is averted. Sense-meaning involves consciousness of/as time (Husserl 1905). The ability to recognize change presumes a persistence of sense across adumbrations. What Husserl, in *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness* demonstrated already by 1905, is that difference gives us "the same".[6] Cassirer carried this insight into the cultural realm. Tracing, as both retention *and* protension, extend the self beyond and across variance. This is how meaning is realized and moves—changes. Alterity is ever-present to the living (transmutational) mind. As Richard Buckminster Fuller put it, "I seem to be a verb" (Fuller 1970: 1).

Prejudices that persist and both limit while enabling awareness are inscribed in our physical nature and culture and are therefore sharable. Both are mediated by systems of symbols we use and which enable us to performatively pass a relatively stable reality on from one generation to the next. The stability exists within the codes themselves and the medium used to "fix" them. But the performativity harbors endogenous variance—purposeful and accidental, as Paul Watzlawick and others have noted (Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson 1967; Ruesch and Bateson 1951). Exogenous variance also impacts horizonal identity. Hence, dictionaries must be constantly updated. This highlights the power of creativity and curiosity—the pursuit of frequencies beyond the capability of the empirical eye and the empirical ear to detect. It also reveals a phenomenologically positive attitude that we can know that we are historically situated and embodied beings and yet understand this as a universal condition and see it as a limitation implying that there is more to be learned. Contrary to the dead-end promise of naïve positivism, which Nietzsche abhorred, Socrates taught us that ignorance is the origin of growth.

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[6] Many of the most profound observations found in Heidegger's works Being and Time and Identity and Difference are found in The Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness, which Heidegger edited for Husserl.

Hope and the Condition of Ignorance

We should aspire to be ignorant, or to be proven so, so that there is always more. Without mystery, there is no possibility of discovery. Meaning comes from the edges we trace. Sense and nonsense interplay. When there is no periphery the center is everywhere and nowhere (Black Elk and Neihardt 1932).

Knowledge demands that we continue to reflexively challenge the "received view". This is the essence of what Husserl was pursuing as a cultural tendency and the crux of his long exchange with Wilhelm Dilthey, a friendly and fascinating exploration continued by others such as Ricoeur in his work *History and Truth* (1955) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* (c.1960). This is an exploration of humanity and its artifacts including the "life of signs *within* [emphasis added] society" fully initiated only in the last century (de Saussure i.1906–1911).

The Essential Quality of Relativism

Here we must acknowledge the enormous influence Nietzsche had when he announced that "the development of language and the development of consciousness go hand in hand" (1887a: Book Five, §354, p. 299), and that our embodied animalism achieves "the essence of phenomenalism and perspectivism" (299). Note Nietzsche's use of the term "essence" in analyzing perspectivism. Pespectivism is construable. It is not an endless, incomprehensible, uncommunicable sense. Both relativism and perspectivism have essential qualities. "Consciousness is really only a net of communication between human beings … consciousness does not really belong to man's [*sic*] individual existence but rather to his [*sic*] social or herd nature" (298, 299). Codes are inherently/essentially social phenomena (Wittgenstein 1946). In their interactive operation, they enable construability but also are exposed to variance due to accident and invention.

Phenomenology is a method. It is not the same thing as phenomenalism (an ideology naming naïve impressionism), which is unexamined perception characterized as often being an unchallenging, if not arrogant, dedication to the received view. The conceptualization of meaning as representational, as referring to something exterior to itself, changes at this time in Nietzsche, Saussure, Husserl, Wittgenstein, and others. The focus of investigation therefore shifts to the process of meaning itself. Phenomenology is a rigorous project to interrogate the unexamined life. Here is the basis of the notion of Foucault's (1966) episteme as a shared naiveté in need of interrogation of the presumed order of things. As Nietzsche put it, only "gloomy positivists" (1887a: 288) become fearful, indignant, and finally exhausted in the face of alternatives and complexity, preferring instead a communal myth of profound

and fixed simplicity—failing utterly to understand that the variety of modes of experience do not unhinge, but instead, enable what Cassirer would call the comprehensibility of identity emerging from difference. The simple correspondence theory of truth along with the consensus theory give way to a much more radical ground. One person could be correct while all others are wrong. Truth is not private but nor is it simple inter-subjective agreement. Questions continue to emerge.

While simplistic industrial positivism tended to do the "mopping up job" of organizing modern society, to focus on issues of hegemonic organization, efficiency, functional fit, assimilation, conformity and "competence", it spawned various forms of social engineering rather than a rigorous social scientific questioning after the possibilities of society and sense. Positivists view grand theory as well as the pursuit of first principles as either too difficult or as impractical and irrelevant to human progress.

Cassirer demonstrated that there is no such dualism. Understanding first principles has "practical" consequences for understanding/worldview. Questions of sense and reality not only remain germane, but become critical. Just as quantum theory wrenched the physical sciences beyond the notion that Newton had finished the job, the unexpected confluence of existentialism with logical positivism demonstrated that social science and economic law was nowhere near finished.

Insofar as consciousness is linguistically structured it is a social product, and it therefore varies. But this itself is a universal fact that we can understand. And as a social phenomenon, it transcends all who participate in its field. As a linguistic manifold, poetic and other aberrant uses of language can help us see language anew. But more importantly, insofar as consciousness is linguistic/symbolic in structure, aberrant forms give us a new awareness.

Acquiring the primitive attitude, even if only partially and momentarily, was one such aberrant worldview for the Modern European. It became a prism, a structured and structuring instrument for altered gaze. Once this stance, the primitive way of regarding things is achieved, the Modern worldview comes into focus. Dissociated as such, it becomes available for analysis. For instance, if we can see US armed forces arriving in a place such as Micronesia in 1945, from the perspective of the indigenous population, we may begin to understand what such US forces looked like, meant, constituted for the Micronesian and why the cargo cult emerged as it did. US citizens and soldiers may see US military forces going into Afghanistan as a liberating act while Afghani tribesmen see something very different. Cassirer understands this and proceeds to examine human complexity as such. And in his investigation, he turns to "the

symbol" because all perception manifests as such (as prejudice—enabling and blind). But before this he was a man of his times.

Passages: Different Paths, Different Views

Initially, Cassirer was wrong, and fundamentally so. He assumed that mathematics and the natural sciences are somehow at odds with humanism—that they somehow escape our human, all too human cultural existence. But of course, they are human inventions—cultural artifacts, achievements of human activity. What he was reflecting was the then dominant notion that Europe was superhuman while all others were merely human or worse, subhuman. He separated science (as derived from natural language), from art, which he contended derived from more primitive "mythical thinking" (Cassirer i.1906–1907). He would abandon this conventional dualism as he came to appreciate more fundamental and essential (common) aspects of human consciousness and culture—including science as a process of human agency and symbolic interaction.

Not unlike Nietzsche before him, Cassirer began to understand that the "primitive" is presumed in all "higher" modes of expression (Kramer 1997). By the 1920s, Cassirer had been swept up in, but at the same time had become an original force for, primitivism. While it was still tinged with the naïve aspects of romanticism, scholars (but notably not Heidegger) slowly came to realize that urban industrial *gesellschaft* **and** the *gemeinschaft volkskultur* both had deficiencies—deficiencies clearly exposed by the "back to the land" Nazi populist movement. The Enlightenment turn toward an efficient reason did yield positive results vis-à-vis medieval mythic and magic archaic thinking (Gebser 1949, 1953; Kramer 1997; 2013). Technical power increased rapidly. But it too has its deficient adumbration—deficient meaning a system's inability to reproduce itself (suicidal tendencies due to lack of vitality or self-destructive hypertrophy).

Like his contemporaries who began to see the limits of rationalism, and those foreshadowing (such as Rousseau and Goethe); Impressionists in painting, Dadaism, Existentialism, Bartók and Stravinsky in music, Joyce, Evens-Wentz, Max Scheler, Boas, Mauss, Malinowski, Jung and others in socio-cultural literature and studies (to mention but an exemplary few), Cassirer began to see the vital and dazzling aspects of magic and myth including the incredible precision and complexity of magic systems and the profound insights of mythic storytelling as yet vital aspects of life. Correspondingly, Cassirer began to see as delusional and dangerous an unwarranted immodesty

found within European Modernism that enabled abuse: denigration, exploitation, and too often cruelty on a global scale.

Magic and mythic inspirations presented continued viability and were even essential—necessary—dimensions foundational for the success of modern projects that were hardly disinterested or random efforts. Modern projects such as damming great rivers to electrify cities and creating flying machines involved magic identification with facticity and mythic visions of progress. Operationalization, the transformation of a mechanical drawing of a water pump, for instance, into an actual, functioning piece of equipment, presumes magic effort and mythic imagination. Only in deficient social sciences do writers mistakenly claim they have operationalized something by merely translating natural language into numeric. Furthermore, Cassirer (1942) realized that the impotence of social science as an operation may be a good thing, because social engineering had proven to be fraught with ethical and moral complexities which social scientists are typically unprepared to address. Pride in being "disinterested" and denial of contextual consequences proved dangerous for those on the receiving end of social engineering.

Cassirer also realized that mythic sentimentality was an essential component to ethics. Being sentimental, regard for sentient beings, though perhaps unprofitable within a capitalist system, creates limits to abusive unbridled power-domination. Rationalism could not limit itself. Judgment, as Kant noted, is fundamental to perception itself. I see an injustice even as I see a material action.

Cassirer was not only Kantian but also Hegelian. Hegel had been correct. There was a tension within the European mentality that was most powerfully exposed where it met difference. Trained in English law and Christian morality, Gandhi was able to expose what contradiction becomes in moral terms—hypocrisy. The same would be the case with the US convulsion over slavery—perhaps the first time in human history that a dominant class went to internecine war with itself to liberate another class of people within its own social system. The rational problem of set theory exposed by Georg Cantor and Gottlob Frege demonstrated the limits of rationality (as expressed in analytic philosophy) as inherently inconsistent and therefore absurd (*aporetic*). In socio-cultural terms, this amounts to a Hegelian self-contradicting system—that being a member of a set that is self-referential quickly produces profound moral consequences when implicated in practical affairs. Arthur Schopenhauer would merely re-label Hegel's world-as-logic as world-as-will (the magic identification is highlighted by the use of hyphenation here). Desiring to present simplistically irrefutable two-valued philosophies, both

Hegel and Schopenhauer explain the inconsistencies within systems; one as an inevitable clash of desires, the other as an equally inevitable logical necessity. Well before Whitehead, both were process philosophers who lacked the pragmatics of practical rationality that Charles Sanders Peirce recognized, and which contains the anti-fatalistic kernel of abductive third-value logic—freedom (not of will but to be corrected via implication).

Within the European intellectual community, Cassirer (among others) constituted a point of strain that was his self-reflexive writing. In his own way, like Peirce, he began to transcend the old two-valued way of thinking for semiotics, which turned toward how communication actually happens including mythic ambiguity thus leaving behind the malpractice of pure theory.

