

The Status of Truth in Science-Fictional and Scriptural Texts: Captain Kirk™ Meets Captain Moroni.

Life, the Universe, and Everything
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*...Tho' the heavens depart and the earth's fountains burst,
Truth, the sum of existence will weather the worst, Eternal, unchanged, evermore.*

--John Jacques (Hymn #272)

Supposition Error: a novel uses several familiar science fiction devices (time-travel, spaceflight, alien encounters, etc.) to illustrate for lay persons and students the dynamics of the philosophy of meaning formulated by C.S. Peirce (1839-1914). In this paper I shall use Peirce's framework in an academic context, to compare and contrast my treatment of *The Book of Mormon* in the novel *Supposition Error* with two other works that employ science-fictional devices to illustrate *Book of Mormon* events: Orson Scott Card's *The Memory of Earth* and Chris Heimerdinger's *Tennis Shoes Among the Nephites*.

In brief, Peirce's three basic categories of meaning are each neatly illustrated by one of these three fictional treatments of *The Book of Mormon* :

FIRST: Fourteen year-old Nafai, the main character in *The Memory of Earth* , is a transparent refiguration of the original Nephi from *The Book of Mormon*. The history told in 1st Nephi 1-4 is transposed to an imaginary world 100 light-years from Earth and 30 million years in the future. In this indisputably fictional setting, Card fleshes out a 330-page novel upon the skeletal account of this youngest son (Nephi =>Nafai), his visionary father (Lehi=>Volemak), his contentious elder brothers (Laman, Lemuel, and Sam => Elemak, Mebbekew, and Issib) and their quest for the brass plates of Laban (=> the Index of Gaballufix).

SECOND: Thirteen-year-old Jim Hawkins, the main character in *Tennis Shoes*, is transported back in time and encounters the people and events described in Alma 47-51 as indisputable fact, the conflict instigated by Amalickiah between the Nephites and Lamanites.

THIRD: Thirty-three-year-old Paul Bolton, cynical postmodernist, rarely sober literature professor and main character in *Supposition Error* , encounters *The Book of Mormon* itself and all of its stories together, confronting the text as an exemplary problem in distinguishing fiction AND fact from the kind of truth that probably matters most: the propositions upon which a happy and successful life might be built.

Peirce's three basic categories

The all-but-forgotten founder of semiotics, C.S. Peirce suggested at least THREE distinct senses in which any meaningful form might be classified as "true." Since Bertrand Russell, the vogue among modernist philosophers and logicians has been the claim that ONLY a referential proposition (e.g. Elizabeth II is the current monarch in England) can be considered "true" or even "meaningful." Since the later Wittgenstein (and Jacques Derrida) the voguish counterclaim among postmodernists has been that NOT EVEN referential propositions are genuinely true, that in fact the concepts of truth and fixed meaning are themselves without secure foundation.

In the beginning however, Peirce maintained that a true and meaningful form or "sign" could be anything from a gesture (a raised eyebrow or a pointing finger), to a work of art (a poem, painting or a piece of statuary) to forms of language (a predicate, a proposition, a paragraph) to extended texts (a book or a library). Any of these might be true that is, so long as distinct senses of "true" are allowed:

1. A **potential** (iconic) sense of "true," i.e. an expression that effectively creates a metaphoric model of an idea, making it possible to develop the idea more fully. Successful works of art like Rodin's "The Thinker" and creative new words like Richard Dawkin's artful coinage of the word *meme* are "true" in this sense (192). A meme is a bit of cultural information that spreads from person to person in the likeness of a viral gene, just as this term has itself spread into general use among social psychologists--amateurs and professionals alike. Whether or not there are actual "memes" or "mind viruses" in the world, the term and metaphor have potential as tools for talking and thinking about how ideas spread, just as *The Thinker* has become an icon of thought itself.
2. A **factual** (indexical) sense of "true," i.e. a propositional statement that successfully describes people, objects and actions as they are determined to exist or to have existed in the physical world of hard facts and concrete action. For example, the statement "It is snowing" is true only if it really is snowing at the reference-time of the utterance.
3. A **general** (symbolic) sense of "true", i.e. a statement expressing a general law that can be used to predict the future and thereby lead a person to regulate their actions and reshape physical facts to future advantage. For example, the Master's generalization that "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword..." (Matthew 26: 52) is often false in the referential sense (#2 above): Many career soldiers do in fact die of old age in their beds. However, the dictum is true in the deep and

general sense that it was probably intended (to regulate Peter's future behavior, to keep him from cutting off any more Roman soldiers' ears, so to speak), the broader lesson that any attempt to impose the Gospel (or any other social agenda) by force will inevitably lead to bloody battles which will finally destroy that agenda.

