Distributing Worlds through Aesthetic Encounters

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INTRODUCTION

Our Conference

The present volume consists of a selection of the papers presented at the 2014 Uehiro *Cross Currents* Philosophy Conference, the premier graduate student conference in comparative philosophy, held at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. This conference is an annual event that puts on display the work of graduate students studying comparative and cross-cultural philosophy at the very institution that initiated the development of a philosophical dialogue between East and West. Because our secluded island is home to the most renowned department of comparative philosophy in the world, we get submissions from graduate students around the planet that are eager to broaden their philosophical horizons – indeed, broaden philosophy's horizons in general – by generating a dialogue between culturally unique and sometimes isolated or otherwise marginalized philosophical perspectives. The 2014 conference was focused on aesthetics and the way our sensible world is distributed. With the recent arrival of Joseph Tanke at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, our students' interests in aesthetics – its political aspects in particular – had spiked. The injection of his expertise in aesthetics and continental philosophy, especially with regard to the works of Jacques Rancière and Michel Foucault, combined with an already resident interest in Japanese aesthetics under the guidance of Steve Odin and Indian aesthetics under our Emeritus Professor Eliot Deutsch as well as Arindam Chakrabarti, inspired a yearning for further and broader dialogue on aesthetic considerations. What better way to open up such a dialogue then by making it the theme of our conference!?

The conference consisted of six panels over two days: eighteen graduate student presentations in total from eleven different universities across the US, China, Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. In addition to the ten presentations selected as papers herein and the eight other presentations at the conference, we saw an excellent introductory talk as well as two fantastic keynote lectures. To usher in the conference, our very own Arindam Chakrabarti gave a talk entitled "Aesthetic Attributions: A Brief History of Comparative Aesthetics at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa" wherein he noted the development of comparative philosophy at UHM

from Charles A. Moore and Wing-tsit Chan to its "aesthetic turn" invoked by Eliot Deutsch and recently taken up in particular by Steve Odin. Joseph Tanke, presented a keynote lecture entitled "Crosscurrents and Undercurrents: Transformations of the Beautiful from Kant to Proust" that sought to facilitate conversations in comparative aesthetics by discussing the transformations in the understanding of "beauty" that occurred in the work of Kant at the dawn of modernity. In addition, Peng Feng, of the Center for Aesthetics at Peking University, delivered a talk entitled "Aesthetics as a Bridge: An Intercultural and Interdisciplinary Interpretation" that compared the way aesthetics bridges theory and practice in Kant with the way *xiang* bridges *dao* and *qi* in ancient Chinese cosmology, arguing that aesthetics isn't just a way to bridge practical aspects and theoretical aspects of the world, but a way of bridging divides between cultures.

The Present Volume

Until around the second quarter of the 20th century, academic philosophy was taken for granted as an essentially Western enterprise. Philosophy was traditionally considered a quest for Truth, Beauty, Being, Knowledge, Self—those sets of ideas that, though we take them for granted, leave the lot of us baffled. But the parameters of these investigations were rather fixed; philosophy cut out a niche for itself as the "Queen of the Sciences," as a distinctive form of investigation indispensable to the narrative of the progress of Westernized civilization. But this distinction was of merely academic value: it was an institutionalization of the philosophical spirit, delimiting the sorts of interrogative attitudes voiced by those engaged in it. Thus, many voices that weren't delimited according to the institutionalized parameters of Western academia were marginalized, indeed sometimes entirely unheard of, in philosophical discussions. It wasn't until Charles A. Moore and Wing-tsit Chan established the philosophy department at UHM in 1936, closely followed by the first East-West Philosopher's Conference in 1939, that the dominantly Western voice of philosophical academia was challenged. Comparative philosophy, which was born of Moore and Chan's efforts, is itself a challenging of the status quo of academically institutionalized philosophy: it broadens the discussions that are possible between professional philosophers to include worlds and views not necessarily familiar to the Western canon.

This challenging of the status quo is, if one takes Jacques Rancière's suggestions seriously, at once political and aesthetic. To the extent that comparative philosophy outlines new possibilities for how the world can be distributed – i.e. how things can be thought of in their spatiotemporal

embodiment – it is involved in artistic practice, in the development of an aesthetic, a way of making sense of the sensible by bridging the distinction between ordinary, everyday life and the extraordinary through a mode of creative agency. On the other hand, to the extent that it demonstrates the equality of marginalized voices in its distribution and redistribution of sensibility, comparative philosophy takes on a political dimension. The papers presented herein point to this politico-aesthetic aspect of comparative philosophy and, indeed, of philosophy in general. Such a discussion was the goal of our conference.

The first section, **Ecological Perspectives**, addresses the dynamics between environmental factors and sensible distributions. Matthew Izor, in "The Emergent Positivity of the Statement in Foucault's Metaphysics: A Biological and Material Comparison," integrates a semiotic approach to biology with analyses of Michel Foucault's notion of "the statement" (*l'énoncé*) and Nishida Kitarō's notions of the historical body (*rekishiteki shintai,* 歴史的身体) and expressive activity (*hyōgen sayō,* 表現作用). In so doing he plots a course for the emergence of creative agency out of specific combinations of non-living entities and thereby situates us in the mode of aesthetic inquiry, describing the basis for a creative engagement in sensible distributions. In the following discussion, "Which is More Beautiful? Between the Tamed and the Untamed," Maki Sato takes up the relation between nature and human intervention on an aesthetic scale ranging from beauty as highly-intervened-with, to the sublime as utterly wild, with the picturesque as sitting somewhere between the beautiful and the sublime. In doing so, she points out the way these different sensible distributions are related with political measures such as the establishment of National Parks through governmental organizations.

