Metaphorical Reference and Peirce’s Dynamical Object

One of the most puzzling things some metaphors seem to do is articulate new insights; they create what they discover. And they do this through uniting two or more terms, each with its own implied frame of reference, which antecedently were unconventionally associated with one another or which occur in expressions that are in some way incongruous with their contexts. One fairly well-known theory of metaphor that has taken this puzzle into account is interactionism, especially as it was initiated in the Anglo-American tradition by I. A. Richards and developed in some detail by Max Black. The most striking part of Black’s form of interactionism was a claim that some metaphors may be thought to create rather than discover similarities. At the same time, Black insisted that some metaphors may be adequate or “faithful” as cognitive insights which show us “how things are” in the world. However, in explaining how a metaphor can create a similarity, which is the kind of thing ordinarily thought to be part of the world, Black said that similarities are not independent of cognition. They must be understood as perspectives on the world. Creating perspectives, of course, seems fairly easily understandable in terms of our Kantian-Hegelian heritage. Yet the perspectival view “explains away” what was exciting about Black’s original claim. Furthermore, Black’s explanation does not include an account of whether the world given for metaphorical perspectives is itself a system of more perspectives or is something like a Kantian unknowable thing-in-itself.

The following discussion is intended to account for the creative insights which some metaphors seem to offer us without side-stepping the ontological issue raised when we ask what the created perspectives are about. The issue will be attacked through some of Peirce’s ideas about the referents of signs. Peirce’s conception of the object of a sign suggests a way to preserve the creative and insightful function of metaphors without forcing us either into a linguistic or conceptual idealism (for which the world is exhausted by some final system of
perspectives on themselves), or into a Neo-Kantianism (for which the world is an unknowable reality that is independent of perspectives). Instead, we are given a way to retain both creativity and a form of realism, or objective reference, that has a function in controlling specific changes in theory and interpretation.

The following proposal, of course, hinges on an account of the peculiar sort of reference that can be attributed to a metaphor. Thus a central question must be addressed: What kind of referents can carry two functions: being created, and being independent of the language and thought that creates them?

Before trying to answer this question, however, let me note that the issue here has important implications that might not be immediately obvious. If creative metaphors can have ontological objectivity, then we have an alternative to various views that deny that independent grounds can be found for interpretations of texts. In short, an account of metaphorical reference bears on some of the views recently proposed by deconstructionists, as well as a variety of other post-constructionist views. Let me also note that I bypass considerations of other approaches to the relation of reference to metaphors, particularly that of Nelson Goodman — as well as that of Israel Scheffler. Although these "extensionalist" views do include considerations of what metaphors apply to, they deliberately exclude the ontological issue insofar as it arises when one poses a form of realism as an alternative to nominalism.

In what follows, then, some of Peirce's discussions of how signs function indexically, as well as metaphorically will be considered. It will be necessary to use a few quasi-technical terms that appear in Peirce's semiotic. These terms are "Ground," "Dynamical Object," and "Immediate Object," as well as the perhaps more familiar terms, "secondness," "symbol," "index," and "icon." I shall not offer a list of attempted definitions of all these terms. Instead, I shall characterize icon, index, and symbol and let the meanings of the other terms emerge in the context of the discussion. Attempts at definitions, particularly in light of the purposes of my discussion, would be both rash and fruitless. The conceptions at the basis of the vocabulary
drawn from Peirce’s writings are too complex to be defined adequately in the present context, if anywhere. The meaning of each term could only be approximated by an article in itself. Furthermore, the full import of each of these terms need not be fully captured. Only those aspects of his semiotic that are relevant to the purposes of this paper are at issue. Indeed, the justification for characterizing the terms integral to what follows — and a justification is proper for those readers familiar with Peirce — is that the particular interpretation I shall give them needs to be acknowledged at the outset.

**Terminology**

The three most familiar kinds of signs, icon, index, and symbol, will be treated as three functions which signs have. This functional approach is justified, I think, because Peirce regarded any genuine sign as exemplifying all three classes of signs. Each genuine sign is at once an icon, an index, and a symbol.³

Insofar as a sign functions iconically, its meaning is found in some form of direct, or unmediated, relation of the sign to its object. The relation depends on some quality which is intrinsic to the sign and which is required for the sign to refer to the referent. There are three kinds of iconic function. First, a sign may refer to an object insofar as it is an image of its object, as a picture may resemble its referent. Second, a sign may be iconic insofar as it has a structure isomorphic with the structure of its object, as a diagram represents its referent. And, third, an iconic sign may refer to its object metaphorically, or by virtue of what Peirce calls a “parallelism” (2.277). The idea that a metaphor is iconic of its referent because of a parallelism, of course, is particularly important for what follows. Unfortunately, Peirce does not expand this idea, and its significance for my purposes will require some interpretive extrapolation, as will be apparent later.

A sign functions indexically insofar as it refers directly to something singular which may be an individual, a collection of individuals, or a continuum. As an index, a sign focuses and directs attention to its object. Attention is focused by a sign’s indexical function when it is not degenerate, because of something that is, or results from a
dynamic relationship, such as that of a bullet hole to a bullet — where the hole is an index of a bullet. A personal pronoun is an index (though here degenerate) of the person who is its object, and a demonstrative pronoun is an index of the thing which is its object.

A sign functions symbolically insofar as it is general or refers to something general. A symbol may be a type, such as a word-type, or, when it is embodied, it may be a replica or token that instances a word-type. A symbol may be a natural law or a formula for a natural law. However, what is important for the purposes of this paper is that whatever represents a complex of abstract qualities, which also are instanced by embodied qualities, is a symbol. For example, the word-type of the expression, “black stove,” is a symbol of blackness and angularity, both of which are embodied in the stove. Blackness and angularity are generals which are embodied qualities in the stove. And these qualities, as generals, are symbols in the way laws are symbols. These are also called “legisigns.” They might be called “universals,” except that this term carries associations Peirce wanted to qualify if not avoid, since he thought that, unlike what is usually thought about universals, generals can grow.