In Peirce's terms then, an ordinary newspaper account is normally only true in the 2nd sense above (if that), while good fiction may be true in the 1st and 3rd senses, and the Scriptures are (for believers) true in the first, second, and third senses above.

...The first is thought in its capacity as mere possibility; that is, mere mind capable of thinking, or a mere vague idea. The second is thought playing the role of a Secondness, or event. That is, it is of the general nature of experience or information. The third is thought in its role as governing Secondness. It brings the information into the mind, or determines the idea and gives it body. It is informing thought, or cognition. (*Collected Papers*, volume 1, paragraph 537= 1.537)

Using this three-part conception of meaning, Peirce offered a rescue of referential truth from postmodern criticism, long before anyone realized it needed rescue (Sheriff, 1989). In sum, Peirce explained how true statements about the world evolve from random mutation of vague ideas.

In the evolution of science, guessing plays the same part that variations in reproduction take in the evolution of biological forms, according to the Darwinian theory. For just as, according to that theory, the whole tremendous gulf, or ocean rather, between the moner and man has been spanned by a succession of infinitesimal fortuitous variations at birth, so the whole noble organism of science has been built up out of propositions which were originally simple guesses. (*Collected Papers*, 7.38).

Most of this guesswork, most but not all these potential 'truths' get eliminated by conflict with actual experience. A word, sentence, or discourse, along with their interpretations, are "true" to the extent that they survive competition with other words, other interpretations. Language comes to truly refer to the world in much the same way that the genes of trees reflect their environment (growing tall trunks to push leaves above competition into sunlight) or butterfly genes reflect their environment (producing wing color to match tree color to evade sharp-eyed birds).

And so, Peirce's rescue of the idea of Language referring truly to the World depends essentially on the validity of these three categories: creative, potential truth (like genetic mutation), factually true reference established by triumphant conflict with the physical environment (i.e. developed by natural selection), and finally, the idea of general truth that has a reciprocal effect on the physical environment: With words we represent our environment. We reshape our world, just as the genes of tall trees ultimately give rise to the genes of long-trunked elephants. As one more way of validating Peirce's three categories of truth, I will now show how they illuminate the difference between distinct fictional treatments of *The Book of Mormon* cited earlier.

Icon: *The Book of Mormon* as Potential Truth

Hugh Nibley has remarked upon the power of the First Book of Nephi as story. Though it seems paradoxical, Nibley invokes its strong story qualities as further support for its status as factual history:

It was while reading the *Beni Hilal* epic that the writer was first impressed by the close resemblance of the behavior of Lehi's sons on that quick trip to Jerusalem to that of the young braves of the *Beni Hilal* when they would visit a city under like circumstances...camping without the walls, drawing lots to see who would take a chance, sneaking into the city and making a getaway through the midnight streets... (88)

Orson Scott Card deliberately exploits these same motifs in his *The Memory of Earth*, the first in an epic series of science-fiction stories based on *Book of Mormon* events. The setting is the planet Harmony, millions of years in the future. The "Oversoul," an orbiting computer with telepathic ability, has kept a human culture on the planet stable and free of global war for millions of years. However, the Oversoul machine at last shows signs of age, its telepathic control of Harmony's population breaks down, and competing city-states on the planet begin preparing for open warfare.

In this utterly surreal setting Card retells the first chapters of *The Book of Mormon*. The Oversoul calls on one of the few people who can still hear its messages (Volemak, the Wetchik), and warns him to gather his family and flee the city of Basilica before it is destroyed. Only his youngest son (Nafai) takes the old man seriously, and so on. LDS readers know the story quite well, but Card's version builds upon the story's initial strengths by making his characters' motivations seem familiar and credible, despite the fantastic setting. The character-analogues of Laman and Lemuel, for example, have clear and understandable reasons for beating Nafai up, after their unsuccessful attempt to purchase the Index of Gaballufix (Plates of Laban). Card shows that it could easily have been Nephi's (Nafai's) fault that their negotiations to buy the records failed.