In our second section, **Dance and Imagination**, Ian Nicolay and Hin-Fung Fung, in their respective pieces, outline ways of taking imagination seriously as a faculty engaged in the creation of reality rather than simply as the faculty which "makes things up" independently of a realistic effect. In the former's paper, "In Defense of Imaginative Perception: The Case of Dance Spectatorship," it is argued that imaginative activity proves invaluable for a spectator's perception of a dance performance; indeed, that imagination is a crucial component of perception in general as the enrichment and enlivening of experience. It is what gives perception a certain warmth, a sense of reality, contrary to common attitudes towards imaginative activity. In the latter's paper, "On Habitual and Imaginary Dance," the phenomenology of dance and the role of imagination in embodied motility, both as a way of contemplating a dance and as a way of preparing for a dance performance, are discussed.

The third section, **Political Considerations**, strikes at the heart of the Rancièrean attitude that has recently inundated the halls of UHM's philosophy department. In her contribution, "Anonymous Bodies/Indeterminate Beauties: Aesthetic Subjectivization and Contemporary American Burlesque," Elyse Byrnes points out, following Rancière's regime-analysis of the development of art, that burlesque represents the aestheticization, and thus, the emancipation of bodies. As such, it redistributes the common sensibilities of bodies, declaring that any given body – no matter how it is gendered, shaped, raced, capable, or otherwise marked – can equally be a subject of art, despite its not fitting the common pattern of a "beautiful body." In the next paper, "The Rise of Cynical Irony: The Danger and the Promise," William Barnes examines contemporary hipster culture and points out how its sense of irony has become increasingly cynical in a primarily intellectual sense. As such, irony has transcended its traditional position since romanticism as the site of contact with the sublime, the theoretical absolute beyond human capacity, and now rests in a pre-theoretical, non-absolutist, empathy-driven humanism wherein the destructive aspects of its cynicism can be tempered.

This final section, **Music, Metaphor, and Poetry**, is a bit of a hodge-podge of papers given at the conference for which we could not find a specific theme as regards these proceedings. Nonetheless, they too exemplify the general spirit of our conference: a keen eye towards how the meanings of our world are distributed and redistributed according to political, aesthetic, or otherwise explanatory concerns. In the first of these contributions, "Music as the Origin of Creation in Nietzsche's Philosophy," Yoonjung Oh analyzes the place of music in Nietzsche's first work *The Birth of Tragedy*, and places it as the quintessential mode through which an *übermensch* arises. Stanley Baronett's contribution, "Through the Looking Glass: Objectivity and the Mirror in Rorty and Daoism," concentrates on a slightly different area of the aesthetic than we have seen in the above papers: the role of a 'root metaphor' in a tradition's understanding of reality. In particular, he analyzes Richard Rorty's critique of the West's root metaphor of a Mirror of Nature which, without having to interpret itself, simply reflects itself upon itself indefinitely, creating perfect representations of what it reflects. He proposes Daoism as an alternative with a more contextualized root metaphor which doesn't demand the sort of certainty requested by the mirror metaphor. The final contribution is "Drinking Alone with Li Bai and Sartre," wherein Nicholas Hudson analyzes Sartre's famous, if disconcerting, declaration that "it amounts to the same thing whether one gets drunk alone or is a leader of nations" in the light of Li Bai's poem *Drinking Alone Under the Moon*.

This juxtaposition, Hudson argues, exemplifies a subversion of traditional expectations with regard to value by presenting an understanding of value that depends directly on individual humans and their solitary actions.

Philosophy at UHM

As noted above, the University of Hawai'i Mānoa is the premiere school for cross-cultural comparative philosophy. Since the philosophy department opened in 1936 under the auspices of Charles A. Moore and Wing-tsit Chan, it has been instrumental in the development of a dialogue between Eastern philosophical traditions and Western philosophical traditions. The inception of the *East-West Philosophers Conference* in 1939, and its continuation on a constant 5-10 year cycle since then, has brought about an unprecedented diversification and broadening of the field of philosophy as compared with the traditional concerns of the Western canon. Moreover, Moore introduced the flagship journal of comparative philosophy, *Philosophy East-West*, in 1959, which is dedicated to continually generating cross-cultural comparative dialogue. The journal continues to maintain its prominent position in the field of philosophy in general, in addition to its obvious impact on the comparative and cross-cultural community, as its reins have been passed throughout the years, first to Eliot Deustch, and most recently to Roger Ames.

In addition to such landmark events and flagship publications, the department's faculty boasts a wide array of expertise from Western-oriented hermeneutics, aesthetics, metaphysics, and ethics to specializations in specific non-Western philosophical cultures such as Indian, Chinese, Japanese and Islamic thought. This diversity of our department's competence mixed with Honolulu's unique location right in between the Eastern and Western worlds, results in an uncommon learning environment where our students are encouraged to constantly look beyond their own horizons to find ways of thinking not specifically grounded in one cultural milieu or another. As such, philosophy at UHM is a rigorous, nuanced, and broad continuation of a dialogue in which its participants take on the responsibility of mastering a wide range of philosophical voices and topics spanning across spatial and temporal boundaries, that is, across the sensible itself, in order to offer new and varied configurations of meaning.