It is important to observe that a sign functions symbolically insofar as it is understood as a rule that determines interpretation. And this function depends on specification in a referent which is identifiable and interpreted through its qualities. A quotation will bring out this dependence, as well as another way signs function that is important for our purposes, namely, the way signs function so as to refer to “Immediate Objects.”

A symbol is a law, or regularity of the indefinite future. Its Interpretant must be of the same description; and so must be also the complete Immediate Object, or meaning. But a law necessarily governs, or “is embodied in” individuals, and prescribes some of their qualities. Consequently, a constituent of a Symbol may be an Index, and a constituent may be an Icon. (2.293)
This quotation contains two points that are especially relevant to metaphorical reference. The first point is that in spite of the generality of symbols, and thus the generality of their meanings, they are made determinate through embodiment in individuals. The second point is that what is called “the complete Immediate Object,” which Peirce here calls alternatively “the meaning,” is general. As such, the Immediate Object is a law or regularity of the indefinite future. The term “Immediate Object” will be considered further in connection with the other quasi-technical terms not yet discussed. 

Indexicality and Interpretation

In order to explore the way Peirce’s view is suggestive of the special kind of reference characteristic of creative metaphor, it is necessary to focus on the indexical relation between signs and their objects. Consideration of this relation will be the occasion for introducing the other terms in Peirce’s vocabulary that are important for developing the idea of metaphorically created referents.

An example, initially one that is not a metaphor, will serve as a point of departure. What is the indexical function of the proposition, “This red rose is large”? As indexical, this proposition focuses attention. It focuses attention, first, on the subject, “This red rose.” Further, this subject calls attention to an individual, which is the referent of the proposition. The individual, however, is a referent in two ways. First, the individual is what Peirce sometimes calls an “immediate [or Immediate] Object,” which, as suggested above, is an embodied complex of abstractions — in this case, the abstract quality redness and the complex of abstract qualities or respects by virtue of which it is interpreted as being a rose. In addition, the predication of “large” to the subject refers to the embodiment of the abstract quality largeness. The expression as a whole, then, is indexical of an Immediate Object interpreted as an embodied complex of redness, largeness, and what it is to be a rose, which here serve as its meaning. Furthermore, the referent as an Immediate Object is a system of connected abstractions that might be further attended to if one continued to interpret what the referent is. This can be seen
in light of Peirce's conception of semiotic situations, all of which necessarily include interpretants which in turn are interpreted. As a sign, the proposition stands for or is of the Immediate Object, but for an interpreter. Thus the thing referred to is an object that is cognitive or known in one or more respects. And the referent is a cognitive object that consists in a certain complex of embodied respects, which Peirce also calls "grounds." These are focused and given individualized locus in the large red rose. Insofar as the respects in which the expression is a sign are embodied or determinate in the red rose, they are the qualities by which it is known.

Now, insofar as the referent is an interpreted object, it is an Immediate Object that contributes to an Interpretant. And its persistence as an Immediate Object is dependent upon the continuing process of interpretation. Future interpretations may constitute the referent as something richer, such as, in the example of the large red rose, a member of some unusual class which is of interest to a horticulturist. The Immediate Object with which we started is left behind, so to speak. It is caught up in a growing interpretive web. However, it does not follow that the developed and developing objects of interpretation become increasingly subjective or dependent upon finite interpreters. Nor do the interpreted objects fall prey to a linguistic conventionalism. They are not exhausted by perspectives or interpreted respects or qualities. Peirce's idea of interpretive processes does not commit him to construing referents as purely linguistic or symbolic, arbitrary conventions. And they are not arbitrary for two reasons. First, at each stage of re-interpretation, or new interpretation, what is interpreted is an Immediate Object that is constituted within the interpretive structure of a sign relation. In each sign relation, the sign represents an object to an interpretant. This relation gives semiotic structure to each stage of interpretation. Consequently, no instance of interpretation is wholly self-contained and decisive for establishing a set of meanings arbitrarily. There is, then, an objectivity of growing interpretations converging on a larger, coherent community of interpretations.

Furthermore, it must be noticed that a referent or an Object is,
at any given stage, an embodiment. Thus, a referent or Object is not a purely abstract general, or set of universals. It is the Object as represented, but as represented in an instance, or as an embodiment. And as an embodiment, it is a referent in a second way, as something dynamically related to the interpreter. Thus it forces itself on attention. It is something reacted to, which resists or constrains interpretation, and which insists or persists in focusing attention for at least some minimal time. The referent, then, is what Peirce calls a "Dynamical Object" as well as an Immediate Object. The referent is resistant insofar as it functions as a Dynamical Object. As pointed out already, as an Immediate Object, or as a complex of qualities, it is an object of interpretation. And because it is also a Dynamical Object, as well as a constituent in a sign situation, the referent is resistant to arbitrary and purely conventional interpretation. The referent as a Dynamical Object provides constraints on the respects in which an object is interpreted (in addition to the contraints of the system in which it functions).

The dynamical side of indexicality may be understood in terms of Peirce's category of secondness. The way the referent is a Dynamical Object is the way secondness functions in a sign. Secondness is the resistance and constraint encountered as interpretation proceeds in constituting the Immediate Object. The Dynamical Object, in one respect, functions like a thing-in-itself; that is, in itself, it is neither constituted nor discovered by interpretation. It is that which conditions interpretation from the other side, so to speak, of the object as immediate. This is why the Immediate Object can be a locus for focusing, or a condition for the relevance, of meanings as interpretation proceeds. As an Immediate Object, the referent gives a focus of relevance for the respects in which the sign refers to the referent. But it does this because the referent as Dynamical Object, is a focus of resistances that constrain the respects that are relevant to the Immediate Object. The referent is thus individualized insofar as it is a focusing condition.