Elemak removed all the rest of the treasure that he carried on his person, and laid it on the table. "Surely that is all that Father would dare ask you to be burdened with," he said.

"Such a slight burden," said Gaballufix... "Then I couldn't agree to lay the burden of the Index on my kinsman..."

"Very well, said Elemak. He reached out and started rolling up the ingots..."

"No!" cried Nafai. "We won't turn back now!" He held out his hand to Mebbekeu. "You know what Father would want you to do."

Mebbekeu stepped forward and began laying parcels on the table. As he did, Nafai could feel Elemak grip his shoulder, the fingers biting deep, and Elemak whispered in his ear, "I told you to leave this to me. You've given him four times what we needed to pay, you little fool. You've left us with nothing." (260 - 261)

Card also plausibly suggests that Nephi (Nafai), by his religious zeal might also have accidentally provided Laban (Gaballufix) with a fairly legitimate excuse to confiscate all his family's property.

...All the Wetchik fortune except the land and the buildings themselves was on Gaballufix's table.
 "Is that enough?" asked Elemak dryly.
 "Exactly enough," said Gaballufix. "Exactly enough to prove to me that...this great fortune has been put in the hands of children, who have, with childish stupidity, resolved to waste it all on the purchase of that which every true Palwashantu knows can *never* be sold.... Did Volemak think it could be bought? No, impossible, it could not be! I can only conclude that he has either lost his mind or you have killed him and hidden his body somewhere."
 "No!" cried Nafai...
 "Thief! shouted Gaballufix. Suddenly the doors opened, and a dozen soldiers entered the room. (262)

Now, at one level, one might say that Card is simply making his living as an author, transforming the *Book of Mormon* account in a fictional setting to entertain his mostly non-LDS readership. At another level however, particularly for those already familiar with the scriptural version, Card's retelling reconstructs the scripture as a 'potential truth' in the Peircean sense, building for us a truly useful "icon" or model that heightens our ability to conceptualize unspoken details in the bare scriptural account.

In other words, both Card's story and the *Beni Hilal* epic invoked by Nibley serve as ground for arguing that *The Book of Mormon* is plausible as history, in other words the story is a potential truth. In the absence of direct physical proof of scripture as fact, Nibley mounts the argument that the events told in First Nephi constitute "a typical Oriental Romance...but typical because such things do, and always did, happen in Oriental cities." (op.cit.)

Index: *The Book of Mormon* as Factual Truth

Unlike an icon (an image or diagram) which potentially represents objects but may or may not represent anything real, an index (as defined by Peirce) requires a physical, factual connection with some object (2.283). Indices require action upon an object: pointing one's finger at something or placing an arbitrary label on something (e.g. See **Figure A**. Without an actual Figure A somewhere in the text, there is no genuine indexical meaning). Whereas Card iconically reconstructs *Book of Mormon* events in indisputably fictional form (30 million years ahead, with a computer in the role of God), Heimerdinger is very much concerned with pointing to scriptural events as concrete fact (withing the frame of the fictional story of Jim and his friend Garth), as the back-cover blurb for *Tennis Shoes* demonstrates:

It all began when Garth told Jim a simple truth:
 "They really existed once, you know."
 "Who?" Jim asked.
 "Nephites," Garth replied. "Every character in the Book of Mormon ate, slept, died, was buried..." (16)

This difference in storytelling agenda is not at all surprising, given Heimerdinger's readership,

almost exclusively LDS youth. What is striking however, is how this story of *The Book of Mormon* as fact, develops in a fashion which resonates strongly with Peirce's description of the essential nature of fact:

...But that which gives actuality is opposition. The fact "takes place." It has its here and now; and into that place it must crowd its way. For just as we can only know facts by their acting upon us, and resisting our brute will (I say brute will, because after I have determined how and when I will exert my strength, the mere action itself is in itself brute and unreasoning), so we can only conceive a fact as gaining reality by actions against other realities. And further to say that something has a mode of being which lies not in itself but in its being over against a second thing, is to say that that mode of being is the existence which belongs to fact. (1.432)

This passage shows how Peirce had worked out for himself the LDS aphorism, "that there is an opposition in all things," particularly in matters pertaining to physical existence, for without opposition "there could have been no creation of things, neither to act nor to be acted upon." (2 Nephi 2: 11-12). Likewise *Tennis Shoes* presents *Book of Mormon* events as facts by having these events literally "crowd their way" into the modern-day reality of the main character, Jim Hawkins, and they do so very much against his will.