None of this occurs in a vacuum. Our department has had a long standing and close relationship with the Uehiro Foundation on Ethics and Education to which we are deeply indebted. This stellar organization, founded by Tetsuhiko Uehiro, a survivor of the nuclear attack on Hiroshima, strives to integrate practice and knowledge – i.e. ethics and

education – by serving as patron to scholars dedicated to broadening their theoretical insights by establishing their usefulness for practical living. Such is the case of our very own educational initiative, headed by Thomas Jackson: Philosophy for Children. This program brings the open ended dialogical process of philosophizing to students ranging from kindergarten to high school, encouraging them to form a free spirited and open dialogue, to think critically for themselves and with each other. The Uehiro Foundation has recently awarded Dr. Jackson's program with a generous grant which will help expand its operations. In addition, the Uehiro Foundation has been instrumental in our department's organization of the graduate conference since 2006. It is because of the Uehiro Foundation's generosity and its overall goal of integrating practical, everyday life with high caliber thought, theory, and knowledge – a goal deeply shared by the Philosophy Department at UHM – that we are able to put on such a conference at all.

We hope that the present volume continues the tradition of a broad, cross-cultural dialogue by adding new perspectives and the novel voices of up and coming graduate students in the field. The reader, we hope, will take home a message of diversity in thought that will deepen and broaden their own thoughts and the dialogues they come to engage in. It is only by such a continuation of dialogue that we can hope to understand each other, and thus, live well together. We wish the reader a pleasant journey through this world of thought and dialogue and hope that it impacts them with all the astonishing curiosity and wonder that it has imparted on us.

Mahalo Nui Loa,
Joshua, Brandon, and Shuchen

I.

ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

CHAPTER ONE

THE EMERGENT POSITIVITY OF THE
STATEMENT IN FOUCAULT'S METAPHYSICS:
A BIOLOGICAL AND MATERIAL COMPARISON

MATTHEW A. IZOR

Introduction

In this paper, I will examine Michel Foucault's conception of the statement (*l'enonce*) and the metaphysical function it plays in his philosophy of discourse. I will come to show how the statement can be described as a positivity resulting from and within the entanglement of discourse that allows for emergent discursive dimensions. Then, I will show how this element of discourse can be seen to be operative on a biologically developmental level, not merely at the level of discourse, commonly conceived. To do so, I will look at the theory of biosemiotics, a biological focus of the semeiotic theory developed by Charles Saunders Peirce, in order to see how something like the statement functions emergently in the evolutionary development of qualitative experience. By doing this, I aim to show i) that Foucault's methodological analysis of our psycho-social relations has metaphysical dimensions applicable in the analysis of other interactional fields beyond discourse, but that discourse is itself perhaps predicated upon and developed out of those fields; and ii) that the statement is a term that appears lacking in the semiotic analysis of life processes considered historically. Finally, I will suggest that the function of the statement may also be applicable to the material world as well. I will do this by comparing the notions of expressive activity and the historical body in the work of Nishida Kitarō with the discussion of the statement that will precede it in the rest of the paper.

I

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault describes the importance of the statement (*l'enonce*) for discourse. I shall begin with a negative description of the statement, as it will be fruitful for the discussion at hand. The statement is a function of signs within discourse that are not reducible either to propositions, sentences, or speech acts. Let us consider these possibilities one at a time.

The criteria by which we identify and define propositions do not equally work to identify or define statements. For example, we might have two sorts of statements when there is only one logical proposition. Consider the phrases 'There are no unicorns,' 'It is true that there are no unicorns,' and 'It is not the case that there exists some x which is a unicorn.' These are three different ways of saying that unicorns do not exist. The latter phrase is recognizably the translation of a logical symbolization. Thus, the latter phrase would be the characterization of the logical proposition that is contained in all three phrases. Yet, each phrase does not equally belong to the same set of "discoursive groupings."[1] The first phrase might be found in simple conversation where a child is being told the reality with regards to her wish for a unicorn for her birthday, let's say. Of course, the second phrase could be found in such equally simple conversation as, suppose, it is said by the aunt or grandmother when the child checks what she takes to be her mother's false statement with them. Even here, in the simple conversation, we have different "enunciative modalities"[2] because each phrase carries with it the intimation of a position of the speaker. In this simple conversation, the final logical translation will not make any sense to the child, for it expresses something that she is not equipped to comprehend. This is because logical formulation requires the existence of other discoursive elements, such as the formal rules of logic, the nature of various domains, etc. and the child has not had the appropriate training to grasp these.

Following Foucault's example,[3] imagine these three phrases being encountered in the first line in a novel. The first phrase would naturally belong to a statement which sets the beginning scene and mood of the book. It is either a statement made by a character or by the narration of the story that helps to create the world which the reader ventures into. Yet, the second phrase would signify that there is a dialogue taking place, even if it is a character talking to themselves. Though both phrases could be part of a simple dialogue, as noted above, here we see that depending on the encounter with the phrase, it will have a different force, so to speak. It will imply a separate set of other discoursive elements with which it will

naturally be encountered. Thus, each of these three sentences are parts of different statements, yet all three are reducible to one logical proposition.