However, it is important to see that the Dynamical Object should not be equated with a Kantian thing-in-itself. It is true that Peirce
suggests that for non-fictional objects, the Dynamical Object may be thought of as "The Real." And he also suggests that the Dynamical Object can only be indicated — never described or articulated as can the Immediate Object. Yet there are differences between things-in-themselves and Dynamical Objects. Let me suggest two of these differences. First, while the Dynamical Object is not something that is itself revealed as a cognitive object, or as something given complete interpretive determination, it is something that would be so determined in an infinite long-run, or if interpretation could reach an ideal limit in the infinite future. Second, the Dynamical Object is not a Kantian thing-in-itself because it bears a special relation to the Immediate Object of interpretation at each moment in the semiotic process. This special relation is found in the way, or respect, the ground, in which resistance constrains interpretation. Thus the Dynamical Object is genuinely dynamic in reacting in certain ways as interpretations constitute the Immediate Object. So far as I know, this suggestion that there are ways or respects in which resistance occurs is nowhere explicit in Peirce's writing. But I think it is at least not inconsistent with what Peirce says.

That there are ways of resistance seems obvious if we consider what it is to react to distinct occurrences. For instance, the presence of a perceived object when we open and close our eyes reveals something that resists by persisting; the object resists disappearing each time our eyes are open. But in the case of trying to lift a heavy object, there is a different reaction and opposition to our will from the counter-pressure of the object. And in the case of the compelled reaction of being surprised by a clap of thunder, there is still another kind of felt resistance. Of course, we know such differences in terms of the generals, the repeatable identities, or the meanings, that constitute judgments about the experiences. Nevertheless, the generals are different from one another, and their differences are manifestations of different ways of resisting. If there were not differences in the ways of resistance, interpretation would be nothing more than discriminations and consequent identification of distinct generals or meanings derived exclusively from the function of the immediate interpreter.
The proposal that resistances are qualifiable in terms of respects has been introduced to indicate why Dynamical Objects, which are centers of resistance, should not be equated with things-in-themselves or uncognizable, unintelligible, ultimate conditions. But the proposal also has another purpose. It indicates one of the ways interpretation is constrained as it grows and is embodied in Immediate Objects. The secondness attributable to every referent, as secondness, or sheer otherness, is not itself intelligible. It is immediate and brute. Yet in being encountered in referents that are interpretable objects, secondness appears as modes of restraint. In this respect, that which opposes arbitrary interpretation is not wholly unintelligible. Or, put another way, referents, even as Dynamical Objects, are interpretable in certain respects. They resist in certain respects, and these respects are interpretable. They are evolving conditions that serve the embodied qualities which are constituents of Immediate Objects.

The respects that are relevant to Dynamical Objects as well as Immediate Objects can be regarded as positive or negative — positive and negative grounds. They are positive when constitutive of the Immediate Object. They are negative when they function from the side of the Dynamical Objects and play constraining or limiting roles in the growth of future Immediate Objects. In order to make this point, it may be helpful to introduce the idea of vectors. Accordingly, we may regard respects as vectors. I use the term “vector” in a loose mathematical sense simply to indicate that resistances are directional and variably weighted. They are vectors in serving as conditions that constrain in roughly specific ways that show some possibilities to be irrelevant and some to be relevant. Thus restraints give force and direction to the constitutions of Immediate Objects. As a vector, each constraint or respect, each ground, that helps determine the referent has a kind of “weighting” in its importance in the interpreted object. Some vectors are of greater relevance than others, depending on the way the interpreted referent functions. In the large red rose, for instance, the constraints against embodying qualities that would constitute it as a tulip rather than as a rose are
more relevant for certain kinds of classification than are the constraints that affect the inclusion of redness and largeness. But the point about the different weightings of grounds is not as important at the moment as the other point that there are modes of resistance and grounds which are directional. They are directional as are antennas that resist signals from specific directions. Thus they are vectors that can control the Immediate Object in determinate respects. At the same time, they are directional in leading from determination by dynamical conditions to the growing determination that makes the interpretive process intelligible.

For convenience, then, let me call the respects, grounds, of embodied qualities that constitute the Immediate Object, "positive vectors." These are positive because they function for the sake of the constitution of the interpretation which is relevant to the Immediate Object. They are the possibilities that have been selected and accepted as relevant. In this respect, positive vectors indirectly play a role in the telos which the referent has in relation to future interpretations.

The ways resistance is encountered in referents may also be thought of as "negative vectors." As already suggested, the word "negative" is used to indicate that resistance is a condition of opposition to possible respects or embodiments that might have been introduced into the Immediate Object. A negative vector functions from the side of the Dynamical Object rather than the Immediate. It is a partially determinate opposition to arbitrary interpretation. But since it is a vector — since the Dynamical Object resists in certain respects — positive directionality is served. Interpreting the large red rose as square encounters a negative vector. The negative vector in this case contributes to preventing the identification of the rose as square. It is a condition blocking the interpretation of the rose as something that embodies squareness. It serves as one among other conditions for eliminating what is not relevant. Similarly, interpreting the rose as blue would encounter a negative vector. As a negative vector, the embodiment of blueness is resisted. And in so acting as a constraint, it eliminates one among a multiple of possible positive vectors, or
color qualities, which are exemplified in the Immediate Object. Negative, as well as positive vectors, then, help control selection.

Needless to say, interpretation in instances of this kind usually occurs too quickly for negative and positive vectors to be explicitly recognized as discrete, characterizable conditions. The judgment that this is a large red rose is, in Peirce's terms, a perceptual judgment, and a perceptual judgment cannot display all the complex interpretive inferences that are ingredients in it. We are not reflectively aware of all the interpretive thinking that goes on in a perceptual judgment. In any case, an object such as this large red rose is the referent of a sign that has the form of a proposition, or formal expression of a judgment. And the introduction of the idea of vectors is the basis of an account of referents understood as complexes of qualities which, as positive, are intelligible constituents, and which, as negative, are forces that limit the relevant intelligible constituents. This way of understanding the function of referents in interpretation leads us back to the original question about how a referent can be created and still be an objective condition for interpreting the expression that creates it. It is necessary at this point, then, to apply this account to the referents of creative metaphors.

Metaphorical Referents as Immediate and Dynamical Objects

Thus far, we have considered the way referents function regardless of whether they are denoted by metaphors. The discussion has been concerned with propositions, specifically, expressions of perceptual judgments, which are commonly thought of as literal rather than metaphorical. But the point of drawing on Peirce's ideas is to apply them specifically to metaphorical reference. Can what has been said about Immediate and Dynamical Objects help resolve the puzzle of metaphorically created referents? An affirmative answer depends on two considerations. The first concerns whether the account of Immediate and Dynamical Objects can be specified so as to be consistent with the peculiarities of the way metaphors articulate meanings. The second consideration concerns whether the proposed refer-
ents of metaphors function as both new and objective with respect to what is responsible for their being new.