For Cassirer, European arrogance was rooted in, ironically, an emotional and egocentric inflation concerning European dominance/power derived from industrially operationalized mechanical logic—positivism—an ideology that conveniently judged itself to be the *non plus ultra* of human evolutionary development. And yet the left Hegelian, Marx, contra the British utilitarians, insisted that reason had been tragically reduced to competence, to *techné*. Reason itself as a mere means of the Absolute had come to Earth as tool, a utility used by European powers, entrepreneurs and governments, to service their greedy ambitions. This proved pragmatically irrational given larger goals such as survival. In practical terms, when a system leads to conditions that compel the system to fail, it becomes deficient (as opposed to efficient). What this means is a condition emerges that is suicidal. European logic (or unbridled will), as an "innocent" and inevitable path, was reaching just such a self-destructive absurd fatalism. A false dichotomy emerges, reflected in false consciousness. Do or die. With the advent of powerful technologies of war this led to the ridiculous situation called mutual assured destruction as the primary strategy for global stability in a "new world order". Peace is assured through taking billions hostage at the tip of hundreds of intercontinental ballistic missiles. And even this insanity did not allay missile envy as more and more nation-states strove to join the "nuclear club" while their populations languished in poverty and military might hypertrophied into "super powerism", with growing arsenals supporting militarized communist and capitalist economies. Absurdities abounded such as symphonies refusing to yield to mass destructive aerial bombardment and children attempting to play soccer in the rubble of great European cities. While Dadaists and Vorticists abandoned thinking altogether, Cassirer and others began to think outside of this very small suicidal "reason" that was justifying endless preparations for mass suicide.

Individualistic egoism constituted a fallacy even as industrial power demonstrated superiority in forms of violence towards Others and the natural world (Levinas 1947). Aristotle's narrow vision was operationalized as power and intelligence became magically identical. Modernity had reached its own logical conclusion. Saint-Simonian positivism encapsulated this egocentric fallacy as more than a mere school of thought but as a culture and *realwirtshaft/realpolitik*. Conservative positivism was too smart by half. It attempted to outrun critical examination by setting up monopolistic criteria (might proves right) that determined that it itself was the one and only true reality and also the best way to exist, thus retarding vital influences for evolutionary change. Means change but the goal becomes fixed. From spears to arrows to bullets to cannon to rockets, the unleashing of emotional and libidinal energies such as ambition and envy including missile envy spiral out of control. The instrumental ingenuity for propelling bits of metal at each other faster and over greater distances became confused with reason and intelligence itself. In today's geopolitics, it is smart to be a nuclear power, and so North Korea's nuclear program seems bluntly rational as those with such arsenals enjoy more status, global presence, and "get their will". Others convinced to give them up, such as Muamar Gaddafi, are hunted and killed. Voice itself becomes a manifestation of power.

As so often happens in history, the good attempted to triumph by might, in this case Napoleon attempt to spread Enlightenment by the canon. Positivism painted itself as the final stage in human evolution. The criteria for judgment, as far is it was overtly allowed to exist given the fatalism of logical necessity and material determinism, was material might itself. Economic and military machine-might was used by Europeans as a form of justification for brutality which in turn evinced their superiority restricted to brute might—the military industrial complex (Mumford 1934; 1964). This became the tightest form of reasoning; the tautology. Technological might enables subjugation and this proves the value of technological might. Stupidity equals weakness. Therefore, human development emerges as "progress", and progress comes to mean developing into a new kind of human being, an industrial human. It is no wonder Hegel, one of the grandfathers of Modernity would reduce everything to a Master/Slave relationship. Being subjugated proves the value of technological power and the inferiority of one's existential condition. Truth, comes from the end of the biggest gun. Positivism literally becomes fatalistic as only insane people deny reality. But this convenient metaphysical claim in the service of colonial self-promotion ignored reflexivity in the forms of nonmaterial morality, beauty, and meaning (Gadamer 1960).

In this atmosphere of futurism and tremendous confidence and arrogance proven by successes in material engineering and sciences applied to industry and war, voices began to arise suggesting that this unbridled ambition may not be everything. Power was escalating far beyond the simple necessity of competing for basic necessities such as food and water. By analyzing the deficient tendencies of rampant materialism Cassirer and others, notably Freud, began to suspect that this ambition, this endless will-power-drive may actually be a massive weakness, and a fatefully dangerous one to boot; namely, inferiority complex, including missile envy. Reason proved insatiable. The new truth was horrific. Competition ruled and the winner took all. According to the rules of Modernity, to be inferior, to be subjugated was the worst condition, a radical vulnerability. And so arms races engulfed all the intellectual, temporal and economic resources of entire societies. One could never have enough money, power, or influence. The modern ego had become hypertrophic and thus self-destructive—deficient. Humans were clashing in massive conflagrations destroying everything—a level of violence unknown anywhere else in the animal kingdom. This comportment demanded inter- rogation which began with the "insane" questioning of its *version* of reality.

Material-economic positivism (industrial culture) increasingly turned away from the question what it is to be a human being and toward how to make people into efficient tools, functions within industrial structures. Ministers were giving way to ad-ministers. Universities increasingly "retooled" their cur- ricula to fit the new culture (values, motives, beliefs, and behaviors), a process that continues as the relationship that was teacher/student continues to be replaced by digitized manual instruction delivered "online" as though there is no difference in the meaning between downloading versus personal instruction and mutual exploration. Content increasingly constituted mechanical (rote) solutions rather than moral and ethical reflection.

Societies desiring to develop rapidly read the handwriting on the wall and could see that the only way (limited logic) to advance and become "sig- nificant" was to build industrial and military might with little to no regard for the classical questions raised in the humanities. This tendency has also infected the field of communication itself, as stress on "how to" questions, questions asked by industrial interests, increasingly reduce communication studies to a set of competencies, and the field overall to playing handmaiden to business interests (ala organizational communication and network ana- lytics). Insomuch as this may be true, humanity, as Cassirer realized, had deep reserves of creative impulses that were not all dedicated to conquest and he

saw firsthand that in the midst of insane self-destructive movements, such impulses shone brightly, brilliantly.

Existentialism (including Husserl's *Crisis of European Sciences and Phenomenology*) emerged as a rare flower in the rubble of internecine Euro-colonialist death struggles for ultimate dominance that had grown to global proportions. Nihilism gave birth to profound writing and art. The rigorous and serious examination of meaning, value, beauty (the humanities and liberal arts) persevered. Science, econometrics, and even material engineering were exposed as forms of discourse with perspectives and interests—tropes available for interrogation. Resistance to the militarized effort to spread the Napoleonic Code, for instance, as a universal truth exposed the fact that it was not a naturally occurring phenomenon. Horizons could open but only if dogmatic comportment was decentered.

Imagination and Arbitrariness: Power and Controlling the Symbolic

Cassirer was born into a world of fanatical modernity, of a profoundly conflictive world that strove to disambiguate everything, to eliminate anything arbitrary, and yet, a world qualified by a type of rapid change unseen before, a world filled with veterans of the Code Wars. Suddenly everyone had discovered agency and will, and were writing, in utter irony, analytical tomes on the subject. Freedom and determinism, truth and relativism erupted into modern consciousness. Will was seeking to control and accelerate evolution itself, which had been given its own logical necessity, a rhetorical maneuver used to "innocently" justify inequality as natural; hence, the invention and application of "objective" statistical techniques to human beings in the service of colonial domination.

Eugenicists, notably Karl Pearson and his benefactor Francis Galton,[7] invented such means in order to justify and implement colonial policies (at

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[7] At the height of British imperialism, we find Karl with a "K". Throughout his life Pearson's first name had been spelled with a "C", but his admiration for German fascism led him to change it to a "K". Semiotically instantiating and generating race as real via mathematizing coding was the modern rhetorical ploy to sell eugenics. Pearson was the protégé of Galton, the inventor of the phrase "social Darwinism" and industrious promoter of sorting humans along various factors and variables. Galton endowed the chair in Eugenics at the University College London specifically for Pearson and as is well known Pearson and Galton dedicated their lives to the creation and application of quantificational measurement and statistical prediction to humans, separating them into various groupings, mostly racial, and comparing averages to motivate policies to enhance the wealth of the nation. Thus, they could "objectively demonstrate" the inherent need to discourage some groups from reproducing, including mass sterilizations, or track children into various occupations assuring that educational assets and efforts not be wasted on the genetically inferior. The invention and application of statistical techniques to

home in the U.K. and abroad). Hegel's stage evolution scheme, but also Napoleonic positivism, stalked the halls of Cassirer's academe. Napoleon's ambition would be the ambition of dictators rising in his times. The absurdity of utopian violence, violence in the service of utopianism proliferated. Reactionary movements emerged. Just as Heraclitean flux spawned Platonic eternal formalism, revolution spawned counter-revolutionary violence. The clash of Left and Right Hegelians wrote the history of the twentieth century.

Will, free will, confronted its own mirror image as naturalistic justifications emerged for its unrestrained movement. Magic power within modern society turned to idolic imagery to form the age of logos (from swastikas to hammers and sickles)—to identify political movements with natural inevitability—historical absolute reason. *Logos* (reason) and logos, identifying signs, symbols, insignia, emblems and other markings suggest an essential conflation within the modern mentality with idolic, magic thinking. To achieve rational order, emotional energy was needed. People were given identities. Organic identity shifted to instrumental identity as a means to other ends. Democracy degenerated into mass pandering that formed a major type of communication ("public relations" and manipulation). War itself became a product to sell. Communication experts, proselytizers, political spin doctors, ad men, lobbyists, "talk show" opinion leaders, media magnates, grew rich and powerful, proud at their abilities to sell anything to anyone.

Amassing wealth quickly was the virtue of mass production but this required mass consumption, be it of bullets or detergent. Increasingly, modern societies are comprised of nations of salesmen. This turn was well documented as it arose (Packard 1957; McGinniss 1969). Predictably, and unfortunately for those who value sincere efforts to promote a public sphere dedicated to rational discourse (Habermas 1981b; 1983), a new highly organized, well-financed, and effective industry of deception emerged. Its purpose is to not merely tell half-truths in order to sell goods and services, but additionally to generate doubt and confusion on a mass scale about the public safety of industrial products and by-products from cigarettes to global warming (Michaels 2008; Oreskes and Conway 2011). Philip Dalton and Kramer (2012) thus label this cultural comportment and predominant mode of communication, the rise of the Third Sophistic.

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human beings was in the service of creating the new order (Reich), and not incidentally, the International Business Machine corporation (IBM) did its part helping the Nazi Party identify and sort people by group membership for processing on a mass scale (Black 2012). Of course, the cultivation of this ideology has borne fruit with the US in 2016 appointing (according to electoral college votes) a person whose bragging about having "German blood" and "breeding" making him a leader, found a large receptive audience. The simultaneous rise of ethnic purity movements across Europe is telling.

This has been exacerbated by an accelerating trend, documented by Ben H. Bagdikian over decades, of private interests acquiring media. Tiring of trying to bully, bribe, and otherwise influence a free and independent press, powerful private interests decided to simply buy media and push through changes in law and regulations eliminating ownership limitations thus enabling them to extend their agendas beyond the editorial pages to news reportage itself (Bagdikian 2014). Why fight with an independent reporter when you can become her employer and simply fire her?

What constitutes journalism is in crisis. While propaganda and journalism have always rubbed shoulders, today major media powers are dedicating themselves to cultivating particular political and economic agendas; they are not even trying to be even-handed. Corporations with large media holdings now perform as around-the-clock and around-the-globe beacons of propaganda to rival and often outstrip nation-states (especially poorer ones).

With globalization, major advertising and public relations firms as well as media conglomerates have expanded this process of concentrating influence across nations, continents, and populations (McChesney 2015). A new power-elite based in control of information has displaced the old proletariat/bourgeoisie industrial class structure. A common class of narcissistic "players" (hypertrophic egos), people who care little of religious faith, demonstrable fact, ethnicity, or even national identity and allegiance have found common cause as a global force, networking to promote personal power (Bingham and Kramer 2016; Kramer and Kim 2009). Regardless of gender, race, or origin, all Others are equally perceived as instruments of and for exploitation. Class-consciousness and loyalty are even tenuous while focus narrows on personal power/mobility.