By comparing the statement to the proposition, we can learn a couple things about the nature of the statement. First, it is not simply contained in the logical sphere or logical plane. This will be important for my later use of the statement as something not limited also to what we know in Foucault as 'discourse.' Next, we also learn that the situational encounter with a proposition, in this case, provides for different "enunciative characteristics."[4] These characteristics of the entire "entanglement"[5] which a statement is bound up in determine the statement. It is important to recognize that a statement does not burst forth on the scene and create discourse *ex nihilo*, but rather is entirely caught up in discourse already ongoing and only within the particular entanglement that it is found in. We cannot think of the statement (*l'enonce*) as a simple. It is not a monadic element, nor an *a priori* that precedes the discourse it is found in.

The statement is also not equivalent with the sentence because a statement exists where there is no grammatically recognizable sentence. We should not consider this to be merely the idea that certain phrases which do not bear the appropriate subject-predicate composition are statements but not sentences, for we do recognize such short utterances as "Him!" and "Never!" to be sentences. Perhaps, we can simply consider such utterances or phrases as simplified symbols for the proper grammatical English sentence that they convey without specifying the rest of the proper sentence structure. In other words, "Him!" is merely the shortened yet recognizable version of "It was him!" or "That's the guy right there!" Foucault, however, is not simply quibbling over this sort of grammatically correct shorthand. Rather, he means to emphasize that there are statements for which there is nothing recognizable as a single collection of words, however ordered. Instead, consider the case of a graph.[6] A graph is a collection of data points splayed across specifically scaled axes intended to describe something like growth, decline, distribution, comparison, etc. The encounter with the graph, with the data arranged how it is, is the encounter with a statement. It is clear to see how this example abolishes any attempts at equivocating the statement with the sentence, for the graph, as a statement in itself, would take a multitude of sentences to deliver the same sort of force as the visual depiction of data in a particular way. The title of the graph is not the graph itself, but merely another descriptive sentence that would need to be taken along with a host of other sentences to convey what the graph does.

From this comparison with the sentence, we can learn that Foucault's understanding of the statement puts it outside of a *purely* conceptual realm.

The graph certainly involves concepts, but it involves our encountering the concepts splayed out in a way which opens them to a new appreciation. This signifies that the statement is not merely verbal or logical, as seen above, but also something more immediately sensorial. Certainly, one could not grasp the statement of the graph if one does not also grasp, to some extent, the various conceptions that surround and enable the graph and its data to be conveyed. Yet, merely describing and listing the various extinction events that appear in our examination of fossil records and core samples, for example, does not convey the same sense of fluctuation that biological diversity has had on this planet in the way the graph does. Seen in this light, the statement would seem to encompass something like our psycho-physical interaction with the world. Again, this formulation of the statement will become important in my discussion below.

Finally, Foucault also distinguishes the statement from the speech act, or the formulative act. Moreover, what Foucault is distinguishing the statement from here is the operation that a certain formulation serves in the very formulating of it. Consider the making of a promise whereby the promise is that which is brought out by the making of it. It is what occurs by the very fact that the speech act has been made. Whether it is kept or not is another story. However, such an act is not to be equated with the statement. In order for a promise to be made, and thus a specific operation occurring in its very formulation, there must be a whole set of statements that have been made or else the promise is not what it is in the sense of our social engagement, but is merely sounds in the air or marks on paper. In other words, for a promise to be a promise there must be certain statements surrounding its formulation such as the recognition of an activity that requires the actor to ensure, either the recipient or the spectator, the intention to fulfill the activity or see to its initiation, etc. In short, there are speech acts which are also statements, yet, these speech acts could not get off the ground were there not a scaffolding of statements enabling their occurrence. Promises and the like occur within discourse and could not be what they are without the surrounding discourse that they are found and located within. As such we cannot equate the statement with speech acts, for "one finds more statements than one can isolate speech acts."[7]

From this comparison, we learn that the statement is something more subtle than the performative aspects of our social use of language. The functions of acts, such as the promise, are themselves something emergent within the social exchange of language. A rich social structure is necessary for the creation of covenants. While the promise, as a covenant, would permit emergent discursive entanglement around it, the occurrence of something like a covenant would already be tied to dense discursive

elements, themselves already containing the play of multiple statements. While it is obvious that discourse is a function of the interactivity of our multifaceted social-linguistic world, it would seem by these comparisons that the statement is an aspect of interactivity which also *enables* the social-linguistic interactivity that discourse clearly embodies.

We can see here that the statement is not identical with the discoursive elements with which it is tied. There must be statements for there to be propositions, sentences or formative speech acts, but these are not what statements are. Continuing with this negative description, statements are not one particular element that exists at one specific level of analysis. It is not an ideal structure by which analysts can identify when something qualifies as a statement. It is not a specific model or pattern that can be imposed upon discourse in order to isolate isomorphic entities under the classification of 'statement.' While it is an aspect of interactivity, the statement is not a specific type of relationship or a specific structure of relations. In a general sense, the statement is in each instance individual and worthy of its own archaeological study. Foucault does not see discourse as being everywhere the same but instead insists that all discoursive development and entanglement be everywhere unique and the result of specific accidents, transformations, distinctions, and ruptures.

I begin with this sort of negative description of the statement because it helps to illuminate the key components of statements in relation to the things the statements are inherently tied to. By doing so, we will be able to see how this sort of positivity, which the statement plays in Foucault's understanding of discourse, might be also seen in a more motor-sensory and biologically developmental plane. In order to make this argument, I will show below how the statement plays into the semiotic processes of Peirce and how these processes can be understood on a biological level. Before that, however, we will need to examine the positive description of the functions of the statement for Foucault, keeping in mind the above negative description and the characteristics there revealed by my analysis.

