

4. Where Are Our Words?: A Mythic Reply to Cavell's Mythology

CHARLES DJORDJEVIC

What we do is to bring [or lead] our words back
from their metaphysical to their everyday use.
LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, *Philosophical Investigations*

The original sin [of positing sense data, a metaphysical
abstraction]... by which the philosopher casts himself
from the garden of the world we live in.
J.L. AUSTIN, "Other Minds"

Then the picture we get is not of the philosopher as
playing the game of the ordinary... but as casing his
words into exile. That is casting our words.
CAVELL, "The Wittgensteinian Event"

The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can
be observed, nor will people say "Here it is" or "There it is"
because the kingdom of God is in your midst.
The Gospel of Luke

This essay aims to offer a response to Cavell and his invitation for just such responses, as I read him.¹ It offers a reading of later Wittgenstein based on a different mythology than Cavell's modernist mythological one. Specifically, I aim to provide a myth that sees words in their metaphysical uses not as in exile, as a cast out of the garden of the everyday by the machinations of serpentine philosophers. Instead, I of-

1. I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for their helpful suggestions and remarks. See Cavell, "The Wittgenstein Event," in *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (London: Belknap Press, 2005), 211-212.

fer a myth that sees the metaphysical use as a holiday for our words², a form of unrestrained playfulness that is a facet of how we learn our ways about with them.³ In turn, this optimistic myth casts a philosopher not as an individual engaged in a tragically heroic, but ultimately futile, seeking of the “kingdom of the everyday”⁴ but as a person who has come to understand the axis of our real needs.⁵ I shall unfold such a myth later and hope to show that it gives us a means to dance. Pursuant to this, my mythology casts metaphysics not as an inherent flaw, a manifestation of our inability to live with our finitude⁶, but as a playful response to it.

Section I sets the stage. I discuss what constitutes a “philosophical responses.” Such a discussion is necessary as responding to a myth with a myth may, on a particular construal of philosophy, simply fail to be philosophical. In section two, I briefly discuss what “myths” or “symbolic expressions”⁷ are as well as argue that they play ineliminable roles in philosophy. In section three, I offer what strikes me as the guiding mythology of Cavell’s understanding of the “metaphysical/everyday” distinction.⁸ I cast Cavell’s mythology as modernist and read it against the backdrop of *Fear and Trembling*, a text by John of Silence that Kierkegaard was kind enough to edit.⁹ Pursuant to this, I interpret Cavell, and his Wittgenstein, as knights of resignation who take tragedy and fallenness as a part of our all too human and finite condition. In section four, I offer my own myth, again based on Kierkegaard, which casts Wittgenstein as a knight of faith. I further argue that this mythology recasts both Wittgenstein and philosophy not as beautiful but futile attempts to run “into the walls of our cage”¹⁰ but as a form of playfulness that casts metaphysical uses of language as

2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell Press, 2009), §38.

3. *Ibid.*, §123.

4. E.g., Cavell, “The Investigations’ Everyday Aesthetics of Itself,” in *The Literary Wittgenstein*, ed. J. Gibson and W. Huemer (London: Routledge Press, 2004), 26.

5. Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations*, §108.

6. It is not an accident that Cavell’s seminal work has “Tragedy” in the title.

7. Cf. e.g., Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 343-354.

8. Wittgenstein, *The Philosophical Investigations*, §116. For a reminder of how complex Wittgenstein’s use of “metaphysical” is and why it does not reduce to simply “bad,” see Joachim Schulte, “Ways of Reading Wittgenstein: Observations on Certain Uses Of the Word ‘Metaphysical,’” in *Wittgenstein and His Interpreters: Essays in Memory of Gordon Baker*, ed. G. Kahane, E. Kanterian, and O. Kuusela (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 159-166.

9. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. H. Hong and E. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

10. Ludwig Wittgenstein, “A Lecture on Ethics,” in *Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951*, ed. J. Klagge and A. Nordmann (Cambridge: Hackett Press, 1993), 44.

requests for understanding and attempts to make sense of ourselves and our world. Finally, in section five, I argue that this faith-ful mythology exposes a troubling feature of “therapeutic” readings of Wittgenstein.¹¹

I. Setting the Stage

Before one begins to respond to a myth about the metaphysical/everyday distinction with another myth, a critical question is forced on us. To wit, should such myth-making count as a philosophical response? Ergo, before I can either discuss Cavell’s mythology or reply to it with a different mythology, an articulation of what feature(s) render a response philosophical is required. Without this articulation, one runs the risk of simply failing to reply in the proper key.

Let us begin with the use of “philosophical.” In everyday language, a “philosophical” work, response, etc., is often cast as pragmatically useless, not worthwhile, or wholly speculative. Thus, if one is told one is being “philosophical,” this often means that one is avoiding or missing some practical dimension that is more important. Alternatively, “philosophical” is often applied to New Age-esque works that offer self-help in a post-religious world. In either case, it is clear that the use of “philosophical” by philosophers is somewhat different. Specifically, it seems that there are two different accounts of “philosophical” within philosophy: (a) the professional account; and (b) the personal account. Let us take each in turn. I then offer (c) my own account that incorporates the laudable aspects of both while avoiding the drawbacks each has.

(a) The professional account takes the word “philosophical” to properly apply to the problems, works, schools, interests, etc., that philosophers engage with, in their academic capacity. In other words, the professional account is, broadly speaking, sociological, and understands the use of “philosophical” in terms of the research programs that philosophers engage in. Of particular note for the professional account are three interrelated features of the activities of professional philosophers engage in. In turn, these features give a rough-and-ready guide to the proper application of the

11. James Conant, “Throwing away the Top of the Ladder,” *The Yale Review* 79, no. 3 (1991): 328-364. Gordon Baker, *Wittgenstein’s Method: Neglected Aspects*, ed. K. J. Morris (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), *passim*.

term “philosophical” to some items.¹² These features are: philosophers often address themselves to other philosophers, long-standing philosophical problems, attempt to confirm or confute a particular school, etc.; philosophers insist on specific methodological standards of rigor, clarity, precision, and argumentation; and philosophers often teach a particular canon of texts to their students in their universities. I argue that these features are unable to adequately characterize “philosophical,” however.

The central problem with understanding “philosophical” in terms of who/what philosophers address is that there is no agreement on, e.g., who is a valuable conversation partner or what constitutes a serious philosophical problem. For example, some philosophers view Freud's work as pseudo-scientific nonsense best placed in the dustbin of history.¹³ In marked contrast, others take Freud as a critical figure who raises fundamental issues that must be addressed within philosophy.¹⁴ In a related key, some philosophers take the turn to modal metaphysics as a sure sign of philosophical progress as well as an essential step towards answering long-standing philosophical problems, if only philosophers would try harder to master these new logical tools.¹⁵ And, again, in marked contrast, other philosophers view modal metaphysics as a strange mix of common sense and nonsense, a retreat from the best features of classical analytic philosophy.¹⁶ Thus, there is no commonly shared set of persons, approaches, problems, etc., that all and only professional philosophers address.

The central problem with methodological conditions like clarity, rigor, etc., is that they are often based on little more than rhetorical invectives against individuals, traditions, etc., that a philosopher does not like. Thus, consider: “I guess that our thinkers have been immunized against the idea of philosophy as the Mistress Science by the fact that their daily lives in Cambridge and Oxford Colleges have kept them in personal contact with real scientists. Claims to Fuehreship vanish when postprandial joking begins. Husserl wrote as if he had never met a scientist—or a joke”;¹⁷ “[G]ranted that de-

12. I use “item” in the broadest sense to include, e.g., teaching, reading, writing, conversations, and so on.

13. E.g., Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Routledge Press, 1962), 33-59.

14. E.g., Richard Wollheim, *Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), passim.

15. E.g., Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 278-292.

16. E.g., P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth-Century Analytic Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell Press, 1996), 228-273.