The new cosmopolitan has less and less association with anyone or group, a dwindling affinity to nation or organization while collecting business properties and assets of all sorts and residencies across increasingly irrelevant national borders and ideological spaces. All businesses are the same. All workers identical. All soldiers easily replicable. Indeed, robotics is proving superior as robots rarely falter, complain, get ill, or go on strike—the perfect slaves.

As Eliade (1957) argued, myth (including religious stories) is neither true nor false, but rather either alive or dead. Living myth (which often includes moral teachings) is yet vital and believed. For the postmodern player, what is sacred to others is mere instrument for and of power accumulation—hence the pandering to all sorts of religious and political positions simultaneously. Logic too is a mere tool. While past kings and emperors saw themselves as

divine beings and passionate defenders of the faith and of "the people" as common blood, the modern player is a product of hypertrophic modern fragmentation. Individualism is presumed. She has little faith.

The modern player is a dedicated materialist who has little compunction to doing "whatever it takes" to increase power here and now. The universe is dead and empty, allowing the player to cavort as much as she can; contradict norms, mores, rules, and laws with impunity. No transcending judgment exists. Being illogical is irrelevant. The bottom line is money and it is the absolute judge, the new god. Truth is what sells (Henry 1965). Classical values such as patriotism, truth, even consistency, are becoming irrelevant. Communication experts travel the globe to manage political and product campaigns arguing one position in one country on one day and a completely opposite position the next, all depending on the agenda of who pays. The old duality of form (appearances) and substance has collapsed. "Professional" means having no position in a world where there is no center. This is exactly what Plato feared and why he refused to teach the dialectic to a student until and unless they had first satisfied him that they understood ethics and morality and took seriously what constitutes civil responsibility and what is the good life as a worldview and not merely as obsession with the care and feeding of the self (Foucault 1984).

In favor of the Stoics, Foucault may have downplayed the fact that Plato's stress on introspection presumed a collectivism we today do not share. While Plato wrote, he wrote in the form of dialogue. He straddled the boundary between oral (collective) and written (individualistic) cultures. After the death of his teacher, Plato became very concerned about the public consequences of immoral wielding of rhetorical skill. His goal was to teach how to defend oneself against unjust accusations and illogical public policy. The cultivation of the public as well as the self is where Plato and Foucault agree as Foucault argues, "It [the spirit or ethical self] is a matter of acts and pleasures, not of desire. It is a matter of the formation of the self through techniques of living, not of repression through prohibition and law" (Foucault 1984: 89). Even as individualism was promoted, control over the self, especially the personal self, became an obsession of ministers and ad-ministers, Popes and politicians. As the official law murdered Socrates, Plato held that the law, could be unjust, irrational, and ultimately destructive. On this, Foucault concurs.

As our technologies and screens shrink to the exclusivity of the "personal" computer and algorithmic tailoring of content, worldview and comportment are impacted. Mindless prejudice (deficient subjectivity) is thus assured by careless robotics that manifest a metaphysical faith in sales and repetition of

what sells. Ethical issues seem less and less relevant as we are isolated from others. However, they become even more urgent, for isolation is a delusion. The self, as Foucault argued, is always a political self or at least has that dimension. This includes the primitive dedication to identity, political identity. The Randian vision of extreme selfishness (isolation) as ultimate virtue is realized at a profound cost to humanity as a social being.

The Unconventional, Experimental Life

The stages of history were inevitable yet human agency was celebrated as heroic accomplishment. Those who most passionately supported conformity, the mass organization man, were the modern winners in "the order" (Whyte 1956). Narcissism became the new qualifier to be a leader. Cynicism became a measure of intelligence while commitment to the organization was the "reasonable" path "forward" for subordinate occupants. To Hitler, who identified himself with Germany itself, the people of Germany failed historic destiny— they lacked commitment (strong dedication to purity, loyalty, and authority).

After a millennium-long hiatus, Modern Europe picked up where the ancient Moderns, imperial Romans, had left off. The application of organizational reason and management, with its own justifying moniker "scientific", "super-vision", created a communication that itself became mass with one central voice reaching out simultaneously to thousands of passive receivers. Policies and human engineering proliferated. High rates of no-show soldiers, common in pre-modern wars, came to be called "defects". The perfect army moved as one. With modern mass organizational reason defection rates plummeted as modern armies became standardized, uniform, structured, well trained (institutionalized)—professional. Many of the techniques that defined modern warfare and orders within the late medieval church, were quickly transferred to other social institutions. Meanwhile labor also became increasingly dissociation and institutionalized. Workers lost the power to work as they wished. To defect, to quite or be fired meant the risk of destitution. Economies became corporatized and laws even enacted to make it illegal for people to grow their own food, lest that disrupt "markets". Markets formed the most obvious mathematized manifold of modern life, alienating workers from their own labor.

Within this utilitarian atmosphere, tension exists. The dominant model of communication as mere transfer of information itself came under scrutiny. On one hand, reductionism to uni-formal sameness, such that all life is merely chains of amino acids (codes) for instance, failed to appreciate the issue of precision within the lifeworld, for precision comes not from reducing

everything to the same, but by fragmenting. Precision became confused with rationality. Precision is created by adding more teeth to a gear or dividing time into ever-smaller increments, from days to hours to minutes to seconds. The Modern army had Divisions, Units, Privates, and Generals. Supervision is reserved for the General ("the Principle" in school systems), while Privates make few decisions but become instruments of operation. This was the new logic, the new "rational" and scientific management of all things.

The tension between fragmentation and mass standardization is enabled and even ameliorated in some ways by quantification. Justification of conditions could be generated via the "bottom line", quantifiable profits. The only difference between a gear with many teeth and a gear with few teeth is quantity of the same. Value is reduced to currency. Money is utterly redundant and totally inter-changeable. Value is realized not as an inherent quality but as a transaction. Also, each unit, each Euro, for instance, is identical with each other one. Rich versus poor is merely an issue of quantity. Political equality comes dangerously close to the denial of qualitative differences. But in fact, we know that some votes are far more informed and reasoned than others even though they all count the same. Quantification and divisive processes became definitive. Intelligence itself had become a number in the service of industrial control. To know is to control. People had value only as utility. Identity is reduced to the annual evaluation and final number on a five-point scale. This year you are a 4.2. Last year you were a 3.8. Congratulations. Though such assessments are profoundly subjective, assigning numbers is supposed to objectify the process.

This has had an impact on culture and what is valued as educational growth. Manuals proliferate with the diffusion of instrumental regard toward education. Lip service is paid to "development of the mind", while economic support shifts to vocational pursuits and "professional" degrees. A failure to appreciate personal growth and enrichment of the meaning of things infiltrated educational cultures. Civil discourse and comportment has suffered (Dalton and Kramer 2013). As noted, a Third Sophistic has emerged along with the most powerful communication infrastructures in history. This seems impossible if and only if comportment/attitude is disregarded and neglected as a function of cultivation. Learning how to read and view is more than simple recognition of content. Appreciation and authentic reciprocity as aspects of reflection are required. Denigration of expertise, legitimate authority established through merit, and suspicion of intellectual curiosity and rigor are having the most practical of consequences including personal retardation of mental acuity and cognitive complexity. Care, as a value and

moral foundation wanes as dissociation increases. Care does not mean sentimentality. It means serious appreciation for the truth and suspending ego-interests when they do not fit reality, which is not mine but ours.

This has hermeneutic and semiotic implications for personal comportment and understanding. For example, the first time this author saw Michelangelo's *David* in Florence, I was very young and ignorant. I knew that the statue was supposed to be impressive and important, and it was for me, in terms of age and size. But after ten minutes of jostling with other tourists I was ready to move on. Years later, after learning about the sculpture, how Michelangelo had worked on it half naked and shivering in a barn through the cold winter months while assistants constantly drizzled water over him to keep the marble dust down, and how his hands bled from the work, and how, during one of the riotous "bonfires of the vanities" instigated by the firebrand priest Savonarola, a large bench had been hurled out of a tower, landing on the masterpiece and breaking an arm off, an arm that laid in the square until a boy, sensing its importance, came along and muscled the large marble appendage into a wagon and hauled it away, vowing to repair it when he had the skill to do so, the "statue" was much more for me. It was not the same. That young man, Giorgio Vasari, would later write the famous work, *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri* (*The Lives of the Great Artists*), the founding text for the field of art history, and invent the word "Renaissance". Learning to see, is learning to judge and appreciate. It takes experience. It is not a simple method applied like a piece of tape.

After learning these things (and many more), the next time I stood before the statue it was a completely different experience. I looked for the seam that marked the repair, and there it was. I had become enriched. It semiotically marks the boundary between revolution and counterrevolutionary violence; the break with the Medieval world and the rebirth of Modern thinking.

The world is made more meaningful through education. Education is more than learning to repair industrial systems, do accounting, and manage/exploit labor. That is training. Appreciation of life is a result of comportment, mode of regard, way of seeing. Once I learn more about a bird species, a type of tree, a person's personal history, life becomes more meaningful.

Cassirer refused to give up the category "human" based on qualities that separate human from other animals and things. The human for him was not merely a means to an end, a redundant tool that could be replaced by a robot or an animal identical with all other flora and fauna (a "dime a dozen"). Rather, for Cassirer, to be human is to be categorically distinctive, the animal that manipulates symbols at such an astoundingly high level of proficiency and

invention as to be unique … the *homo symbolicum*. Cultivation of the mind is very different from learning tricks through operant conditioning.

Of Codes and Invention: The World as Open Source Software

Semiotics arose as the overarching approach to all things human including the disciplines that had claimed to be the ultimate ground of objectivity—history and mathematics—both codal *constructs*, cultural inventions that claimed to be at once the finger and the moon. Some become so mesmerized by the beauty of a regional ontology that they fall victim to the idolic aspect of codality and see, for instance, a thing as identical with the sum of its measures and nothing more. Human, for Cassirer, was relatively free and responsible to play at making signs, symbols, codes, art, sciences; culture. It is irreducible. A great poem may be manifest by ink and paper, which would make it the same as all printed matter. But it is far more than that. Failure to grant this fact is hegemonic dedication to an ideological prejudice; a staunch dedication to self-delusion that would block one from the richness of the work. Such is the horrible combination of arrogance with ignorance characteristic of a closed immature mind—a poverty of meaning.

Com-portment: The Common Passage

A passage is a synecdochical moment of a larger discourse. It articulates both part and whole, the individual and group, *parole* and *langue* in integral implication. It is also a channel, and when shared it becomes the way of expression shared by all voices no matter how diverse. Freedom, human liberation, was the source of and a product of human communication. Complex, symbolic communication enabled the animal to pass into the human lifeworld. The human mind was free because it could escape the here and now, it could imagine and it could imagine because it was linguistic in nature. And language is a structure that allows for invention. The transcending properties of symbol enabled the human to escape the prison of empirical stimulus/response, physical here and now. And yet it also had tendencies of being a potential prison-house unless invention was encouraged and allowed (Jameson 1972). The quality of lifeworld becomes a matter of personal resolve and political courage (Noelle-Neumann 1980).