The archaeology of discourse must consider discourse to be, in some sense, continuous. Foucault does not adhere to any theory that would see discourse as being one process, or one which would "ensure the infinite continuity of discourse."[8] His project is to highlight and investigate the irregularities of discourse, its formulations, transformations, and propagation. In attempting to describe what it is that discourse has become and how it has come to this point of development, one must also have a way of describing why it is that discourse did not go in other directions, did not open up other fields, did not entangle itself with other possible objects or distinctions. Foucault will not ignore a single break, gap, or discontinuity

with regards to discursive formations. All of the specific points of departure or digression are relevant in their own right and cannot be subsumed under a larger, general heading, nor swept under the rug by sticking to the best fit line rather than including every single data point in its individual actuality. Such would be the case with general theories which ignore or explain away drastic irregularities which challenge the coherence of the general theory.

Now let us examine what it is that statements do in discourse. In a preliminary summary, they form objects, concepts, strategies, as well as "enunciative modalities."[9] Discourse finds itself dealing with objects that are tied up with the functioning of discourse but which provide a sort of discursive locus around which other elements gather. For example, 'madness' as the object around which the fields of medicine, law, and institutions of confinement gather and organize, while simultaneously adding dimensions and characteristics of their own to the object. Also, sexuality becomes the object around which psychiatry, religio-moral decree and the confession gather. These objects, as Foucault notes, are not natural. They are not given in the world but rather arise out of the functioning of discourse.

> The unity of discourses on madness would not be based upon the [actual] existence of the object 'madness', or the constitution of a single horizon; it would be the interplay of the rules that make possible the appearance of objects during a given period of time.[10]

How do these objects come to be formed? This is where the concept of the statement plays a role. As discourse develops in its multifaceted manner, points of distinction are exploited. Upon these points of distinction further statements, sentences, propositions, etc. can find anchorage. These points of distinction come to be definitive of discursive *objects* when such points of distinction become dispersed in different planes of discursive groupings, such as is the case with both 'madness' and 'sexuality.' These objects span several groupings, e.g. medical, social, and juridical in the case of 'madness.' Because of this dispersion across several planes, the distinction which provides discursive anchorage in each plane, takes on the form of a discursive object.

These objects must have been seen in the proper light and not confused to be objects which discourse uncovers that were there in full form. Rather than discursive objects existing *a priori* of discourse, they are an aspect of the law of discursive formation. We must "substitute for the enigmatic treasure of 'things' anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse."[11] We should consider these objects only

along the lines of their dispersion through discourse. Thus, what appears now are not constant objects but a constancy of "relation[s] between the surfaces on which [these objects] appear, on which they can be delimited, on which they can be analyzed and specified."[12] Now we can see that 'madness' is not some thing-in-itself in the world, but is a particular nexus of connection between various planes of discoursive groupings and because of the constancy of these planes of discourse and their reference to this nexus, these objects appear as being constant and ever present, something 'real' which discourse now proclaims truths about. However, this is merely how it appears, and we should understand that these objects are themselves formed in the interaction of discourse.

What then do statements do for the formation of such objects? Statements themselves are not things nor are they equivalent with these objects just discussed. The formation of such objects owes itself to the potential which statements introduce within discourse. Statements are elements of positivity that allow and anchor further discoursive development. Thus, these objects require statements for their existence in discourse. It is important to note that statements are even more immaterial than the objects they contribute to. This immateriality is due to the fact that the statement is not a unit, "but a function that cuts across a domain of structures and possible unities, and which reveals them, with concrete contents, in time and space."[13] I would suggest that we take this notion of 'concrete contents' not to be describing the actualities of such objects in the world revealed by the function of statements. Rather, the function of the statement in this case is to link several planes of discourse such that the references of each overlap in a particular entanglement giving a recognizable anchor for each plane as being a recognizable anchor in the others. The concrete contents would then be the discoursive elements of one or more planes as viewed from the plane in question.

The statement works in similar, yet distinct ways with regards to the formation of concepts, strategies and enunciative modalities. However, for the sake of space, I will transition to our first comparison with the field of biology. To conclude, let me reaffirm that this section describes the statement as an immaterial material positivity resulting from discoursive interaction that enables emergent discoursive formations and divergences.

II

Foucault says that the statement is the function of signs, or of a collection of signs. As we have seen above, this does not mean that a predestined collection or structure of signs is enough for there to be a

statement. Yet, "the threshold of the statement is the threshold of the existence of signs."[14] Here we see that we cannot have statements without signs, but signs do not guarantee a statement. What can we say about the development of signs? Charles Saunders Peirce held that signs are something which stand *for* something *to* someone or something. A sign is not merely a relationship between an object and its 'significance,' for significance means nothing if there is not a third aspect to the system, namely that of the interpreter. For Peirce, signs are an immaterial aspect of interaction between two things. What the interpreter takes an object to be is that object's significance for that interpreter. Signs, then, are an 'in-between,' an aspect of interactivity that is generated in and by the interactivity itself. A sign stands for an object, but is not entirely determined by the object. The content of the sign and the significance of that sign are in part determined by the way in which the interpreter acts once it encounters the sign. Thus, signs are not units, entities, or things in the world, at least not apart from the interaction of all three aspects of the triadic relationship.