Before extending this picture of reference to the metaphor, two preliminary comments are in order. The first comment concerns another attempt to develop a view of metaphor that is influenced by Peirce's distinction between symbol and icon. This view is offered by Paul Henle.⁹ He proposes the idea that metaphors contain iconic elements. However, he overlooks Peirce's distinction between the second and third kind of icons, between icons which are analogical and those which are metaphorical. In consequence Henle treats Peirce's view as if it construed metaphors as analogies. Apparently Henle's own conception of how metaphors can be shown to be intelligible was so strongly fixed that he missed the subtleties of Peirce's view. But, more important, Henle does not concern himself with the ways metaphorical icons refer to objects, which is the main concern of my own attempt to develop one of Peirce's insights.

The second preliminary comment concerns an objection that might be raised to my distinction between literal and metaphorical uses of language. It has been argued that all language is metaphorical and that the distinction between the literal and the metaphorical raises unnecessary problems.¹⁰ I am inclined to be sympathetic with this objection. However, I must point out that what is important about the distinction is not the label "literal" used to refer to kinds of expressions that are set off from metaphors. Rather, what is important is the difference between, on the one hand, linguistic expressions considered as meaningful on the basis of antecedent meanings and referents, and, on the other hand, expressions considered meaningful on the basis of conditions that make their meaningfulness unique, and, in part, irreducible to antecedent conditions. The distinction, then, need not commit us to an essential separation of literal from figurative or metaphorical language. All that needs to be insisted on is that there is a distinction between, on the one hand, contexts, in which linguistic expressions require determinations that are, for practical purposes, taken as literal, and, on the other hand, linguistic contexts in which the general metaphorical and creative character of language is taken
as central. It is the latter that exhibits uniqueness and newness of meaning in metaphor and art. Even if it is insisted that all language has metaphorical roots which persist in what only appears to be literal usage, some language is nevertheless used literally, or in what is ordinarily considered to be literal ways — that is, in ways in which the individuality and uniqueness of the interaction of nuances of meanings is ignored for the sake of precision and repeatability of meanings as they appear in different contexts. Thus, we can and do, for various purposes, treat certain ranges of linguistic expressions as paraphrasable or translatable. Such expressions may be called "literal" with respect to the functions of those expressions which permit paraphrase.

Assuming that some articulations of meaning do function in special, figurative (as distinct from literal) ways, we must return to the question of what qualifications are needed for the view of reference sketched above. The necessity of making such qualifications should be obvious if we recognize that metaphorical expressions are like all aesthetic creations in exhibiting meanings that must be initially immanent to the metaphorical or aesthetic symbol. Unlike expressions such as "This a is a large red rose," which is used descriptively and supposedly literally, creative metaphors cannot be intelligible exclusively in terms of antecedent meanings and in terms of references to antecedent objects. Their meanings are peculiarly related internally to the expression that presents them, since the intelligibility of the creative metaphor is unique. This they share with the function of meanings in works of art. And this is one reason why they may themselves be regarded as works of art in miniature, as well as ingredients in larger works of art.

Susanne Langer's conception of art as presentational symbol is a well known version of this point. And, as L. A. Reid puts it, aesthetic meaning is found only in the concrete work itself — in what is "meaning-embodied."11

If metaphors function as aesthetic articulations of meaning, or as miniature works of art, then it would seem that they can have no reference beyond themselves. Eduard Hanslick said of music that
if it refers, it must refer to itself. Accordingly, it seems that metaphors, insofar as they are aesthetic creations, must be self-referential. Indeed, it seems that if they are creations — even if we leave aside the attribution, “aesthetic” — they must refer to themselves, if they refer at all. Insofar as they are creations, it seems that there could be nothing independent of themselves to which they could significantly refer. Or, to put it another way, it seems that meaning and reference fuse with one another in the case of creative metaphors, and we are pushed back to an interpretation of metaphor something like the one which initiated the discussion — metaphors can create only perspectives — except that we now have perspectives which are on themselves rather than on a world consisting of either additional perspectives or of something independent of perspectives.

Seeing the issue this way suggests again a point made earlier which needs repeating. The issue of metaphorical reference has ramifications beyond a theory of metaphor itself. Earlier, it was said that the issue relates to interpretation theory. But the issue can be seen now in the light of the basic question of the relation of art to the world, or to life — that is, to the question of the truth of art.

The problem, then, is to see whether the conception of referents as Immediate Objects and Dynamical Objects suggests a way for metaphors to preserve both immanence of meaning, as rightly insisted on by a relatively long tradition in aesthetics, and relevance to the world. Yet, as was suggested above, when we consider Immediate and Dynamical Objects in terms of the question of the relevance of the metaphor to the world, we see that the same dilemma appears in another form. Thus, in the case of metaphor, at least when metaphor is aesthetic, the issue concerns whether there is a Dynamical Object controlling the Immediate Object.

In extricating ourselves from the dilemma, we should first observe that Peirce’s conception of the Dynamical Object is designed to provide constraints on scientific theory. The Dynamical Object is what prevents theory from being radically relative. The Dynamical Object is a condition for there being reference that would be reached in an infinite future. It seems plausible, then, to conclude that for Peirce,
metaphors in science have Dynamical Objects, even if these are only indirectly reached through a system of symbols. Are there also Dynamical Objects that constrain aesthetic metaphors in art?

Peirce explicitly affirms the conclusion that there are objects of some sort for aesthetic literary expressions. He says, "The Object of a Sign may be something to be created by the sign. . . . The Object of the sentence 'Hamlet was insane' is the Universe of Shakespeare's Creation so far as it is determined by Hamlet being a part of it" (8. 178). Yet, if the significance of artistic metaphors is immanent, and if the referents of creative metaphors are created — and the object here is indeed Shakespeare's creation — then we might conclude that the object Peirce affirms is only the Immediate Object. And if the Immediate Object is identical with the metaphorical expression itself (as sign type), then the autonomy of the aesthetic function and the immanence of aesthetic meaning are retained. I think the point that there must be aesthetic immanence of meanings in the Immediate Object is correct as far as it goes. But I think the denial that there is a Dynamical Object is unnecessary and dangerous for aesthetic interpretation. In the remaining remarks, I shall focus on this issue, considering the ways immanence of meaning can be maintained along with the claim that metaphorical reference includes what Peirce called the Dynamical Object.