Freedom is always freedom from. … It begets more freedom even as it moves through a gauntlet of contradictions. My intentions are hard to express. As captured in the story of the Tower of Babel, language is at once both the greatest barrier to communication and the necessary condition for

it. This is the broadest form of the hermeneutic circle, which is not vicious but enabling—a process of identification evinced by a movement from case to category and back to case. Expression gives unique identity-voice while relying on the common sense that enables expression to be construable—debatable. To describe in a distributed communal code is the first step toward sharable, enduring knowledge. A common sense is essential to human community.

The human imagines and creates worlds—provisional structures of meaning that transcends individuals and even defines them within contexts of signs and grammars. Arts and sciences also presume the semiotic process. This levels all human expression from magic to myth to logic. It, the semiotic process, is essential to all human comportment. Recognition of this was a profound self-reflexive turn that enabled Cassirer (i.1923–1929; 1944) to identify us, all of us, as *homo symbolicum*, the symbolizing animal, which is apparent but not as simple as it may seem. The shared sense of the world, which is essential to community, sustains all discourses, all arguments, all agreements, all valuations, all identities, all purposes, all cultures, all things that "matter".

Comportment; com-portment, means acting together in a common process of passage which is expression itself. The delusion of self-reliance is corrosive to social atmosphere. Milieu is not a "background". Such spatial metaphysics fails to appreciate that, for better or worse, our interactions constitute the ambiance of our lives. This realization that humanity is not under a divine microscope of true reality, or a shadow world of impermanence, was a hugely important turn for the self-examination of humanness as a set of qualities and capacities including our "social comportment in this world". It is what we make it. World is this transcending symbolic manifold. Once this was grasped, humans could become truly moral beings. Nothing "above" or "below" was to blame for the lifeworld. The transcending quality presents itself as something I, each of us, is "thrown into". But at the same time, we have agency and are in the "thick" of it all building our ship while at sea.

Category and case, transcendent and rescendent, theory and action, are given together through mutual implication. Freedom and constraint, fatalism and invention, master and slave form the creative tension that demands reflexive attention. The fundamental question arises, what is the good life, and how shall we pursue it, together.

To Be a Member as Re-membered: Sustaining Identity through Communication

The necessary conditions for sustained convention, for "the common" is the first study in social science and as such is very much worthy of investigation. Semiotics

explores the common sense and reveals comportment (the common passage) in all its varieties. It is said that one exists as long as one's name is remembered by someone. When that memory dies, then so do we as meanings within a shared sense/reality fade from being/consciousness. We linger and pass not as physical bodies but as meanings for Others.

One salient identifier in a multicultural world is membership in a linguistic community. Linguisticality becomes the third *apriori* to join Kant's categories space and time as a necessary condition for reality and identity to exist, to be as inscribable and describable—knowable, which is to say shared—human reality. Validity and reliability, criteria so often denied to qualitative work, is understandable only as *qualities* of socially shared values and symbolic interaction. Valid and reliable claims are understood as such only because they are the result of independent verification *among members engaged in a common pursuit.*

Objectivity is inter-subjective agreement enabled by a shared code and interest. In this sense, not only is it the case that our "pursuit of understanding improves our interactive comportment in the social world" (Lanigan 2011) but furthermore, the world as it is knowable, as we know it, is a product of, and sustained through, social comportment. Freedom is our choice of how we comport ourselves. It will determine what kind of world we have. Culture is thus more than a prison-house. The more we understand it, the more we can participate in its making. Nothing more practical can be imagined. Artifacts, texts we make always provoke more communication; graphs. Thinking, as a shared activity, diffuses and morphs.

This also implicates the proposition that metaphysics is not abstraction of no consequence but rather power of a most fundamental form. Husserl attempted to bracket metaphysical assumptions because they blind us. In the *Crisis* (1936) he made it clear this was more than a methodological or epistemological issue; it is a moral and ultimately political issue. Dedication to delusion such as fake news, for example, is dangerous. Blind prejudices threaten community.

If reality is codal and social in any sense, then mutability is possible, which means moral responsibility presents itself. Again, identity is profoundly affected. Metaphysics is power, for whoever dominates the definition of what is real, possible, and knowable, wields untold power, especially with regards to truncating expectations for possible futures—the quality of hope characteristic of open horizons. The received view of reality in the form of one's culture includes expectations and motivations as well as values, beliefs, and behavior patterns (Kramer 1997; 2013). Reality as fixed versus reality as generated

results in a self-identity of the human as either a passive prisoner of fates or as an agent of change. The implications are demonstrably far reaching.

Cultures vary from presenting an orientation that is predominantly and fundamentally traditionalistic, with the tragic trap of having "traditional enemies" for endless generations, to cultures that see themselves as self-made and which encourage change-oriented experimentation while also being less averse to communicating and risking the self as a set of limited horizons. The latter focuses more on an uncertain future potential than submitting to the tyranny of the past—the great *chain* of causation. This variance involves the cultural propensity and support for, and preoccupation with, the known or with the unknown. The greatest revolution in the Western tradition was the turn toward the unknown manifested as the age of wonder and exploration (Wootton 2013; Brook 2007; Holmes 2010).

However, to suggest that this turn toward Modernity and the perspectival mentality only happened once, as Paul Johnson (1991) suggests, is incorrect. It is evident that Modernity erupted at least twice in the Western tradition and versions have appeared in other places. Several ancient Hellenes such as Isocrates, the inventor of "school" with its founding belief in the mutability of individuals to change fundamentally through education (meritocracy versus immutable caste-based social structure) and Aristotle, who, after Plato's yet dialogical collectivism, turned toward analytical prose, individual silent reading, and an obsession with psychology, politics, and rationality, may well be the first full-blown Moderns (Kramer 1997). There is a semiotic and a hermeneutic that expresses curiosity and encourages the unconventional.

Experimentation and exploration is a mode of comportment that over time becomes a culture with repeating tropes and passages. The highly reflexive world opens itself to change and encourages its members to pursue vision/imag-ination. Where all is already established fact, people are pressured to avoid deviance as error. Conservative tendencies and institutions reinforce sameness. It may be out of fear of difference but what it leads to is redundancy, which is ultimately nihilistic. Efforts to avoid difference prove, ironically, to be suicidal. Under such a value system, stability is valued over uncertainty. But as mentioned above, equilibrium is a zero-energy state.

In a conservative world, passage is, again ironically, uneventful. Paths close. Communication wanes. Sanction, as a trope, works through language that establishes the fact about facts. In such a milieu, to deny facts is a defi-nition of insanity. To do so is inconvenient if not evil. Time/change, must be "arrested". Thus, modern cultures and members' identities are influenced by how people orient to semiotics as a dynamic process as opposed to rote

repetition of inherent and immutable meanings/identities. A law in time is secular. A timeless law is sacred and infallible meaning talk/debate; inquiry is prohibited. It may even be seen as a sin. Deviance is discouraged lest the whole world be lost. The void is unthinkable as an absolute terror. Yet it is the empty space where invention and comportment can function—can play. Arbitrariness enables perspectives, interpretations, and styles to be auditioned (heard and tested as forms of comportment). Hence the elevation of play to a serious subject in the works of Nietzscheans from Freud to Derrida.

Thick Semiotics: Serious Attention to the Play of Human Comportment

To launch ships into uncharted seas requires daring. Conservative interests have always regarded critical research and inquiry with suspicion. To turn toward the unknown, toward self-reflection and interrogation of the lifeworld as a discipline would lead Clifford Geertz (1973: 6) for instance, to borrow the notion of "thick description" from Gilbert Ryle and to proclaim, that it is Ricoeur, "from whom the whole idea of inscription of action is borrowed … the whole idea of what an ethnographer does" Geertz is equating examination of humanness with doing semiotics and hermeneutics (5).

Geertz continues clarifying, "The concept of culture I espouse, and whose utility [I] attempt to demonstrate, is essentially a semiotic one" (1973: 5). And he concludes describing his entire project thusly, "It is an aim to which a semiotic concept of culture is peculiarly well adapted. As interworked systems of construable signs, culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thicky—described" (14).

Systems/communication theory begins with Cusanus—relationships determine meaning—and grows through Husserl, Saussure, Nicolai Hartman and Hartman's student Gadamer on to Luhmann, Giddens, and so forth. This includes the "codes"; codes Ryle first discussed and which many cite regularly today such as Juliet Corbin, Kathy Charmaz, Barney Glaser, Anselm Strauss, and others who owe so much to him.

Along with Ryle, Geertz (1973: 29) references Cassirer as a semiotician and as one of his greatest inspirations. Systems and networks are based on codes. And human comportment toward comportment and language itself (be it magic idolic, mythic symbolic, or perspectival signalic) are an open source … a system available to each of us every time we express ourselves.

Cassirer's pursuit of the question, what is a human being, rather than how to make humans more efficient industrial tools, inextricably leads him, and entire fields, to turn toward semiotics. In this move the essential semiotic quality of human being as world-maker-articulator was established and at the same time a methodical path to exploring *various* cultural worlds as systems of construable signs was founded. This enables two things. First it reinforces the possibility of knowledge as a pursuit of case differences within a category (culture), so that nihilistic relativism is avoided without reducing everything to the same. And second, this move provides an opening that allowed European culture to escape its own positivistic cage.

In Cassirer and others, most notably Nietzsche, we see the synthetic moment emerging from the conflict within European thinking. Only when positivism was able to think beyond its own criteria, to see itself as one perspective among Others, was the fatalism of positing the one and only true world escapable. Ironically it is only then that progress was enabled; that is, when positivism's conservatism which labeled all deviance primitive, insane, criminal was loosened. Tolerance, lenience, wiggle-room for unconventional thinking was bearable.

Rehabilitating the primitive thus had a profound consequence on the nature of the academic gaze as well as the culture at large. Progress requires deviance and creativity—difference—be it from foreign sources or inherent contradiction. Along with Jung, Cassirer saw one solution in reintegrating previously vital aspects of myth, but not only from the Christian tradition. Gebser, Joseph Campbell, and Eliade would follow this shift in attitude, this opening that became a vector of the globalization and the cultural churning and fusion we see today (Kramer 2003). And yet we must be honest. Difference does not always result in "happy" consequences or interesting music or art. What it does do is enhance experimentation and feed human curiosity and creativity—qualities of regard and attitude not universally embraced.

Our Current Condition: The Age of Gaps

Change is changing both in scope and rate. As change has expanded and accelerated to unprecedented forms and magnitudes, from emojis to leet speak, we see codes emerge at unprecedented rates. And we see backlashes erupting from conservative interests around the world. Karl Mannheim (1928) first described generational "gaps" that lead to confusion and contention as familiar, parochial interworked systems of construable signs begin to shift, even sometimes abandoned or repurposed like stripping the casing marble off of ancient buildings to use in newer construction.

Such accelerated invention of lexicon has enhanced what Mannheim (1928) identified as a burgeoning generational consciousness. This has created something that many traditional societies had never seen before, generation gaps and a proliferation of sub-cultures including youth cultures—a form of fragmentation even within families based on youth assimilating foreign expressions and ways of expression that harbor foreign values, beliefs, and expectations brought to them via international communication. Change has accelerated profoundly.

Well before Marshal McLuhan (1962) borrowed the "global village" metaphor from Wyndam Lewis (1948), whose work on vorticism appears increasingly prescient in the context of increasingly dynamic cultural churning, Lewis Mumford (1934) and Daniel Lerner (1958) argued that a major consequence of being exposed to international communication would be a peaking of interest in distant lands and peoples, an expansion of imagination and shift in empathy for others (Lerner 1958: 52). But unlike McLuhan they were not romantic about the emergent comportment. Rather than a global village they (Mumford especially) saw a rising global city (Kramer 2003). Each presents a very different atmosphere, a different collective style of comportment (one stressing cooperation, the other relentless competition).