The word 'interpreter' or 'interpretant' which Peirce uses can be a bit confusing. For we commonly understand interpretation to be an activity by which we relate the meaning of something to others. An interpreter is someone who translates a spoken phrase in one language to the roughly equivalent phrase in another language. Here it would seem that to interpret is to take the meaning already saturated in the phrase itself and relate it to another meaningful phrase. In this case, the interpreter has nothing to do with the generation of meaning, only its translation and communication. This is not the way in which the interpretant works in the Peircean system. Meaning is not contained in anything. It is not locatable or isolatable as a property of an object. Rather meaning is generated only in the process of one thing interpreting another.

So much for an initial sketch of the Peircean system. The question now is, how does this system get started? What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for genuine semiotic relations to get going? In answering this question, I will indicate how it is that the statement might be integral to the driving force of this semiotic system. This will involve me considering the biological implications of Peircean semiotics through the lens of biosemiotics. Briefly, biosemiotics is the study of life as being driven and constituted by semiotic processes. It is not simply the study of the use of signs in organisms, but a perspective that understands life processes, down to the cellular molecular level, to be inherently semiotic and thus engaged in the generation of sign relations. This is not to say that there is some underlying language of the universe and that life is reading the code, but

that the function and interaction of living systems are themselves the processes of signification. In the biosemiotic approach, the generation of meaning cannot be the criteria for distinguishing between nature and culture. For example, the uniqueness of human language and expression would not be due to humans being the unique and only users of signs, but as being capable of a specialized type of sign usage, that of symbolic reference.

The simplest unit which we currently define as living is the cell. The cell is the first embodiment, for cells are characterized by their cell walls creating an interior and an exterior, in a rudimentary sense. The cell wall is the discontinuity of inner and outer. Yet, the cell is in continuous contact with that which is around it. It is a type of discontinuous continuity. The creation of a membrane is integral to there being a living system contained within yet distinct from the environmental system outside of it. This living system itself must be continuous with the surrounding world, for life is only sustained by the through put of energy. Thermodynamically speaking, organisms are 'dissipative structures.' Harold Morowitz describes this phenomenon in an article on the influence of two major discoveries of 19th century science: the second law of thermodynamics and the process of evolution.

> Viewed from the point of view of modern thermodynamics, each living thing, including man, is a dissipative structure, that is, it does not endure in and of itself but only as a result of the continual flow of energy in the system… Consider a vortex in a stream of flowing water. The vortex is a structure made of an ever-changing group of water molecules. It does not exist as an entity in the classical Western sense; it exists only because of the flow of water through the stream. If the flow ceases the vortex disappears. In the same sense, the structure out of which biological entities are made are transient, unstable entities with constantly changing molecules, dependent on a constant flow of energy from food in order to maintain form and structure.[15]

Living systems must be *systems* and in no way isolated or closed off. Yet, they must be something unto themselves, in a sense, or there would be nothing other than energy tending towards greater equilibrium. Living organisms evade (for a time) the second law of thermodynamics by taking in low-entropy food sources and expelling higher-entropy waste products. In doing so, that which is interior is a system organized in a way slightly different from the exterior system which it is continually encountering. It is this 'encountering' that forms the possible basis for genuine triadic processes to develop on the biosemiotic view because the encounter is necessary for interpretation and thus also the generation of meaning. The

generation of meaning, then, is predicated on embodiment and thus a discontinuity of continuity, or as Jesper Hoffmeyer describes it, "surfaces within surfaces."[16] Considered on the level of human embodiment:

> The skin keeps the world away in a physical sense but present in a psychological sense. It is the skin that gives us the experience of belonging – it allows us to feel the world. But the very fact that the world can be felt is already a complex phenomenon… It is not enough to sense; organisms must also create functional interpretations of the myriad of sensory stimulations so that these do not become isolated incoming impulses but are integrated into a form that the body understands and can act upon appropriately... And already… the organism's own most current contextual situation becomes a relevant factor in the phenomenon.[17]

What we have here with the role of embodiment in the formation of semiotic processes is the creation of an interior and an exterior, and importantly, an interior-via-exterior sense of interaction. The threshold for semiotic interactions is this interior-via-exterior nature of embodiment.

Where does the statement fit in? As Foucault mentions, the threshold for statements is the threshold for signs. The natural development of signs and the natural development of statements would seem to also share some similarity. However, I would stress, this is not a strict unity. Keep in mind that the statement is a particular *function* of signs. It is not interchangeable with any particular sign but is something that signs do that have the types of consequences noted above. In Foucault's system, statements drive the particular trajectories which discursive formation takes. If statements are a particular entanglement of discourse which allows for new elements to emerge in the discourse, then the occurrence of statements would contribute to the restricted domains of discourse throughout the history of thought. Why do we discuss this object but not that? Why do medical and judicial fields overlap in these respects but not those? This would be due to the irregular occurrence of emergent elements within discourse that open up new avenues of possible statements, objects, sentences, propositions, subjects, strategies, power, etc. but which simultaneously restrict the pure possibility of the unsaid into the channels of actual engagement. Statements are that aspect of the entanglement of discourse that allows for further entanglement to be built upon it, shifting it as new elements pile on, so to speak.