Let me suggest that the conclusion that aesthetic expressions, or metaphors in art, have Dynamical Objects is consistent with Peirce's general position, and this can be seen if we consider the pervasiveness of his conception of indexicality. Though reference may be a minimal function of some signs, there is no full-fledged sign that completely lacks any one of the three functions of iconicity, indexicality, and symbolicality. Thus, even a sign that is identified as an icon — as metaphors are, for Peirce — has indexicality or reference, so long as it is intelligible, i.e., so long as the icon functions semiotically, as an interpretable thing. Furthermore, Peirce's characterization of metaphor as the third kind of icon, suggests, I think, that metaphors, have references that are not confined to themselves. A metaphor is an icon that, as noted earlier, represents "a parallelism in some-
thing else" (2.277). I shall return to the idea of a "parallelism" later. Suffice it to say at this point that since Peirce says that metaphors represent something in something else, the reference of a metaphor is to something other than the sign itself. And if Peirce attributes a kind of non-self-referential reference to metaphors in general, then this kind of reference must be characteristic of metaphors in aesthetic as well as scientific contexts.

Putting this point in terms of Peirce’s suggestions about the two-fold referent, it can be said that, insofar as a metaphor represents something other than itself, and insofar as it is indexical, its unique Immediate Object must be embodied. It must be a concrete complex of integrated meanings. And its concreteness is its dynamical side. It must be remembered that an Immediate Object is an interpreted object. But to be interpreted requires a focus or condition of relevance. This relevance is in part a function of the interacting connotations, the selection of which does not yield complete nonsense — otherwise the metaphor would not be meaningful at all, much less exhibit insight. But creative metaphors may also exhibit insight so that the condition of relevance cannot be confined to internal considerations. There is import, significance, or relevance to the world. And this requires the function of the Dynamical Object. Thus as Peirce says, the Dynamical Object is "really efficient" (8.343). Furthermore, the Dynamical Object resists being exhausted by the meanings that compose the metaphor’s Immediate Object. And such resistance and constraints on interpretation serve as the objective condition of the metaphor.

A metaphor, then, creates its referent insofar as the referent is its Immediate Object. And in this respect, it creates and refers self-referentially to its meanings. However, it can be said to be apt, faithful, adequate, inappropriate, or unfaithful, etc., to an extra-linguistic condition insofar as its referent is a Dynamical Object. The Dynamical Object is the objective side of the created referent, or of the referent as Immediate Object. Encounters with Dynamical Objects functioning and manifesting themselves as negative vectors alert the interpreter to the relevance which created and creative metaphors have
to the world. And, in serving future interpretation through negative vectors, the Dynamical Object has an indirect creative function. It cooperates creatively, through its constraints, with the Immediate Object. Further, as a constraining condition of interpretation, it is negatively vectorial — that is, it restrains in certain respects — consequently, it is a condition contributing to telic growth toward future interpretation, though this telos is not one that is predetermined. It is *sui generis*, or self-developmental — in accord, it may be pointed out, with Peirce's conception of developmental teleology ("The Law of Mind," 6.102-163).

It must be emphasized that the Dynamical Object is necessary as a condition of resistance to future arbitrary interpretations. It is the Dynamical Object which functions as an extra-conceptual condition that is independent of capricious interpretations, even if those caprices are shared with whole cultures. In interpretation, something other than the embodied meanings themselves is operative. Thus, in terms of the issue as it was formulated at the outset, it can be said now that something other than perspectives is made possible, even if the perspectives in question are those which form the schemata of whole civilizations. Change and growth of such perspectives or schemata does occur. And the Dynamical Objects of creative thought — a kind of thought which is often if not always expressed in metaphors — are the cooperative conditions of these changes.

**Problematic Consequences**

Two interdependent problems should be addressed before these suggestions about metaphorical reference are concluded. The first problem concerns whether the Dynamical Objects of metaphors in science relate to their metaphors in the way Dynamical Objects of metaphors in art relate to their metaphors. The second problem, clarification of which is inseparable from the first, concerns the possibility of testing artistic metaphors for their relevance to the world or to Dynamical Objects.

The above account of creative, metaphorical reference may be thought to break down when applied to science. How can science
create anything in the world? How can it create anything that is independent of the conceptual scheme or theory constructed by the scientist? The answer to this question already has been indicated by what was said about the objects of metaphors in general. Insofar as the referent of a scientific, creative metaphor is an Immediate Object, the referent is created. Thus a theory that is built on or made possible by a metaphor refers to an Immediate Object, which is the interpreted and interpretable object. This is the creation of the scientist or scientists who develop it. Scientists create the objects of their theories just insofar as those objects would not have been intelligible things functioning in the world unless the theory had been created. There would be no DNA as an intelligible structure unless a theory of it had been created. Yet the creation of the Immediate Object or theory does not entail that the theory is arbitrary. The theory is not merely a construct. A scientific metaphor is a creation that has its relevance to the world in terms of Dynamical as well as Immediate Objects. The Dynamical Object retains the development of theory, functioning as a condition for empirical tests. The concept of DNA, for instance, is not pure fiction. It is a created interpretation, a theory, that is constrained by what is in the world, the Dynamical Object, conditioning the interpretation. Yet the Dynamical Object constraining theory is not itself a static, immutable condition. It contributes to what constitutes an evolving universe. The DNA referent came into being at some time and changed functionally as life evolved. Or, to consider another example, the development of the theory of gravitation — and I assume that this theory in its inception, at least, involved metaphor — was creative of its referent as an Immediate Object. This Immediate Object was the theoretically articulated complex of meanings that state the law. On the other hand, the law is embodied, and the same referent as dynamical was and is a component of evolving reality, the relevant component of which, in this case, is now known as gravitation itself, which in certain ways not then intelligible affected persons and things before Newton through constraints and resistances to perception and understanding.
It should be obvious that this account implies an evolutionary ontology. But this is consistent with Peirce’s cosmology, which affirmed the growth of reality in all its dimensions — physical as well as mental, both poles lying on a continuum. However, even if this ontology were not accepted, the account of metaphor could be retained. If one insisted on a view in which the Dynamical Object were construed as a condition that could not evolve, it would still function as a control on scientific metaphors which would then be at least epistemologically creative in creating referents as Immediate Objects, though ontological creativity would be denied.