Unlike his friend Garth, Jim had little interest in Church in general and scripture lessons in particular, but one day while exploring a cave in a search for petroglyphs, Garth, Jim, and his younger sister find themselves transported back through time and space to *Book of Mormon* times, to one of the most violent periods in the scriptural account. They are almost immediately captured by Lamanite soldiers of the renegade Amalickiah. The sister is given to Amalickiah as an apprentice member of his harem, and Jim and Garth barely escape being sacrificed to the Lamanite's Sun God. The boys make their way to Nephite territory, only to be drafted into Teancum's army, and so on. These grim episodes of conflict and brutality are portrayed in a less-vivid manner appropriate to Heimerdinger's audience, but portrayed they are, for the expressed purpose of driving home Heimerdinger's message that *Book of Mormon* events were 'hard' facts.

"The Book of Mormon seemed like a much nicer place," I mumbled in the darkness

"It depends on the century you come in at," Garth replied.

A splintery stick had been propped behind my shoulders. My arms were stretched across it, strapped down at each end. Another strap wound around my neck to keep the stick in place. Two ropes, tied to the roof, kept me upright. My weight was fully carried on my knees. Blisters were grinding into my kneecaps.

Garth and I were among ten other men and one woman. All of us awaited ritual sacrifice at first light. (87)

With the exception of one beating Nafai gets from his brothers, and his reluctant slaying of Gaballufix, most of the narrative conflict in Card's story is psychological, the problem of believing or not believing the aging Oversoul, the possibility of war, the Byzantine politics in the city, the

mind-games played out against Nafai by his brothers. Heimerdinger's story in contrast is a fairly constant series of direct, dangerous confrontations and literally rocky obstacles (e.g. 33, 41).

Indeed, modern authors generally write much more extreme portrayals of graphic violence and sexuality (two complementary forms of oppositional physicality), but they explicitly and invariably justify it as necessary to make their writing 'more gritty,' 'more realistic,' more 'true to the facts of life.' And indeed, such writing might be true to brute, natural fact, as explained by the principled connection made by Peirce (and 2nd Nephi) between physical fact and oppositional conflict. Nevertheless, our objections to an excess of raw physicality in literature are based ultimately on an appeal to a sense of truth and a vision of reality that transcends both fictional images and physical fact.

"But what else is there, besides fiction and fact?" some may well ask. This question leads us to the realm of the Peircean symbol and my own goals in writing the novel *Supposition Error*.

Symbol: *The Book of Mormon* as General Truth

Peirce's idea of "symbol" is vastly more complex than the arbitrary signifier->signified relation popularized by students of Saussure. Symbolic figures are anything BUT arbitrary in their meaning. Rather, Peircean symbols are invariably conceived in iconicity, gestated through actual indexical use, and finally born as signs of general usage (as in the evolution of all known writing systems from pictographs to symbols). So, just as symbols remain implicitly iconic and indexical, *Supposition Error* echoes several motifs already seen in *The Memory of Earth* and *Tennis Shoes Among the Nephites* (but not deliberately so--I only read both of these long after completing the manuscript of *Supposition Error*). And yet, despite important similarities, the differences between these three stories in their use of *Book of Mormon* motifs are more significant still.

Card's fictionalized, iconic world of Harmony is singular and self-contained. Heimerdinger's factualized, indexical world of Alma 51 depends essentially on the binary opposition between Jim Hawkins' normal twentieth-century life and the savagery of the last century B.C. in Central America. *Supposition Error* constructs a three-cornered dialogue between the factual twentieth-century life of Paul Bolton, the fictionalized television universe he habitually retreated to (*Northstar*, essentially a *Star Trek*® clone), and the third, problematic world Paul is confronted with--Mormon culture in general and *The Book of Mormon* in particular.