Yet, what does this have to do with biology? One connection is that both discourse and biology have a similar set of actual trajectories and processes which determined those trajectories, restricting the possibilities of life into the actual life forms which we can observe. A similar question might be that, supposing our classificatory scheme to be somewhat

veridical of the natural world, why are there five kingdoms of organisms and not seven, or a hundred?[18] Why are there specific body plans? Why did the four-limbed structure seen in some tens of thousands of species develop only once in the course of biological history and then diversify from that point on? Why did winged flight develop independently at least 3 times? The idea is that the actual range of body plans is significantly short of the possible body plans that life might have supported.

With regards to this paper, let us focus less on the development of structure and more on the development of perception. The question might then be why have certain perceptive channels developed rather than others? Of course, I am not limiting this to our five recognized senses, for many creatures also possess the ability to detect electric pulses, changes in water pressure, eyes that can register much more than the visible spectrum of humans, heat detection, echo location, etc. These are all actual sensory channels present in living organisms. Why did these develop and not others? Why do some organisms have some of these and not other organisms? The answer presumably has to do with the fact that these sensory channels are intimately tied with the life and death of organisms and so must be approximately accurate, in the least. That is, sensory channels would not have developed were there not some aspect of the world that they could track or distinguish in a way that aided that organism's ability to survive and reproduce. Such specialized sensors would not have developed if the world lacked the details they register. The rudimentary beginnings of evolutionarily developed sensory channels would not have appeared in organisms without serving the same function that they currently do, for biology does not plan. Yet, in order for specialization to occur over generations, there would ideally be a differential reproductive rate for organisms with finer-grained sensory channels able to detect more detailed distinctions in the environment.

Considered at the level of perception, signs are that which a sensory channel can detect, register, pick up, sense, etc. The action-potential created inside the nerve cells connected to the sensory channel would be the initial biochemical interpretant of the sign. Simply put, interpretation takes distinction. Some element of the environment must be 'picked up on' in order for the organism to act on the *encounter* with this particular element, rather than that. Something must become apparent to perception. Of course, this involves both the constitution of the organism and the sophistication, range, dexterity, etc. of its sensory channels and the degree of their coordination, *as well as* that which is contributed by the world, that which is capable of becoming apparent. But what shall we call that which is able to become apparent to perception? How shall we describe it?

Peirce states that signs always are of objects, in the most general sense of 'object'. They are of the thing that they represent, in a way. We have already spoken of the importance of the interpretation side of the process, but we are now concerned with the object and its relationship to its (possible) sign(s). If I look at a flower and a bee looks at the same flower, we shall both be perceiving something from the common world which we both inhabit. Yet, we know that bees can detect light in the ultra-violet end of the spectrum, whereas we cannot. So, what do the bee and I each see when we look at the flower? Can we ask which view is the 'true' view of the flower? For surely both are veridical, though across different portions of the spectrum of the flower's possible visual encounters. Each creature here would be attending to a different sort of interpretable aspect that issues from the world and is interpreted dependent upon the sensory channels of each organism. Multiple possible signs are generated as being both issued and interpreted in the interaction, which differs across various perceptive encounters. The signs that are generated in genuine semiotic interactions in the biosphere are dependent both upon the interpretables issued from the object and the constitution of that which encounters them. This all centers around the notion of distinction: both the possible distinctions of the world and the distinctions perceptible to organs of varying design.

I argue that statements play a role in biological development, similar to the role played in discursive formation. If we understand statements to be functions of signs which enable emergent aspects of discursive development to take hold, we can describe the occurrence of statements within discourse as an autopoetic element of the functional interaction of discourse, enabling its creative and novel development, while also constituting the irregular departures and ruptures in this very process of development. Thus, the statement is a functional contouring of the topography of discourse. If we can describe the statement as being a functional positivity of interaction that provides possible grounds for *distinction* (whether among objects, strategies, concepts, or modalities), we can also consider the function of the statement to be operative on a biological level, when viewed from a semiotic approach to perceptual development.

In order to finally elucidate how it is that the statement can function similarly in biological development, we will need to discuss the notions of semiotic niche and semiotic freedom.[19] The idea of a semiotic niche is quite similar to the traditional ecological understanding of niche. It is a collection of aspects of a localized ecosystem which certain organisms can 'occupy' through their diet, habitation, diurnal and nocturnal movements,

interspecific associations, etc. Ecological niches play an important role in evolutionary development as organisms who can occupy a niche that provides sufficient resources with tolerable resource competition and low predation are more likely to be able to exploit that niche and thus develop and reproduce within the niche's micro-ecosystemic forces. The niche success of an organism depends upon both the presence of a rich ecosystem of multi-layered forces and resources, as well as an organism's capability of inhabiting that niche. For example, while the forest canopy and the forest floor each provide their own mixtures of resources, competition and predation, if an organism cannot reach the canopy then it cannot exploit its niche resources, even if no other organism currently is.

This understanding of an ecological niche is suitable for a rudimentary understanding of how material bodies requiring energy throughput develop in a diverse biosphere. But what about the development of qualitative experience? The concept of a semiotic niche might come into play here. As the world is replete with a limited, but vastly diverse multiple layers of possibility, an organism which could gain access to new realms of semiotic interaction with the world would be able to exploit the new distinctions available to it.