The second question, mentioned above concerns whether there are tests for the “truth-value” or the relevance to the world of metaphors and their Immediate Objects in art as well as in science. It will be helpful to formulate this point along the lines of Mary Hesse’s discussion of “the cognitive claims of metaphor.” Hesse accounts for the relevance (or what she calls the “truth-value”) of metaphors in natural science by appealing, finally, to tests of prediction and success in communication. There may be “truth-consensus with regard to metaphor within the scientific community” because of coherence and an “external grounding in natural reality.” And this grounding is tested by prediction. Thus, when Hesse’s view is transferred to the present context of the created referent proposal, the issue concerns whether such tests are identifiable for aesthetic or artistic referents that are created. However, Hesse thinks there is a special problem for metaphors that function outside science. She sees that the possibility of tests is problematic only when we turn to extra-scientific metaphors — poetic, religious, and ideological — where, she thinks, there is no “test in the natural world.” In addressing this question, it is important to emphasize that the account I have given of artistic metaphorical reference takes referents, in their dynamical sides, to be independent conditions. These referents are of, or in, the world. Thus, the question here concerns what tests, if any, show the fit of artistic metaphors to such objects in the world.

One way of responding might be attempted by interpretive critics who are willing to accept certain types of Immediate Objects as de-
cisive. I have in mind not those who are primarily concerned with evaluating works with respect to formal success, but rather those who are concerned primarily with determining specific messages about the world or particular "truths" known independently of the works of art which are supposed to be offered us by those works. When a critic raises such questions about the relevance of the work of art to the world to which it may lead us, the referents of criticism are antecedently understood Immediate Objects. Thus, a critic might approach works of art by looking for historical data concerning influences on the creator, or by speculating about consequences of works of art for society and the future community of interpreters. But this is to look for referents that are pre-interpreted Immediate Objects of the past and the future. Similarly, attempts to paraphrase metaphors, and to explain fully the meanings of works of art, are attempts to find other Immediate Objects to substitute for the works being analyzed. Of course, there are tests available for this kind of criticism — descriptive tests for the correlation of what is discriminated in the work with what is said to be the referents (antecedent) in the world.

However, our issue concerns Immediate Objects that are created and which cannot be matched with previously interpreted Immediate Objects. Are there tests for the fit of these to the world? One ready answer is that since the Immediate Objects are creations, they are original, and they consequently originate their own standards. It is they that serve as models which test future reinterpretations of established Immediate Objects. Such tests, then, may account for the fit of a creative metaphor to the world in the future. But what tests are there, if any, of the fit of creative metaphors to the world in which they are invented and to which they are asssented to as apt or fitting? If there is an answer, it must depend upon finding tests that do for scientific Dynamical Objects, which function as conditions for predictability tests and convergences of theories. Specifically, the issue turns on whether there are tests relevant to the negative vectors functioning in the Dynamical Objects that constrain the consequences and future community of aesthetic interpreters.
The immediate answer to this question must be negative. First, with respect to the test of convergence, art cannot be assessed in such terms. There is no final convergence to be expected for a community of aesthetic interpreters. I want to pursue this negative response by indicating how it is suggested by Peirce's statement that a metaphor represents a parallelism. What Peirce says about metaphors and parallelisms must be looked at more closely. Peirce's statement that a metaphorical icon represents a parallelism needs to be quoted in full and in its context. In this quotation, Peirce uses the term "hypoicon" as a substitute for what he calls the "substantive" for the representamen.

Hypoicons may be roughly divided according to the mode of Firstness of which they partake. Those which partake of simple qualities, or First Firstnesses, are images; those which represent the relations, mainly dyadic, or so regarded, of the parts of one thing by analogous relations in their own parts, are diagrams; those which represent the representative character of a representamen by representing a parallelism in something else, are metaphors (2.277).

Presumably, diagrams belong to the mode of Second Firstness and metaphors to Third Firstness. As a Third Firstness, the interpretive component of icons comes to the fore. Thus the representative character of the iconic sign is explicitly mentioned, emphasizing that a metaphor must have a representing function and that it has a greater dependence on a future series of interpretations than does an image, which simply stands on its own by virtue of possessing a quality. However, what is important here is that Peirce had an insight that was not given emphasis, if it was recognized at all, until recently by theorists of metaphor, namely, that metaphors are not analogies. As indicated earlier, Henle apparently thought that for Peirce metaphors depend upon analogies. This interpretation might be accounted for by Peirce's reference to a parallelism. Yet it is clear that analogical relations are attributed to the second kind of icon. Consequently,
Peirce must mean something else by the "parallelism" that is attributed to metaphors. Metaphors are not (as are diagrams) comparisons or expressions that purport to match antecedent relations in the world. Nevertheless, a metaphor is a representation of something — "something else" which includes the structure of a parallelism. Peirce's use of the term "parallelism," then, is significant. It suggests, I think, that the terms of a metaphor are incongruous in relation to one another and must sustain a tension. Thus terms such as "Man," "dream" and "shadow," brought together in "Man is the dream of a shadow" inevitably manifest a certain tension as long as the prior complexes of antecedent meanings for each term are attended to. This metaphor exhibits, as an expression that is an Immediate Object, a parallelism. And the something else represented is a Dynamical Object, which here functions as a dyadic condition of the representing parallelism of the metaphor. Thus, as parallel, the representing and represented relation can never collapse or permit its terms to converge. The contrast or otherness of one term in relation to the other(s) is sustained as long as what represents it is a metaphor and as long as it conditions the tension of the metaphor. And as long as an icon is a metaphor, it cannot merge with its Dynamical Object, even in an infinite long run. Just as cosmic evolution inevitably includes increments of spontaneity, so metaphors provide the semiotic counterparts to these spontaneities in the evolution of semiose.