It is not initially a friendly dialogue. Like any good postmodernist working for tenure, rarely sober literature professor Paul Bolton had openly denounced all academic claims to truth, and

criticized even more vocally the local Mormons for their cultish, irrational faith, ironic in light of his own cultish devotion to *Northstar*.

But then, Bolton and Dana Cooper, his most-accomplished but least-favorite graduate student find they've been abducted by aliens, or so they might suppose, for they awaken with memory gaps in a mountain wilderness on a distant planet, 278 years in the future. Worse still, Paul and Dana learn they've been transported to a parallel universe where the *Northstar* characters are hard reality, along with all their deadly accessories: evil alien empires (the Oskaps), disintegration-ray guns (plasmers), and an interstellar war in which Paul and Dana soon become unwilling pawns. With the familiar distinction between fact and fiction blurred so radically, the stage is set to introduce a third kind of truth.

In the following passage, Dana explains to Paul her rather too-colorful past and her recent attempts to reform her life:

...“I left Portland, waited tables in Salem, taught swimming in Idaho Falls, and slept my way through college and my first year of graduate school too, with any man I pleased. You remember. But the truth is, Paul, that every lover took away a little piece of me, until I was patching over the holes with booze, with other drugs too in the end, until there was almost none of me left. I may be wrong, but I think all the people who do live the ‘debbie-does-dallas’ kind of life have to kill themselves inside to do it. Nature built us for one mate each, and if we’re lucky, for making and caring for babies. Anything that doesn’t conform to that is worse than fantasy, it’s a lie, a natural heresy.”

I wanted to put this gently, really I did. “In case you haven’t noticed, Dana, truth and fantasy don’t separate so easily on this planet, in this universe.”

“That’s crap Paul and you know it!” Dana suddenly raged. “We’ve just been a little confused about some random facts, like what year it is, and who flies in what starship. You know and I know some principles must be true of all universes humans live in, and all stories worth telling. Otherwise you wouldn’t prattle on about what’s good science fiction and what’s not, about whether the shelter door will hold up the launch, about why a plasmers might or might not really work.”

“Whoa, whoa. Let’s focus here a little. Forget eternal truths for a minute, and let’s talk some random facts, like do I sleep in the launch or not? Dana, what do you want from me right here, right now?”

“Well, the dana-does-department-of-english-dorks story was a bad one, not worth writing more of; even when it was a fact, it wasn’t true, if you follow me. I don’t want to live it anymore.” (111-112)

In this and similar scenes we are confronted with the apparent paradox that there are facts that aren't true, and truths that are not immediately apparent as facts. The paradox is solved by acknowledging another kind of truth, precisely that third kind advocated by Peirce.

...Most of us, such is the depravity of the human heart, look askance at the notion that ideas have any power; although that some power they have we cannot but admit. The present work, on the other hand, will maintain the extreme position that every general idea has more or less power of working itself out into fact; some more so, some less so. Some ideas, the harder and more mechanical ones, actualize themselves first in the macrocosm; and the mind of man receives them by submitting to the teachings of nature. Other ideas, the more spiritual and moral ones, actualize themselves first in the human heart, and pass to the material world through the agency of man. (2.149)

As in the two novels discussed above, *The Book of Mormon* plays an important role in *Supposition Error*, but as neither fiction or fact. In this fictional *Northstar* universe, all practicing Mormons have long since vanished from known space (rather like the City of Enoch before the Flood). But copies of *The Book of Mormon* text have remained behind, and spacefaring humanity in subsequent centuries has seized upon it as one of their guides to survival. Paul discovers this, much to his dismay, when he tries to pass himself off as an officer in the Starcommand (starfleet):

“Speaking of the Oskap surrender, sir, you might review the account of Zerahemnah’s surrender to the prophet-captain Moroni, Sub-book of Alma, chapter 44.” Lieutenant Ilex handed me the Book of Mormon, after opening it to that passage. “The Oskaps are not so different from the Lamanites. We must be careful.”

“Lamanites?” I asked.

Ilex seemed puzzled at the question. “Putative ancestors to the Mesoamerican Indians, remember? Chapters covering their wars with the fabled Israelite colony on that continent are still required reading at Starcom academy, are they not?”