> The organism must distinguish relevant from irrelevant food items and threats, for example, and it must identify the necessary markers of the biotic and abiotic resources it needs: water, shelter, nest-building materials, mating partners, etc. The semiotic niche thus comprises all the *interpretive challenges* that the ecological niche forces upon a species.[20]

If, on the biosemiotic view, any organism is already involved in semiotic processes, evolutionary advance would need to develop out of this already existing semiotic entanglement. The preconditions for such emergent development on a semiotic model would require both the possible interpretable distinctions issued by the world as well as an organism's capability to perceive and distinguish some range of the possible distinctions. Semiotic freedom, or in other words, the access to distinct layers of a semiotic niche, would depend on the reciprocal interaction between the organism's interpretive system and the world's available semiotic resources. As a simplified example: color vision is driven to greater discernment based on the reward of accurately locating food sources. Likewise, the development of brightly colored fruit depends on the relative success of trees which develop such fruit in the presence of organisms that will find it, eat it, and spread its seeds. Here, in this interaction, there is an evolutionary developmental force at play.

What drives this evolutionary development into new semiotic fields? My suggestion is that something akin to the statement (*l'enonce*) is also at work in such emergent development. The statement, a function of signs that cuts across multiple domains of organic systems, would be a particular semiotic entanglement that permits for further, novel semiotic interaction, and thus new ranges of interpretables, new signs, and new interpretations. It is here that something like the statement must be functioning; an immaterial materiality, an unsubstantial realness that nevertheless plays an integral role in the actual development and irregular, asymmetrical trajectories in biological diversification. It is a metaphysical aspect of the interaction between interpretant and sign-field that becomes open to selective forces driving specialization of the genetic, corporeal participants of the interaction. This could also assist in explaining the phenomenon of specialized sensory channels, alongside the historical diversification into new structures, behaviors, and relations. Here, the gene still plays a role in the reproductive transmission of traits, but qualitative experience itself, as the interior felt quality of the collection and transmission of sense data, would be open to selective forces and thereby be a driving element of evolution, just as much as the material DNA. The equivalent of the statement at this level would be something like the semiotic freedom, slowly developing over generations, in which organisms begin to either distinguish new elements in their environment, or actively engage their environment in new ways.

III

In this final section, I will attempt to describe how it is that the statement, as described above, also functions at the material level. To do so, I will very briefly engage the philosophy of Nishida Kitarō, in particular his notion of expressive activity and how he describes its formation with regards to the historical body, something with affinities to Foucault's *l'a priori historique et l'archive*.

For Nishida, the world is replete with a rich unity of varied experience and real novel development. Considered from our first-person experience, the experienced present moment is the novel development resulting from the interaction of the accumulation of our past experiences and the immediate environment. As our temporal past 'crashes' into the spatiality of the present, our experience first begins to develop as an outward product of this 'crash'. This outward product, as I have called it, is Nishida's notion of expressive activity (*hyōgen sayō* 表現作用) and it precedes the standpoint of the knowing subject, which develops later as a

distillation of the richer experience going on here. Because of this, we can consider expressive activity to be present in the world even where we do not find consciousness, as we understand it.

Consider the graph example back in the first section of this paper. The statement of the graph is in part due to our encounter with it. What the graph expresses is a result of the encounter of two different systems, a psycho-somatic personal history and a visual-linguistic representation of data points set against axes and scales, etc. For Nishida, expressive activity is a similar type of encounter of different systems, that of the past and the present. This interaction does not take place exclusively within organisms or minds, but as a natural occurrence of the historical body of the physical world as it encounters its present configurations. Thus, the expressive activity of the ridge at the back of Mānoa Valley is the existence of the mountains just as they are, writ with the history of their slow erosion and formation by wind, rain and landslides. The expressive activity of the material world is also a function of the fact that physical matter accumulates characteristics over time and these characteristics are always held present despite their historical formation.

If the function of the statement can make sense in this way, it would be the aspect of the encounter of material past with material present in such a way that new emergent dimensions of physicality are possible, such as chemical reactions, perhaps. This is just a very brief sketch at how it is that Foucault's metaphysical account of the statement might be applicable in domains initially quite different from discourse. However, there is quite a bit more work to be done, particularly with the dimensions of Nishida's philosophy and modern physics, chemistry and biology, but this section points toward those possible trajectories of inquiry.

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Notes

[1] Michel Foucault. *The Archaeology of Knoweldge*. A.M. Sheridan Smith, trans. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972/1969), 81

[2] Foucault. *Archaeology*, 50

[3] Foucault. *Archaeology,* 81

[4] Foucault. *Archaeology*, 81

[5] Foucault. *Archaeology,* 72

[6] Foucault. Archaeology, 82

[7] Foucault. *Archaeology,* 84

[8] Foucault. *Archaeology,* 25

[9] Foucault. *Archaeology,* 50

[10] Foucault. *Archaeology*, 33

[11] Foucault. *Archaeology,* 47

[12] Foucault. *Archaeology*, 47

[13] Foucault. *Archaeology*,87

[14] Foucault. *Archaeology,* 84

[15] Harold J. Morowitz. "Biology as a Cosmological Science," *Main Currents in Modern Thought.* 28 (1972):156

[16] Jesper Hoffmeyer. *Biosemiotics: An Examination into the Signs of Life and the Life of Signs.* Hoffmeyer and Donald Favareau, trans. Donald Favareau, ed. (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2008), 17.

[17] Hoffmeyer. *Biosemiotics,* 18-19

[18] Of course, this is very much dependent upon the accumulations of discourse regarding the definition of life, the natural world, etc. Our systems of knowledge are themselves based on the accumulation of historical ways of thinking and characterizing the world.

[19] Hoffmeyer. *Biosemiotics,* 182-188

[20] Hoffmeyer. *Biosemiotics*, 185