A parallelism then, differs from a condition of convergence (such as may be appealed to in science). Metaphors themselves, taken either independently or in art, represent a peculiar kind of referent which resists the convergence of its qualities as exhibited in a unity. The referent must remain dynamic. In contrast, scientific theory, as has been pointed out, converges — that is one of its tests. Convergence is what coherence exhibits as it increases with the evolution of scientific theory. And, in science, evolving convergence brings Immediate Objects closer to Dynamical Objects and to interpretations in which new metaphors become less dominant, being replaced by frozen metaphors or "literal" expressions. But the aesthetic Dynamical Objects of the arts — with respect to their negative vectors — remain
inevitably resistant to — though they are not irrelevant to — the manifestations of their Immediate Objects. Because of the aesthetic Dynamical Object, we cannot count on the test of final convergence of aesthetic interpretations in a Final Interpretant.

This idea of the kind of referent represented by a metaphor can be complemented by another suggestion which Peirce offers in one of his comments about his conception of would-be’s or generals. And this suggestion also throws light on the problem of finding tests for assessing the relevance of metaphorical reference. In explaining what he means by would-be’s, Peirce says that the idea of an agreement that would be actualized, if inquiry were sustained long enough, is a kind of hope “for will be” (8.133). This introduction of hope, I think, reveals something about his conception of the infinite long run in which scientific theories would converge. The introduction of hope suggests that would-be’s are something more than regulative ideals or ideal limiting concepts. If these were only simply limiting concepts, Peirce’s view would be another form of Kantianism rather than a pragmatistic realism, and, in turn, the synechism, which he thought could serve as the foundation of an architectonic. But if a would-be expresses a hope, then it cannot be understood simply as something that is unrealizable in fact. Instead, the convergence that would be is a concrete end. It is what Peirce called “concrete reasonableness.” Applied to the test of metaphorical reference, it follows that the creator of a metaphor, at least in science, envisages constraining conditions that consist of more than an ideal claim of what ought to be agreed to by future audiences. There is an empirical claim as well as a regulative command. On the other hand, what I have suggested above implies that there can be no such would-be functioning in artistic metaphors. Metaphors in art are not relevant to an end that can be envisaged as a determinate culmination of teleological necessity. It must be remembered that Peirce’s teleology is developmental. Each telos is sui generis. Thus a developmental evolutionary process does not have its source in a principle of eros, which aims at a determinate goal that lures the agents of the process. Instead, the principle is driven by what Peirce calls “evolutionary love”
or "agape." Thus, what constrains the aesthetic creator and functions as an extra-linguistic condition, is not a realizable, future, determinate object. The creator in art must be permissive and accepting of such a condition, letting it, the Dynamical Object, develop and resist the creator's control over the Immediate Object, and without hope for terminating the evolution of art in an indefinite future.

If we cannot expect convergence as a test of metaphors in art, can we expect predictability or something like it — e.g., some kind of correctness, or appropriateness in showing the import of the metaphor, or a kind of fulfillment of anticipated experiences seemingly indicated by the import of the metaphor? Again, the answer must be "no" insofar as what would satisfy such tests must be defined in terms of Immediate Objects already integral to the objects of familiar signs. If such tests were relevant, then we would need to accept the view that paraphrases are adequate translations of metaphors and that metaphors are expressions of literal propositions, in which case the novelty that is necessary where there is creation would be denied. If there are tests, they must be satisfied by constraints other than those of the consistency and coherence within a system expected of Immediate Objects. I think Peirce's conception of the Dynamical Object does play a role here, as has been suggested above in the point that the construction of metaphors and their interpretation is not arbitrary. A Dynamical Object provides constraint on semiosis. Thus, when a creative metaphor seems apt, that to which it seems apt, its referent, is its referent as Dynamical Object. And the felt constraint of this object is the only test we can expect of art. Metaphors are creative of their referents by virtue of their Immediate Objects and apt, adequate, relevant to the world, by virtue of their Dynamical Objects. And being apt is tested by the constraints of Dynamical Object. Of course, the proposal that such tests are all we can expect is open to the charge of relativism — each metaphor creator and each interpreter may encounter constraints not recognized by others. However, at this point the test of convergence, or a community of agreement, in a limited form, can be called back.

Although the test of final convergence cannot be expected in art,
the difference between art and science in this respect is not as great as it might seem. Scientific tests are not decisive apart from communities of scientists. Selection of expected or predicted evidence is a function of selected hypotheses and a system of accepted theory. Assent to the tests depends on the discrimination of trained observation and, of course, the anticipation of converging agreement that takes place under the control of the Dynamical Object of science. Similarly, the tests of interpretations of art may, at any given time, be decisive if communities of informed (trained) observers, especially critics, agree. Agreement is much looser in aesthetic interpretation. In fact, it can even include quite varied, competing interpretations, which are different specifications of a more general, common interpretation. The differences are to be expected if the independent control of the Dynamical Object sustains the parallelisms represented by metaphors or aesthetic experiences. While critics and audiences look, listen, read, and imagine, as participants in communities of appreciators, the controls of their referents should not be expected to lead to perfect precision of agreement. We cannot expect agreements that are determinate enough to unite, at any assignable time, communities as large as the groups of scientists working as inquirers in our Western European tradition. Yet this imprecision of outcome is not the same as anarchy of taste. And agreement within specific contexts, if not in an infinite long run, is still a partial standard, joined with the resistances intruding within each interpreter's experience. Like science, interpretation of art undergoes evolutionary growth. Although this growth does not aim at a final end. it is a growth in which new referents are created and incorporated into families of the created referents.

Conclusion

The purpose of the discussion of metaphors and Peirce's conception of their Objects has been twofold: (1) to suggest a way in which Peirce's brief remarks about metaphor reach far beyond his time and offer insights that had escaped theorists of metaphor during his own time; (2) to apply Peirce's view of reference for signs in general to an
understanding of metaphor. This application required a certain amount of extrapolation, but I do not think I have distorted Peirce's general, mature philosophical view. In any case, it has always seemed to me that the most respect is shown Peirce when his ideas are taken as seminal ideas that are fruitful for enhancing our understanding of philosophical issues.