Gaps as Mutually Excluding Regional Ontologies and Worldviews

The ontological struggle of competing interests for the mantle of the definitive ground of all knowing, has erupted into popular consciousness. The universe was reduced first to mathematics. Galileo announced that the book of nature was written in that particular code. But the tracing of that claim itself was found to have a history that was human, all too human. Likewise, Leopold von Ranke's dream of an objective history-writing also proved to be a human, all too human mode of expression-persuasion. Husserl (1913) proved by means of his relentless analyses that each discipline that claimed to be the ground of all others; that such an ambition resulted in an absurd cacophony of mutually reducing regional ontologies, and that Nietzsche had been correct, perception could never be separated from the perceiver, which itself forms an essential truth.

What enables a world was a transcendental set of shared codes that no one person invented or controlled. Semiotics sought to understand communication essentially. Semiotics became the home of the most consistent, self-examined explanation for all human activity. To understand behavior, one must understand what the world means to people.

Cassirer and others began to understand that cultures harbor a transcending human activity, which is to conceptualize reality, but that there was another universal truth to this story. The mode of conceptualization varied from "primitive" to "modern" and that to privilege only one over all others (positivism) was an unwarranted bias and a project that failed to understand scale in transcendentalism. There are many forms of mammal, but they all share certain essential qualities. The same is true of human consciousness. And one universal is the semiotic mind. But we must be cautious here.

Communication as Genetic Fate

Communication is a verb and it evolves with usage. Despite efforts to establish a final dictatorship of semantics and usage, dictionaries must be constantly updated to keep up with living languages. Like all positivism that posits truths once and for all, Chomsky's theory of genetically predetermined grammar and meaning-structure fails. In fact, genetics in all instances fails as a predictor of outcomes because the synergy of endogenous "nature" and exogenous "nurture" escapes predetermination. This synergistic process is itself a semiotic process. Randomness and purpose function in such a way that life, the genetic code, proliferates countless solutions to the problem of survival. This includes the evolution of languages themselves. We cannot predict what English will look like in five hundred years.

With the randomness of mutation, efforts at forecasting are utterly confounded. Art, science, and life are mutational. Chomsky fell into a brain-centered bias. It is now known that the "Broca-Wernicke brain-language theory is incorrect" (Lieberman 2007: 39). To give but one small example of how such a simplistic reductionism fails to account for the essential necessities for our current languages, we can recall that skeletal studies have revealed a mutation (FOXP2 gene) whereby a huge bundle of nerves, the supralarungeal vocal tract, appears in only one primate, *Homo sapien sapien*, about 50,000 years ago enabling very subtle muscle control of breath necessary for forming, "a potentially infinite number of words and sentences [and] the 'quantal' sounds which facilitate both speech production and perception and the vast phonemes that make up our language-use, a mutation not present in previous *homo* forms" (Lieberman 2007: 7). However, this capacity has also fueled virulent forms of ethnocentrism linked to old eugenic arguments about the founding of civilization in comparative genetics and subgroups.

Beyond this there is the fact that the environment has an important impact on phylogenic structure. Light called into existence the eye. Even in creatures with the biologic and genetic structure for vision, if light is removed the eye

disappears. An example is the variety of blind cave fish. The world called forth our ability to form complex languages. We cannot take credit for our linguistic abilities. And yet unjustified arrogance accompanies species identity.

At the species level, what in the relationship between humans and their environment "called forth" complex language remains a valid path of investigation. Many agree that given the relative poverty of humans with regards to traits (such as speed, visual and audial acuity, olfactional ability, and brute strength), our complex communication is what enabled us to coordinate hunts, plan, and ultimately not merely survive but become a dominant predator. Abstract thinking happens through talk. Our adroitness in forming a shared symbolic world enabled us to transcend our physical shortcomings.

The glorification of positivism, an ethnocentric and self-serving bias that saturated European imperial histories and even social "scientific" writing, began to wane. Following Nietzsche's (1887a) devastating critique of positivism and the rampant irrationalism marching to and fro with enhanced mechanistic might across Europe, even in the name of rationalism; a positivism extending from Hegel's stage theory of progressive evolution of consciousness and the Saint-Simonian's glorification of industrial positivism, many began to recognize that the mechanized revolution positivism yielded was not all "good". Despite the amazing irony of an ideology claiming to be certain and objective yet naming itself after a value judgment—"positivism" (which prompted Nietzsche to retort that he was therefore a "negativist"), progress of this steam-roller ilk came to be seen as disastrous for natural and cultural environments culminating in what we now witness as two great and simultaneous mass extinction events; one of cultural and linguistic diversity and the other of biodiversity (Kramer, Adkins, Kim, and Miller 2014).

Implications of Cassirer's Insights

At the time of Cassirer, "primitive ways", and magic were marginalized and derogated. From the rationalistic perspective, magic was represented as a form of childish knowledge, of "trying to do what science does", but pathetically failing because it presumes false assumptions (Greenwood 2010: 4). While this critique of the dominant modernist critique of magic is common today, still would-be defenders of magic, including Susan Greenwood, fail to understand the phenomenological (dimensional *apriori* architectonic) differences. Foundational differences make her sympathetic statements, such as magic is a "legitimate form of knowledge", (2010: 4) and a "mythopoetic expanded aspect of awareness" (2010: 4) totally inaccurate. Such supportive attempts at justification utterly fail to appreciate the fundamental differences between

magic, mythic, and modern perspectival architectonics (Gebser, 1949, 1953; Husserl 1936; K. Burke 1950). Greenwood is still trying to say that magic "knowledge" can compete with modern knowledge. That is to maintain the perspectival modality as central, the only measure of all things including other worldviews. But magic is not about representational model-building/ theorizing, reductionism, and prediction. The magic world has no mirrors of self or nature because dissociation is not dominant. Magic awareness is neither representational nor consensus-based. Magic is about transformation and identification. Even the suggestion of "expanded" consciousness belies an inappropriate valuation and misunderstanding that fails to realize that magic is not in any way spatial.

Despite her pathetic, literally sympathetic defense of magic against modernist prejudice, Greenwood's historical outline is accurate and useful to us in describing the *intellectual, social scientific* atmosphere within which Cassirer lived, and this helps demonstrate how, along with a handful of others, Cassirer was a radical thinker and ironically, how his understanding of myth and magic was not emotionally based but analytically powerful—hence his work remains not merely relevant but more sophisticated than much work filled with unnecessary and misleading sentimentality being currently published—so called "new age" literature.

> Social scientists have described magic in various derogatory ways. Edward Taylor, in *Primitive Culture* (1871), saw magic as 'the most pernicious delusion that ever vexed mankind,' and James Frazer thought that magic was a 'pseudo-science.' According the American anthropologist A. L. Kroeber (1876–1960), magic was characteristic of 'retarded' cultures; magical beliefs occurred in 'advanced' cultures only among the socially disadvantaged, psychotic or mentally subnormal. For Austrian psychiatrist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), there was a parallel between primitive magical beliefs and neurotic and infantile delusions, whereas the French sociologist Emile Durkheim (1858–1917) and his disciples in the *Anneé Sociologique* School viewed magic as a negative and private activity opposed to public religion. (Greenwood 2010: 4–5)

Again, magic is being evaluated according to modernist perspectival criteria. Also, this fails to recognize the true power and veracity of magic idolic consciousness in modern everyday life. On the other hand, magic, properly understood, does not need to be saved. Rather than rushing to defend the "subaltern", Cassirer understood that magic needs no defense.

Quite the contrary, like Gebser (1949, 1953), Cassirer understood that modern humans need to be defended from their failure to understand and appreciate magic impulses that enable potentially suicidal modern technetronic

civilization and modern ego hypertrophy. Fertility magic (the most ancient known) has become increasingly deficient when wedded to the growing ambition of power interests regarding expansion of territory and ideological domination (desire for hegemonic supremacy leading literally to "world" wars).

The cultist's call to destroy the world in order to save it is nothing new. But with modern technology, the prospects of actualizing such apocalyptic dreams are greatly enhanced (Lifton 2000). It is not that magic idolic, mythic symbolic, and modern signalic modes of comportment are at war with each other, the so-called clash of civilizations, but much more dangerously, they enhance each other's power in deficient ways that are potentially suicidal … literally suicidal when you mix radical fundamentalism with modern chemistry strapped to one's body.

Cassirer's apolitical work ends up helping to explain modern power politics and its reliance on technetronic technique (such as the combination of the massive power of the Internet and ego hypertrophy in the form of the irrational maxim known as the "tweet"), which amplifies impulses for domination. Unlike his peers, Cassirer explained modern mega-political movements and conflicts by referencing the irrational. Others did as well, but in the process, they became inconsistent.

As Nietzsche before him, Cassirer came to understand magic as ubiquitous today in the forms of might, machine, mechanism, military—momentum of will. As Archimedes noted, the essence of technology is the amplification of physical traits in the service of desire. Given a lever long enough, one can move the Earth. Consequently, it is not surprising that late in his life Cassirer would increasingly publish on political topics. He recognized that magic is an integral part of the modern world and that expression is an act of will. Mass movements are based on the intoxication of fawning crowds for messiah figures.

One Example: Authoritarian Comportment

No doubt Cassirer would agree that the intoxication of adoration and appreciation is reciprocal making fanatical engagement "authentic", in Martin Buber's (1923) terms, but also potentially dangerous in certain contexts that demand rationality. The reciprocity is not one of perspectival listening and reflecting but a reciprocity blending into a unified and chaotic emotional storm within which participants lose their individuality and merely desire endless escalation of stimulation. They lose time and space. Critical distance vanishes. When joyous abandon gives way to a frenzy of hate that is murderous and suicidal,

it becomes deficient, hypertrophic desire on a collective scale. Following becomes blind as authoritarian comportment overtakes personal judgment.

The supersession of subjectivity thus leads not to objective discernment but rather magic, idolic mass movement that leaders can lose control of. Individuals become like cells in a multicellular organism, pursuing a course the single cell cannot comprehend but is dedicated to without knowing. One of my muscle cells does its job to lift my hand in a gesture of peace or an attempt to kill. Few soldiers in the trenches know the "big picture" or are even well enough educated in geo-political history and affairs to be able to comprehend the larger "chess game". The same is true of most workers in their cubicles or party-loyal voters.

Riotous emotion generated at rallies may abate, but still one will hear the sentiment of a relatively sober person espouse "my country, tribe, or party, right or wrong". Nietzsche addresses the danger of groupthink before the moniker was invented, succinctly nailing the deficient danger of the "good party man" stating,

> *The Machine as Teacher*—Machinery teaches in itself the dovetailed working of masses of men, in activities where each has but one thing to do. It is the model of party organisations and of warfare. On the other hand, it does not teach individual self-glorification, for it makes of the many a machine, and of each individual a tool for one purpose (Nietzsche 1880, 1886: Part II, §218, p. 309).

Hence his famous observation that, "In individuals, insanity is rare; but in groups, parties, nations and epochs, it is the rule" (Nietzsche 1886: Part Four, Aphorism 156, p. 109).