There was nothing for me to do but play along. “Sorry, you’re right. I really have been distracted lately. Tell me something though, Ilex. Is there any evidence that the *Book of Mormon* stories ever really happened?” To her this had to sound like a foolish question, but I couldn’t resist asking.

Ilex seemed to take the question seriously however. “Archaeologists argue. One of the first timeslip expeditions attempted to find out, but their ship evidently disintegrated in a faulty bootstrap loop. It never returned. No positive bootstrap loop has ever delivered an altership to observe those times directly and return intact.” (208)

Under these conditions, with the inherent dangers of space and constant threat of war, spacefaring humanity as a whole would become not so concerned with verifying *Book of Mormon* events (though some enterprising scholars would naturally try, given a time-travelling technology). Those on the front lines of battle, however, had to be more concerned with living by rules of conduct the book illustrated, presumably because centuries of hard-knocks experience had taught them that the principles worked.

Consider a small colony of people who have to populate a large region quickly and then defend it against hostile competition. Whether that region be a Central-American jungle in 550 B.C. or the depths of space in 2274 A.D., whether that competition be Lamanites or Klingons or Oskaps, the colony would urgently need stable two-parent families and many children raised in them to fight for that stability. All this adds up (yet again) to the principle of sexual fidelity (that Dana worked out herself for still other reasons). Read in that context, the Prophet Jacob's fiery lecture on morality isn't just about pleasing Jacob's God. It would also be as much a matter of personal and cultural survival, a matter of staying ahead of hostile competition:

Behold, the Lamanites your brethren...are more righteous than you; for they have not forgotten the commandment of the Lord, which was given unto our fathers--that they should have save it were one wife, and concubines they should have none, and there should not be whoredoms committed among them. (Jacob 2: 5)

Or, to take a final example of truth that transcends transitory facts, one of the most-criticized aspects of classic *Star Trek*® has been that Captain Kirk™ always led the landing party, no matter how dangerous the mission. "This would never happen in reality," critics say. Nevertheless, such actions illustrate a firm *Book of Mormon* principle (*Supposition Error*, 48):

I tried passing time with Dana's Book of Mormon, peering at the pages in the firelight. Between the long theological discussions, passages like this caught my eye:

And it came to pass also that the armies of the Lamanites came down out of the land of Nephi, to battle against his people. But behold, King Benjamin gathered together his armies, and he did stand against them; and he did fight with the strength of his own arm, with the sword of Laban.

I saw that Joseph Smith had made the same mistake with his characters as the *Northstar* writers had, sending his commanding officers into the thick of danger. It made for good drama but not for plausible history. Dana wasn't kidding about Smith's dense Biblical prose being a test of character either; it was hardly light bedtime reading.

But in the end, Paul Bolton himself comes to understand and advocate the paradoxical principles of leader-as-servant and of personal accountability for the safety of one's whole community, these being not so much facts in Bolton's present as general truths that have been exemplified in the past and surely will one day work their way into actual experience again:

...It is an ethic seldom followed in our world, unfortunately, but it is an ethic illustrated clearly enough in *The Book of Mormon*, an epic in which prophets and chief captains stand at the head of their armies in battle. Fiction or not, it is a book with an ethic the Starcommanders took quite seriously. In the close accounting system of their Star Union, those with the greatest privileges must always bear the greatest responsibilities. Senior officers must lead the dangerous landing missions and be the last to escape through a Gate when things go sour... (302-303)

Suppose some time-travellers had returned from ancient America and the prototypical examples set by Nephi, King Benjamin, Captain Moroni, and so on, had been proven fictional rather than factual. This datum would likely have no more concerned Lieutenant Ilex and her fellow Starcommanders than would the discovery that they themselves were fictions in Paul Bolton's home universe. The future these characters were striving to make would matter more to them than the dead facts of the past, be they real or imaginary.

To paraphrase another character in *Supposition Error*, truths of all kinds are "conceived in fiction, yet unborn till trials many pass, of supposition and error" (p. 166). In Peirce's terms, the guesswork that survives the evolutionary gauntlet of experience is TRUTH. Finite human beings can experience no other kind.