In particular, I have tried to characterize some of Peirce's ideas about reference and to apply these ideas to one of the problems invoked by questions concerning the ontological import of an interactionist theory of metaphor. Signs refer in one or more respects to twofold referents: to objects which are both immediate and dynamical. Immediate Objects are objects as represented for interpreters so that they are the referent as an integration of meaning. Referents are also embodiments of meanings and, as such, are Dynamical Objects which sustain a resistance to, and impose constraints on, the respects or meanings that are embodied. Dynamical Objects serve as negative conditions (like vectors) that limit arbitrariness of interpretation. Referents of creative metaphors are also twofold. But in the case of what is unique and which has no prefigured Immediate Objects to which the expression could refer, Immediate Objects that are metaphorical meanings must be integral to the metaphorical expression itself. Such an Immediate Object cannot be independent of its sign. Yet the referent as a Dynamical Object transcends the internal relation of metaphor and Immediate Object. The Immediate Object, then, is what is created and the Dynamical Object is the control on the part of the world that makes metaphors either apt or inept in their relevance to the world.

Dynamical Objects also serve as conditions of the parallelism Peirce attributed to the representational import of metaphors. Metaphors do not represent by analogy, but by a unique relation of parallelism according to which the terms of the relation must inevitably remain apart, in a tension that is conditioned by the Dynamical side of the metaphorical referent. These relationships of metaphors to referents are present in both science and art. In science they function in theory contexts that develop toward a convergence in the infinite long run.
In art, there are no such contexts. Each metaphor and its referent is unique and the relation of parallelism is the efficient condition of novel intrusions in inquiry and in the world which inquiry is about. Creative metaphors are the cutting edges of knowledge and they are manifest most purely in art. It is art, or the aesthetic, that functions in semiosis so as to reflect the spontaneities affirmed in Peirce’s theory of cosmic evolution.

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NOTES

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The problem to be discussed in what follows was first considered in my “Metaphors, Referents, and Individuality,” The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, XII, Winter 1972, 187-197. However, I did not develop the way Peirce’s view of Immediate and Dynamical Objects as referents is particularly useful in attacking the issue.


3. In classifying signs, Peirce defined “icon,” “index,” and “symbol” by concentrating on the way they relate to their referents can be found in, e.g., Collected Papers, Harvard University Press, 1939-1958, Vol. VIII, paragraph 335. All references to the Collected Papers, in the text, as well as in the notes, will follow the standard form, e.g., (B.335) for volume VIII, paragraph 335. The functional way of treating signs is also indicated in Peirce’s discussion of how an object may be present to the mind, i.e., in terms of the three kinds of signs (C.P. 8.346). But, in particular, Peirce’s insistence that “. . . it would be difficult if not impossible, to instance an absolutely pure index, or to find any
sign absolutely devoid of indexical quality” (2.306) suggests that the same experiential item can have three ways of being a sign, or three ways of functioning semiotically.

4. E.g., C.P. 8.334. A sign which is the nature of a “general type,” is called a “legisign.”

5. In other places, as will be seen later, Peirce uses lower case as well as capital letters for the first letters of both words in the term, “Immediate Object.”

6. The term “ground,” used for an embodied abstract quality that mediates a sign and its referent was introduced early, in Peirce’s “On a New List of Categories,” (1.545-560). In (2.228), “ground” means the respect or idea in reference to which a sign stands for its object.

7. In a letter to William James, Peirce says: “We must distinguish between the Immediate Object, — i.e., the Object as represented in the sign, — and the Real (no, because perhaps the Object is altogether fictive, I must choose a different term, therefore), say rather the Dynamical Object, which, from the nature of things, the Sign cannot express, which it can only indicate and leave the interpreter to find out by collateral experience.” Also, in a letter to Lady Welby, Peirce says, “As to the Object, that may mean the Object as cognized in the Sign and therefore an Idea, or it may be the Object as it is regardless of any particular aspect of it, the Object in such relations as unlimited and final study would show it to be. The former I call the Immediate Object, the latter the Dynamical Object. For the latter is the Object that Dynamical Science (or what at this day would be ‘Objective’ science), can investigate. Take, for example, the sentence, ‘the sun is blue.’ Its Objects are ‘the sun’ and ‘blueness.’ If by ‘blueness’ be meant the Immediate Object, which is the quality of the sensation, it can only be known by Feeling. . . . So the ‘Sun’ may mean the occasion of sundry sensations, and so is Immediate Object, or it may mean our usual interpretation of such sensations in terms of place, of mass, etc., when it is the Dynamical Object” (8.183). The function of the Dynamical Object will be considered later. The point here is to see that there is an Immediate Object which functions to provide representation and thus meaning. Thus, at the same time, it is necessarily connected with the Interpretant, in particular, first, as an Immediate Interpretant, which is what is expressed by the sign in the context in which it functions (8.314).

8. See note 7.


10. Mary Hesse is one of the most recent theorists who holds the view that all language is at bottom metaphorical.


13. Douglas Greenlee suggests that a fictive Dynamical Object is a previous internal thought, *Peirce's Concept of Sign* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973), pp. 65-66. However, I think this interpretation not only overly restricts the Dynamical Object but also implies its assimilation to past Immediate Objects. For Peirce, the Dynamical Object is not only efficient in relation to the Immediate Object, but it is also telic. In any case, when we deal with creative-created signs which are relevant to the world, we are not dealing with fictive objects.

14. Owen Barfield has offered a relatively lengthy account of the way the idea of gravitation evolved from various senses of “grave” and was adopted by Newton in what looks like a metaphorical construal of the term “grave” for the purpose of science. *Speaker's Meaning* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), pp. 40 ff.


17. The role of agape as distinct from eros as an operative principle in Peirce's view of cosmic evolution was considered in my “Eros and Agape in Creative Evolution: A Peircean Insight,” *Process Studies* V.4, No 1 (Spring, 1974), 11-25.