Operationalization: Conversion and the False Humility of Modern Magic Man

This is the power of magic idolic comportment. The sense of power is seductive and modern rationality is hardly immune, rather it is amplified for a purpose whereby "pure science" is converted into engineering and the "man of action" is admired over the reflective thinker. Operationalization, the great virtue upheld by so many social "scientists", is the essence of this seduction. Every social scientist is a secret dictator desiring to remake the world beginning with experimentation on pliable undergraduates. Eugenics, for instance, rapped itself in patriotic service to the state, empire, and ultimately to humanity for its own good. The humble servant becomes master to the slave, that plastic mass of humanity for the good of efficiency of organization toward power. Reason is distorted to efficiency of wealth/power accumulation. Unlike the

civil engineer who is satisfied to manipulate steel and glass, the social engineer aspires to manipulate human traits, behavior, and morality itself.

From Fromm and Bruno Bauer to Thorstein Veblen, the Frankfurt School (notably Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse), and Eric Hoffer, analysis of the "true believer" (Hoffer 1951), finds essential, shared traits of authoritarian comportment. The problem is not in the lone demagogue but in the throngs that surrender their rational faculties in favor of indulging their magic, hedonic desire "for blood".

Veblen described such abandonment of the will and effort to reason as a sort of "distemper" and "deranged mentality" (1922: 434) that emerges especially after a sense of failure or malaise, "prolonged excessive worry" (420), due to a failure of capitalism leading to "unemployment, privation, and industrial disorder" (419). It is a reactionary comportment characterized by him as *dementia persecutoria*—"an illusion of persecution and a derangement of the logical faculty such as to predispose the patient to the belief that he and his fold are victims of plots and systematic atrocity" (433). This, he observes effects public communication giving rise to "hysterical consternation", "extravagant rumors" and "impossible fictions" that in turn lead to intolerance, bigotry, and fear of the Other, "justifying deportations and restricted immigration" among other things (426). Current examples include the many claims propagated by the far right alternative reality press such as the claim that President Obama was not born in America, that he is a secret Muslim, that there is a "war against Christmas" and Christianity in America, and a war against white people, the claim that Hillary Clinton had people secretly murdered and ran a child sex slavery criminal enterprise out of a pizza parlor in Washington D.C.

The reader may protest that such examples are themselves exaggerations by the author as an unfair polemic. But leading up to the 2016 Presidential election in the US, all such rumors were in fact widely circulated and given credence by millions—repeated at Presidential rallies, debates and cited by voters as "reasons" for supporting one candidate and hating another. And the most ridiculous rumor of all about the child sex slavery was in fact retweeted by President Trump's Cabinet member and National Security Advisor Michael Flynn. Before he could retweet it, the story was widely circulated by an Internet site Breitbart "News" launched and managed by Steve Bannon who became "Chief Strategist" and "Senior Counselor" to the Trump White House administration. Such fake news motivated a man (Edgar Maddison Welch) to travel from North Carolina with the expressed purpose to attack

people in the pizza parlor with an assault rifle and presumably rescue the children (messiah complex in action).

Such "extravagant rumors", "hysterical consternation", and bigotries have very real consequences impacting elections for the highest office. The actual and the virtual smear into each other by means of the comportment of *dementia præcox*, creating real conditions stranger than previous fiction writers imagined. The importance and power of comportment is that it is procreative, not merely passive reflection. A demented mentality leads to a demented reality. Ultimately suffering is the result of such deficiency.

Veblen argued that this comportment of dementia and victimage (persecution complex), included a "fearsome credulity" (1922: 436) regarding all sorts of calamities calling for a savior. This attitude and the comportment toward others in the lifeworld may be, "presumably transient but sufficiently grave for the time being" as it is a mode of comportment or, as he puts it, a "way of being something of a psychiatrical clinic" (1922: 423). Veblen concludes with a summary of the practical effects of such a "moronic" puerile mentality thusly:

> Such a degree of arrested spiritual and mental development [*en mass*] is, in practical effect, no bar against entrance into public office. Indeed, a degree of puerile exuberance coupled with a certain truculent temper and boyish cunning is likely to command something of popular admiration and affection, which is likely to have a certain selective effect in the democratic choice of officials. (Veblen 1922: 423)

Under such pathological conditions, vulgarities, "puerile crudities" (Veblen 1922: 419) can become normalized and chalked up to "locker room" banter of and by an "adolescent" comportment, even spun as someone staying "young at heart", acting as a virile "alpha male", and as such, admirable. Veblen wonders if the "malady" of "moronic" comportment is temporary and whether it can be "cured" (420). It would seem unlikely if, as is the case, professional conspirators and propagators of hysterical and extravagant rumors via the Internet have become an essential part of an executive administration. The comportment of the Trump White House is thus understood. Again, Veblen is prophetic on the point:

> America is the most democratic of all nations; at least so they say. A run of persecutory credulity of the nature of *dementia præcox* should logically run swiftly and with a wide sweep in the case of such a community endowed with such an official machinery, and its effect should be profound and lasting. (Veblen 1922: 423)

Given this, semiotics is not merely the study of codes without import. The habitat of *homo symbolicum* is worldview (infantile or otherwise). Semiotic

analyses of discourses that manifest and sustain worldview/attitude and mo-tivate comportment can also form analyses of the power of expression (voice). It is well suited to enabling one to dissect the functions of codes such as the alibi and myth, and, in this case, discourses that articulate comportment; discourses of victimage, persecution complex (in the speech of audiences) and messiah complex (in the speech of demagogues), and moronically "fearsome credulity" (Veblen 1922: 435) characteristic of an underdeveloped sense of reasoning and morality leading to a deficient mentality largely unavailable for serious debate.

Thus, semiotics, "symbolic communication" is an act, not an object. Semiotic analysis is itself part of the lifeworld and as such it has a political dimension, it can make a difference, as Lanigan (2011) claims. Such analyses reveal tactical and strategic uses of signs and symbols such as the alibi explored by Barthes (1957). And by combining semiotic with hermeneutic work, one can see, as with this case of Veblen, a consensus about an existential condi-tion and comportment over time. While such an appraisal of modern mass society is discouraging, one can find shelter in the Stoics, as opposed to the Cynics, as Nietzsche and Foucault did, or perhaps, taking the kynical ap-proach (from the original Greek κυνικός, kunikos) exemplified by the "mad Socrates", Diogenes (Sloterdijk 1983; Kramer 1997).

To "cure" the dementia, since it is caused by emotional states and appeals that suppress the spirits and will, less than facts, and make one susceptible to fantastical alternative realities, it would seem that hopeful tropes along with supportive facts would be the best approach. "Hopeful" here means a trope that directly confronts tropes of persecution and victimage that generates an identity of innocent victim entitled to express righteous indignation and hatred of demonized, criminalized targets. Facts alone cannot sway the emo-tionally motivated. Nothing less than a struggle for defining and convincing the masses to assume an identity of victims of criminal evil (via appellation), or as hopeful people with agency, constitutes the rhetorical battle. Trump was a master of appellation, naming and name-calling. Discouraging tropes are a necessary condition for a would-be demagogue to become a savior (the "only one who can save you" and "this is your last chance"—phrases repeated at rally after rally by Trump). This is so because one must convince the masses they need to be saved. A failure to confront such dis-couragement, with en-couraging substance including facts, will retard the cure. For example, on January 23, 2016, at a political rally in Iowa, Donald Trump spoke to a world audience via media coverage and said:

> My people … I have the most loyal people, where I could stand in the middle
> of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody I wouldn't lose any votes [someone in
> the crowd shouts out "we love you"] … I love you too. (Trump on CNN,
> retrieved December 2, 2016)

Convincing people that they are not sheep, who still vote for someone even
after that person calls them essentially mindless sycophants to their faces, is
tricky. The "fearsome credulity" Veblen discusses circumscribes an inherent
contradiction, the absurdity of a person being proud to be submissive (a
deficient form of blind loyalty—faith without, and even despite contrary
facts). Here too is the complication of "joking". The jester is ambiguous,
and the target of the jest may believe that the jester is "not serious". But the
nature of mythic two-dimensional am-bi-guity lends itself to the alibi and the
purposeful confounding of literal versus figural intent. Beyond this, and as
noted, current mass media ownership trends and practices do not engender
overwhelming optimism about treating the dementia. But "the media" is too
broad a brush ignoring qualitative differences in messaging. It is not entirely
to blame. The comportment of the audience is also at issue.

To be highly rational is to be an outlier. The less than optimistic kynical
stoic accepts this fact too, as a consequence of comportment. It does not
mean to withdraw in surrender but to be, like Veblen, sober in assessing the
likelihood of treating the malady. As "hard" scientists, semioticians and com-
municologists have to face facts concerning types of comportment that lead
to deficient conditions in order to address possible solutions.

Cassirer's Realism: To Conceive

In part, informed by his personal observations of a "rational" Europe that had
burned itself to the ground repeatedly in his century, Cassirer's radicalism
is expressed in his realization that magic is not Other, and therefore it does
not need to be defended like a weak sibling or promoted as a utopian return
to "Natural Man", but rather understood as part of the reflexive project. In
understanding magic and mythic consciousness, we better understand our-
selves, including Western modern selves.

Industrial might is material magic. It, as well as science, presumes motives,
interests, goals, and plans, all of which involve the making of something that
did not exist before. Modern might seeks not to simply make things fertile
but to reengineer the entire world—a global fertility of imagination—a scope
quite beyond shamans and priests attempting to help fields and village mem-
bers *conceive*. Following from Schopenhauer's (1859) depiction of the world
as will, conception itself has expanded to what Nelson Goodman (1978) has
called "world making". Cassirer was one of the first to clearly demonstrate

that from statement to request, accusation to apology, from incantation to a mathematically rendered "bottom line", expression changes reality. *We say things to make a difference, to manifest our "point-of-view", the "position" we identify with, which is who we are. No one writes a book hoping to make no difference.*

The Modern powerfully exclaims that if you can imagine it, you can make it. Modern technology is driven to deliver on this promise. As Nietzsche realized, magic never disappeared, it just found a new mode of expression with unprecedentedly powerful results. Life and thought itself become "projects". Building careers and constructivism at all "levels" of life (including the Kantian notion of an architecture of mind), go hand-in-hand with the modernist perception of divinity as engineer. With linear time and teleology comes the idea that all things are created with a goal in mind, and so purpose and interest are fused into the core of Modernism as an achievement itself. God has a plan. Magic animism, where all is infused with spirit-power that is an aspatial mood rather than linear plan, shifts to a spatial manifold with a distant being working at making the world as a separate clay.

Forecasting, actuaries (persons of the actual), and all manner of rationalized prediction form processes of control and become ubiquitous in the modern world (Kramer 2004). Here we find the core of ethnocentrism as competing worldviews, and increasingly utopias (plans). Development implies that cultures are progressing. But note that in the world Cassirer inhabited, Euro-centric exceptionalism was becoming utterly ironic, for here too we find the ancient magic effort to avoid risk, to impose human will on the world and transform it. Cassirer, among others, began to demonstrate that this ethnocentric self-superiority was unwarranted. To kill with a spear or an atomic bomb both manifest bloodlust of the most extreme.

Gaining critical distance from the neo-colonial self-congratulatory posture of Europe, allowed Cassirer to avoid intoxication by the trope of progress. Cassirer could see the yet affective power of totem, taboo, sympathetic and "contagious" magic, and other "primitive" aspects of the human psyche driving modern world wars. This offered an explanation that was not forthcoming from the dominant discourse in Europe about Europe itself. It also offered a warning about emotional rationalization and increasingly militarized societies that remained under the spell of ancient yet ever-present forces that could be either efficiently constructive or deficiently destructive (Gebser 1949, 1953).