Conclusion

If we return and consider fictions and all artistic creation as icons of potential truth, we see that they too must pass trials of natural selection. Rodin's "The Thinker" is in fact part of a larger work called *The Gates of Hell* with dozens of separately sculpted figures, but of these only "The Thinker" has achieved status as cultural icon, presumably because it alone best resonates with some culture-wide aesthetic. It is in Dawkin's term, a meme, the analogue of a competitive viral mutation that "infects" its carriers and out-reproduces its companions, spreading itself widely through the population of cultural ideas. In order to be called "Great," any work of art or any new word must do the same.

Even intelligent and educated men, yea, and a large class of young women, exclaim "Oh, that is poetry: tell us the truth." They seem to consider Poetry to be per se false, little thinking that in order to be the genuine thing, the first requisite of Poetry is to be very true. If they do not know this, what can they know of those regions of thought where truth as it walks abroad is always clothed in figures of which it divests itself for none but its intimates? Let one put up with figurative ideas rather than go without any...

(C.S. Peirce, Manuscript #634, quoted in *Supposition Error*, 3)

If we return and consider statements normally taken to be referential and factual, the same must be said: Their true interpretation depends on eliminating competing, possible interpretations.

No general description can identify an object. But the common sense of the interpreter of the sign will assure him that the object must be one of a limited collection of objects. Suppose, for example, two Englishmen meet in a continental railway carriage. The total number of subjects of which there is any appreciable probability that one will speak to the other perhaps does not exceed a million; and each will have perhaps half that million not far below the surface of consciousness, so that each unit of it is ready to suggest itself. If one mentions Charles the Second, the other need not consider what possible Charles the Second is meant. It is no doubt the English Charles Second. (Peirce, 5.448, note 1).

And if we return yet again to general principles as Truth, we find in the end that these are the driving force behind the long-term evolution of the first two kinds of truth, the generative basis of "True Art" and "True Facts," works of art and factual circumstances that persist indefinitely, lasting more than a generation or three in some decadent and doomed society. Neither Card or Heimerdinger would likely never have written their novels based on *The Book of Mormon*, without their parallel conviction that this book of scripture expresses higher truths of the third kind. In Peirce's terms, general principles are what bring "information into the mind" in the first place and general principles are what actualize themselves as "hard and mechanical ideas" in physical reality (1.537, 2.149).

To put a finer, final point on all of this:

Do you think, reader, that it is a positive fact that

"Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again,"

or do you think that this, being poetry, is only a pretty fiction?

Perhaps you may object that right and wrong are only a power because there are, or will be, powerful men who are disposed to make them so; just as they might take it into their heads to make tulip-fancying, or freemasonry, or [Esperanto] a power. But you must acknowledge that this is not the position of those on the affirmative side.

On the contrary, they hold that it is the idea which will create its defenders, and renders them powerful. Thus, whether you accept the opinion or not, you must see that it is a perfectly intelligible opinion that ideas are not all mere creations of this or that mind, but on the contrary have a power of finding or creating their vehicles, and having found them, of conferring upon them the ability to transform the face of the earth.

--C.S. Peirce, *Collected Papers*, 1.217

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O CAPTAIN! my Captain! our fearful trip is done; The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won; The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting, While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring: But O heart! heart! heart! O the bleeding drops of red, Where on the deck my Captain lies, Fallen cold and dead. In this stanza, the speaker shouts with sheer excitement to ship's captain about making it home safe and sound. The ship after enduring tough storms and impenetrable winds made it back on the dock. Jaded and exhausted after a tiresome journey, the mis Captain Kirk meets Captain Moroni. Alan D. Manning, Dept. of Linguistics, BYU. Life, the Universe, and Everything. Brigham Young University. March 24, 2000. "Tho' the heavens depart and the earth's fountains burst, Truth, the sum of existence will weather the worst, Eternal, unchanged, evermore. --John Jacques (Hymn #272)." In brief, Peirce's three basic categories of meaning are each neatly illustrated by one of these three fictional treatments of The Book of Mormon : FIRST: Fourteen year-old Nafai, the main character in The Memory of Earth , is a transparent refiguration of the original Nephi from The Book of Mormon. The history told in 1st Nephi 1-4 is transposed to an imaginary world 100 light-years from Earth and 30 million years in the future.