Cassirer demonstrated that "magic consciousness" did not need to be rescued from "marginalization". It is not a lost dimension of human experience, neglected and inert. While magic consciousness and idolic communication along with mythic symbolic communication was neglected by rationalism such

ignorance (willful and arrogant ignoring) was a dangerous mistake. Semiotics had proven that Europeans were no more advanced than others except perhaps in their ability to destroy the world. Latency is perhaps the best term for this condition, but latency also suggests dormancy, which would deny the continued efficacy of sympathetic emotion and association and powerful idolic identification with a cause that would reduce millions to deceased effects (facts).

Cassirer, Gebser, and others have attempted to see magic and mythic forms of thinking and communicating once again and thus become aware of their active potential for "good" and "evil". Agency is propelled by will. Blindness and insight are existential facts here. While it is certainly true that we are still infused with non-directional identification of the magic sort (*pars pro toto*, *parte pro parte*, *totum pro parte*, *totum pro toto*), magic is neither neo-spatial linear narrative with the polar structure found within parabolic and allegorical storytelling that simultaneously presentiates literal and figural aspects (which forms the basis of so many debates about the Bible for instance), nor the dualistic intolerance found within analytical reasoning articulated as either/or, knowing/not knowing.

Latency is a form of presence understood as *potentia* (potential energy). Aristotle, Buddhism, Nicholas of Cusa, and de Saussure argue that the trigger for expression of potential is dependent origin. The origin of identity is difference. Elimination of difference means the elimination of existence. The key to a second European Enlightenment via semiotic reflexivity was and is positivism. The true efficiency of any modality is its limitation, which implicates something more beyond the liminal limits of meaning. Opposition does not lead to dead-end contradiction but something previously un-thought.

Failures of Kantian and Hegelian reason to overcome latent-become-activated libidinal energies fueling calamities such as the Napoleonic Wars, World War I and the prolonged, painful, and vicious aggression that "Enlightened" Europe was visiting upon its colonial prey, proved the danger of self-serving arrogance in its many guises including the intolerant, singularly privileged posture positivism struck. But out of this came a post-modern opening. While it may be that post-Hegelian romantics and "diversitarians" such as the *Sturm und Drung* writers Klinger, Scheller, Goethe, Schilling, among others, cast a jaundiced eye toward European exceptionalism, as Reason with a capital "R" became operationalized in bureaucratic ordination and industrial mechanics, Cassirer, Freud, Malinowski, Boas, and later Gebser and even Becker took a less romantic, more Nietzschean approach to primitive impulses.

Compounding the debates was the fact that the idyllic nature that the romantics imagined about utopia was tempered by Marx's withering

condemnation of industrial-scale exploitation and Darwin's argument that life-as-struggle and competition is the unvarnished truth. The "angels of our better natures" were hard to identify until (and unless) our demons came into hard focus.

Semiotics is not a morality. It is a way of observing the formation of world-meaning. It observes the line that defines both the visible and the invisible, the moral and immoral, at once.

The old debates about humans being good or evil "by nature" were eclipsed by a view of humans as more fundamentally animals but unusual ones nonetheless; the meaning makers. Standing erect and using rocks and sticks as tools were paltry achievements, and not even unique, compared with the complex forms of communication humans and pre-humans had achieved. And it was seen as an achievement, not by a "rationality by ethnic nature" or by god.

Other Cosmic Codes that Demonstrate Our Common Nature

Communication, not spiritual elevation on an evolutionary scale, took the central place in human nature. And as Europeans lost some of their immodesty and began to listen to other groups across the globe they discovered amazing complexities. For instance, in 1927, Walter Evans-Wentz published the first English translation of *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, followed quickly by scholarly accounts of other aspects of Tibetan culture including rigorous explanations of how mandalas function as pedagogical devices and focal points for meditation using directionality, color, graphical content, spacing and relative sizing of objects and personae thus revealing very complex codes operating within "primitive" religious "pictures" (Fig. 2).

Indeed, it has been pointed out by Eric Kramer (1997) that the layout of the Forbidden City in Beijing is a three-dimensional mandala following fundamental principles of mandala code including concentric centrism to express significance and power, a structure hardly unique to Western Modernity as many postmodernists would have us believe. China is the Middle kingdom. Vertically it rests at the center between heaven and the lower world. Horizontally it is the center of the cosmos and the human world. Beijing is the center of China. The Forbidden City is in the center of Beijing. The Hall of Supreme Harmony is in the center of the Forbidden City, and in the center of the hall is the largest throne used exclusively for the emperor of the world who sits at the apex of a series of concentric stairs elevated at the center of everything.

Another example of the West discovering the intricacies, sophistication, and elegance of other ways of communicating is John Carrington, a

Figure 2. Tibetan mandala. Public domain. Retrieved December 25, 2016 from http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-mAgCm-HeSpc/T4xd2i2VlDI/AAAAAAAACw8/liq590AY80g/s1600/Mandala+.jpg

Christian missionary who arrived in the Belgian Congo in 1938. He had assumed that only Europeans had accomplished the ability to communicate nearly instantly beyond the horizon with wired and wireless telegraphy and telephony. Messenger pigeons, and chains of fire towers built by ancients conveyed information only so far and fast as they could carry physical media or by line-of-sight. But he discovered that sans wired and wireless electromagnetic devices, African villagers knew of his travel plans and arrival times well before he had physically started. He learned that Africans, often across tribal boundaries and transcending spoken language, shared at least two distinct and complex codes of drumming and could relay information beyond horizons and through the night, bad weather and densest forests with little effort. Carrington had published an account of Lokele tribe drumming

in 1944, and later published his famous work *The Talking Drums of Africa* in 1949, in which he fully introduced to non-Africans the astounding complexity of these codes and Africans' ability to translate spoken languages even as encroaching modernity was silencing them. He himself dedicated much time to becoming a drum-speaker and this willingness to take seriously, and respect the drum led Africans to claim that he was actually a black person reincarnated as a white man.

This is one way to express the meaning of what Kramer (1992 2000b; 2016a; 2016b) has labeled cultural fusion, and it highlights one of the ways colonialism effected not just the colonized but the colonizer in what Kramer (2013) calls the pan-evolutionary (not merely co-evolutionary) process of fusion. While Europeans primitively used the drum primarily to keep a monotonous beat to synchronize dancing, rowing, marching, labor … Africans and others around the globe, created layered simultaneous multi-rhythmic codes played at "breakneck speed" as for instance the Papua New Guinea tribal drums first described by Arthur Wichmann in 1890, and later by the ornithologist Jared Diamond (1992). For centuries untold, such trans-tribal codes conveyed complex messages in "real time" and across impassable terrain and distances.

For good or ill, humans communicate in forms far more elaborate and diverse than any other animal known. For all the colonial bluster, Europeans rather quickly decentered themselves with notions of democracy and universal civil rights, and sciences rendering all "races" as commonly understandable as bio-chemical systems. Even as political economists strove to drop the political aspect, they attempted to reduce all human behavior to a common set of exchange principles. Europeans began to recognize that they could not exclude themselves from their own bombastic pronouncements of universal truths without an embarrassing absurdity.

Privileging, more specifically self-privileging, was leveled with the rise of existentialism, not as a philosophical movement, but as a realization that we are all members of the categorical sets we love to develop. So, for instance, Foucault was humbled by Sartre when Sartre pointed out in *Tel Quel* that Foucault had repeated Marx's error. If the dominant ideas of the dominant class program all our thinking, then Karl, how did you manage to escape the trap and reflect upon it from "outside" as it where? If we are all written and spoken by a total episteme, a global discourse, then how did Foucault escape to tell the tale?

Anthropology and critical philosophy are indigenous European projects. The Europeans achieved a reflexivity that exposed Hegel, Kant, and the

romantics as naïve. Part of the achievement came through the egregious and all-consuming effort to colonize the world. While Kant saw a universal architectonic structure to the manifold of human consciousness, others, most notably Gebser (1949, 1953) and Cassirer pluralized the entire project.

Exposure to other lifeworlds that proved enduring, satisfying, beautiful, productive, and in some ways grudgingly superior, forced Europeans to critically assess themselves. What drove Europeans to sail the seven seas was the promise of knowledge, cuisines, materials such as silk, that the Other had and which was clearly of value. The winds that drove the ships were themselves named for trade and islands for the spices Europeans not only recognized as good and wholesome but as worth fighting for. The examples are endless. We need only remind ourselves of the revolution in the highest of high-brow expression, European art created by the jarring alternative way to regard the world discovered by Van Gogh and others as they unpacked Asian porcelains wrapped in discarded woodblock prints rendered by Japanese artisans. In its greed, Europe exposed itself to new challenging horizons. While its emerging mercantile class and even its spiritual leaders eagerly explored the world for exploitable material goods and new flocks to shepherd, they utterly failed to realize that each bolt of silk and each bag of spice was accompanied by a "spiritual"/cultural perspective. While they thought they were importing only material goods, much more was being introduced for European consumption.

Europe was being nourished on foreign things, ideas, values, and beliefs. The colonial legacy endures not only in postcolonial anxieties of influence manifested as "cultural imperialism", but in all manner of symbolic expression right down to the discovery of Yogic meditation and the Sitar by the Beatles. Cassirer was living this world of churning cultural fusion (proto-globalization). He was a moment in the larger European mind that signaled an emerging appreciation of the "primitive", and the realization that the profound power of the primitive was yet vital in "modernist" irrational political party cohesion and military aggression. By the time minor theories such as group think (Janis 1971) were ceremoniously celebrated in academe, political terror in Europe had already far outrun efforts to understand the primitive impulses that led to massive disasters. Subsequent efforts to comprehend inferiority and superiority as complexes are found in works by writers such as Alfred Adler (1926; i.1928–1937), Theodor Adorno (1951), and most concretely reported from the trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem by Hannah Arendt (1948, 1964).

Cassirer's political works reinforced the effort to apply psychological theories and insights to modern movements and their symbolic expression. Just

as J. L. Austin and Wittgenstein began to deconstruct the false line between the actual and the virtual, Cassirer was demonstrating that communication, what Becker and Geertz would later call the "symbolic", is not about reality, but is rather the articulation of human actuality.

Reading Icons and Logos: The Power of Symbols

We and Them: Communities

Not just individuals but groups, organizations, and entire societies manifest comportment. Some are predominantly magic/idolic, some predominantly mythic/symbolic, and others predominantly perspectival/signalic (Kramer 1997; 2013). There is no teleological faith presumed here. As dimensions accrue, this does not equal progress. In fact, "earlier" structures remain, are presumed, and are essential to the viability of "later" structures. Like the first floor of a skyscraper, the higher it goes the better the view, but at the same time, the more the entire structure relies upon the continued integrity of the foundation. This schema is one explanation of profound differences in matters of empathy (dissociation/association), not progress, with all its ideological implications.

And people and societies shift back and forth. The accrual of dimensions from magic one-dimensional identity to mythic two-dimensional am-bi-guity, to perspectival three-dimensional trivalent isolation, is not unilinear. I am forced to use available language to attempt to articulate mutational shifts in comportment/attitude/world "view" that is not entirely adequate. However, the consequences of a perspectival society that has accomplished powerful technological systems based on a predominantly mental-rational approach to physical manipulation of the environment (at hand) shifting suddenly (in historical terms) to a predominantly magic or mythic comportment can be dire.

Predominantly magic peoples do not generate powerful technologies because the world for them is alive, full, and finished. They are animistic and therefore damming rivers and strip-mining mountain ranges is forbidden. The spirits that are the rivers, mountains, lakes and forests will be disrupted and such profane lack of spiritual respect and etiquette may well lead to disaster for the people. Moderns who have a strong sense of dissociation see the world as largely dead, empty, and expanding beyond comprehension. In such a world, manipulation of everything from genetics to atoms regarded as mere "building blocks" of nature, is not only comprehensible but a virtue in the service of modern will-power ego-demands. Such an attitude liberates libidinal energies to pursue the reengineering of everything according to human, all too human

imagination. The result is a species, virtually unchanged physiologically for at least 250,000 years that has suddenly generated globe-striding technical systems including the ability to destroy much of life. When such a society shifts into a predominantly emotional, associated modality that, by its own essential nature could not and would not create such apparatuses, dangerous weapons systems and engineering processes become available to express emotional, libidinal impulses. This has happened in history on a massive societal scale but luckily the most destructive technical apparatuses had not yet been actualized. This is no longer the case.

Comportment is mutable. This means that for the first time in human history profoundly incompatible technological frames can be acquired by ill-fitting modes of understanding, thus leading to deficiently dysfunctional combinations. It is like handing a loaded gun to a child. Before technologies became so powerful, acquisition of a foreign technology was far less disruptive. Such incongruous mixes generate profound consequences. Today markets are global in scope and everything is for sale. And enduring technological environments are being acquired, inhabited and controlled by comportments that are essentially incongruous. And, as discussed and evinced by Hitler and others, such powerful technological complexes can also fall into the hands of people who could never conceive and operationalize them on their own. Remember, an individual or society is *predominantly* one mode or another at a time. But all modes, idolic incantatory, symbolic narrative, and signalic codal, co-exist and their ratio influence is mutable. While Carl Schuster and Edmund Carpenter (1986–1988), Eric Havelock (1986), McLuhan (1964), and others demonstrated the existence of a shifting ratio of sensorium based on the dominant medium of a society, there is another more encompassing ratio that subtends the invention of, and attention to media, and that is this variable integration of architectonics that are not limited to sensationalism.

Now the reader may be sensing an old ethnocentrism lurking here. But it is important to point out that "foreign" techniques acquired and leading to incongruous mixing of attitudes, tendencies, beliefs, values, and competencies is **NOT** limited to the so-called "clash of cultures". In fact, historically, demonstrably, the worst examples of incongruity leading to dangerous dysfunctional deficiencies (suicidal tendencies) have occurred *within* societies that underwent sudden internal shifts in worldview; mutations, a discussion of the possible causes of which is beyond the scope of this piece).

Our Forgotten Mission: Ego-hypertrophy in the Field

While weapons systems come to mind, one of the great failings of communication as a discipline is that it has failed to fully appreciate semiotics and has

abandoned rhetorical studies as "soft". These same scholars who have chosen to preoccupy themselves with the mental masturbation of quantification, are now fretting about how a magic/mythic mindset can exploit a powerful communication apparatus to persuade millions to follow a dangerous path. From the days of Socrates on, the first role and function of mentorship is to teach students how to defend themselves against what Plato called evil lovers, false rhetoric; demagogues. They exploit the power to shift comportment itself—the greatest of all powers. This mission must be rekindled or sudden shifts toward predominantly libidinal excesses in conjunction with perspectival techniques will have more disastrous results than anything else. In the end, one can have power such as weapons or money but how one views such things and decides to use them is a matter of comportment.

Demagoguery, by its nature, is practically immune to rational argumentation that marshals facts and warrants and structures logical connections. The best way to defend against this dangerous mode of comportment is precisely to teach about comportment itself and various forms and consequences, especially in an environment strewn with powerful technologies.

Concluding Samples of Expressed Integrated Comportment

Legend has it that while apprenticing as a carpenter with Joseph, one of the disciples painted a portrait of Mary on a table built by Jesus himself. After the Crucifixion, the table Luke painted was brought to Jerusalem. Through the millennia as a holy relic it was moved about by monks finally finding its way to a secluded forest in Poland, where it was hidden from Tartar invaders as well as from post-Byzantine Iconoclasts. In 1643, a chapel was built to house the icon in Jasna Gora, an obscure village. This is now the heart of a monastery housing the hermetic order, the Paulites.

Successive invaders including Hussites, Swedes, Turks, and Nazis all attempted to destroy the relic. *The Black Madonna of Częstochowa* is a bejeweled portrait of the Virgin Mary with a face darkened by centuries of incense smoke, adoring kisses, and baring slash marks left by Hussite raiders (Fig. 3).

The Black Madonna of Częstochowa: The icon is synonymous with Polish identity, unity, and independence. The Madonna's image was never absent from Lech Walesa's lapel during the Solidarity leader's struggle against Poland's Communist regime. During the resistance to Soviet control of Poland, thousands of members of the Solidarity movement rallied around an empty frame. It had held the icon, which Communist authorities had removed. Solidarity leaders carried the frame before throngs of protestors marching

Figure 3. Black Madonna of Częstochowa. Public domain. Retrieved August 3, 2016 from http://media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/736x/8c/bb/ca/8cbbca0f7c1 7234aa0ad6c4a13a02093.jpg

in defiance of Soviet power. In such a case, its absence amplified its power. This is the magic power of expression.

Pulling down Sadim Hussein's statute, cloaking the breasts of Lady Justice, which Attorney General John Ashcroft ordered in 2002 at the US Hall of Justice, the black flag of ISIS all indicate human activity as idolic expression. The black flag of ISIS is one example. To understand it one must appreciate that it manifests a formal repository of sacred history with its monochrome Arabic text signifying a direct link, indeed more than a "link" (which presumes modern spatial thinking) but rather the semiotic action of what James G. Frazer (i.1890–1915) called contagious magic (and ironically) expressed

through idolic communication, that manifestly functions as essential equivalences of *pars pro parte*, *pars pro toto*, *totum pro parte*, and *parte pro parte* via color to identity with Mohammad's alleged black banner. The flag ISIS uses is not unique to that group. In fact, it is used by many Jihadist groups including Al-Quaeda and Al-Shabab. It features the shadhada "There is no god but Allah", and a white disc the shape of which is intended to resemble the Prophet's seal with black writing that reads "Mohammed is the messenger of God." Broadcasting this image across the Internet has been treated as though it is radioactive by agencies working on counter-terrorism measures. The image generates anxiety and concern even among nonbelievers (Fig. 4).

Figure 4. Black banner of Mohammad. Public domain. Retrieved June 22, 2016 from https://heavyeditorial.files.wordpress.com/2014/08/isis-flag-meaning-cover.jpg?w=640&h=360

These readily available examples point to archaic identification and its characteristic emotional evocation and invocation. Idolic communication is non-spatial, nonlinear, incantatory. Such examples are also testaments to the continued affectivity of "idolic" power in expression. But locutionary force is complex, not simple. And the form that lends itself least to reflexive critical attention is what Frazer and Gebser have called magic—what Kramer (1997; 2013), combining their work with Lewis Mumford's (1934; 1964) conceptualization of dissociation, calls idolic communication (as compared with symbolic and signalic). Furthermore, those who may think that modern science is immune to the idolic power of expression to evoke and invoke emotional identification, one need only observe the reverence with which the equations on Einstein's chalkboard in his home in Princeton, New Jersey, are preserved. His house is a kind of shrine with his office being the inner

sanctum with the equations being the holy of holies. Einstein's mathematical glyphs are a focus of pilgrimage.

Similarly, tourist flock to see "the actual prime meridian" and take selfies with it (a bronze plate in cement) at the heart of modernist logocentric empire in Greenwich, England—the "prime" upon which all other geo-positioning coordinates reference, as the Earth itself was transformed into a giant clock measuring hours, minutes, and seconds east or west of this hallowed spot (Fig. 5). A clear indication that a scientist has achieve superstar status is when their name has been adopted to identify a unit of measure such as Amp (Ampre), Ohm, Volt (Volta), Watt, Calvin, et cetera. Such a cultural practice traces the reduction of all things to measures and the simultaneous canonization of scientific personalities to saint-like status through semiotic process.

Figure 5. Prime Meridian, Royal Observatory, Greenwich, England. Public domain. Retrieved May 19, 2016 from https://thelulife.files.wordpress. com/2013/07/p1070132-prime-meridian.jpg

Conclusion

The investigation of culture and its presentation is not a "soft science". Rather it is the central target of any effort to understand human behavior including its curiosity into causes, a human characteristic formalized in the history, literature, and activity first called natural philosophy or *scientia*. The scientific

method (with its various razor prejudices) is a cultural artifact. Francis Bacon did not find it lying in the forest. And the codal quality of mathematics and science itself are not empirical objects but accomplishments. It makes no sense to ask how much science weighs or what color mathematics is. While the "hard sciences" took this moniker from the belief that they explore objects with extension in space and duration in time, their modus of exploration itself is no more "hard" than the investigations pursued by an ethnographer of demon possession in Haiti or ghosts in English manors.

The European discovery of culture via Vico and his intellectual descendants (or perhaps rediscovery as the Hellenes and Latins before Vico, demonstrate an awareness if not appreciation of worldviews as such) was like fish discovering water. Europeans came to see themselves once again after a long hiatus of moribund isolation as … Europeans, a positionality afforded only and profoundly via a meeting with other fully developed and dynamically successful world horizons.

Just as Sartre was rescuing freedom as the critical reflexive turn, Cassirer was de-rationalizing human nature. Within this milieu Cassirer similarly came to see the primitive in all of us and the common nature of humans, all humans, as symbolic thinkers. It was a form of comportment that is ever-present. He would later recognize the overarching, or more universal nature of symbolism and culture as symbolic expression; the founding quality of humanness itself.

Our project has been to see where Cassirer's efforts fit within this milieu. And indeed, it is the thesis of this piece that Cassirer's work articulates a movement in thinking that rendered the old analytical/humanistic dualism irrelevant, a movement that in some ways led to endless confusion in postmodern obsessions with *aporia*, but which much more constructively demonstrated that the mythic and the scientific, the magic and the modern political worlds share far more than they dispute. To miss this point is to fail to understand the radicality of the twentieth century's humility vis-à-vis language-use, and to fail to appreciate Cassirer's insights. He did not seek to champion humanism over science but, like Husserl before him, to ground both in human existence itself. In this sense, he was a great existentialist, great here meaning a non-romantic, analyst of human existence.

Rather than try to force the many worlds we produce into a single algorithmic construct, Cassirer embraced the inconsistency, non-determinism, incongruity, a-logical variety, and often incommensurate qualities of parallel cultural horizons. He found wonder where others saw fear and exploitable conversion. He uncovered the transformation of nature and Others into

currency—the magic of European capitalism that sees no value in a thing or process unless and until it can be transduced into monetary units and exploited. My analysis presents the manner in which comportment exists as, and is shifted via, appreciation and analyses of signs and symbols without prior allegiance to ideological, ontological, or metaphysical claims.

Cassirer's work manifests a moment in modern consciousness that reveals what Lanigan (2011) calls a fundamental quality of doing phenomenology and being a phenomenologist. My paper has been an attempt to briefly discuss a revolution in European thinking and finally to show, again very briefly, how it can be applied to all things, from religious to scientific icons. This de-rationalization of European thinking formed a seam in our way of regarding reality, disrupting mindless continuity and revealing new insights.

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