17. Gilbert Ryle, *Philosophical Papers* (London, Hutchinson, 1971), 180-182. Obviously, given that Husserl was Jewish and lived to see the rise of National Socialism, this quote is particularly troubling.

construction has rather obvious and manifest intellectual weaknesses, granted that it should be fairly obvious to the careful reader that the emperor has no clothes, why has it proved so influential among literary theorists? [...] [W]e live in something of a golden age in the philosophy of language [...] the age of Chomsky and Quine, of Austin, Tarski, Grice, Dummett, Davidson, Putnam Kripke, Strawson, Montague";¹⁸ "Why does Butler prefer to write in this teasing, exasperating way? [...] obscurity creates an aura of importance. It also serves another related purpose. It bullies the reader into granting that [...] there must be something significant going on."¹⁹ What is striking about these quotes is that each is predicated on a simple, informal fallacy that philosophers teach undergraduates to detect and dismiss in their first-year logic courses. Thus, Ryle resorts to an ad hominem against Husserl in particular and phenomenology in general. Searle appeals to the authority of such talented people in our golden age to cast aspersions on Derrida. And Nussbaum begs the question against Butler as she does not specify what "clarity" is as well as ascribing to Butler a rather odd motive. Thus, it seems as though "clarity," "rigor," "precision," etc. are not principled philosophical standards, but rhetorical tools used to attack individual thinkers or schools.

The central problem with the canon is that it simply does not exist in an uncontested form. This can be most clearly seen by reflecting on both diachronic and synchronic variations. Diachronically, the texts, problems, methods, and so on that are taken as philosophical change in a marked way. For example, today, many philosophers view language as critically important to philosophy, whereas Modern Philosophy took it as a secondary issue.²⁰ Synchronically, one needs only to examine the differences between philosophical courses and topics addressed at *The New School for Social Research's* philosophy department and contrast it with the classes and issues at *Rutgers University's* philosophy department.

(b) The personal account makes sense of the use of "philosophical" in a very different manner. To begin, the personal account attempts to take seriously the range of applications that "philosophical" has in everyday life. Thus, in addition to New Age guidebooks and useless speculations, we also apply "philosophical" to novels, pain-

18. John Searle, "The World Turned Upside Down," *New York Review of Books* (Oct. 27, 1983): §5.

19. Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Professor of Parody: The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler," *The New Republic* 22 (1999): §2.

20. See Ian Hacking, *Why Does Language Matter to Philosophy?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), for an apt discussion.

tings, moods, films, conversations, and so on. Moreover, such uses need not betoken any negative assessment. Granting this, the personal account attempts to derive from this medley of uses some clear overlapping features that determine our ordinary use of “philosophical.” Specifically, the personal account notes that items that we tend to count as “philosophical” begin from a place of doubt or confusion. Indeed, for the personal account of philosophy, some reflection counts as philosophical when the reflection takes some x that we ordinarily understand as odd, seemingly out of place, perhaps even impossible. Granting this, part of what determines if “philosophical” correctly applies to an item is the manner by which a person addresses the item. Specifically, the person philosophically addresses the item when she addresses it in a doubting and critical way.²¹

To further articulate this, consider three examples that the personal account claims are philosophical and the commonalities they share. Thus, consider: Augustine’s reflections on time; the film *Stalker* by Tarkovsky; and *On the Plurality of Worlds* by Lewis. Each of these is counted as philosophical, in spite of substantial differences in medium, style, method, and so on. However, one can plausibly argue that each work shares a problematization of some feature that we ordinarily understand without ado. For Augustine, it is both clear that time makes perfect sense to him ordinarily and yet his philosophical reflection disturbs this sense;²² for Tarkovsky, common assumptions about the goal of human desires are rendered senseless; for Lewis, simple sentences like “If Napoleon would have won the war, we would all speak French” demand ever more sophisticated logical machinery to make sense of. Thus, again, the personal account of philosophy contends that some item is philosophical when a person responds to this item in a doubting and critical way.²³

Granting this, however, the personal account faces two critical problems. First, the personal account lends itself to a problematic form of philosophical imperialism. To see this clearly, consider that the personal account maintains that the sole criterion that determines if some item is philosophical is the reaction of a person to it. Indeed, Cavell maintains that a plausible translation of *Philosophical Investigations*

21. E.g., Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 4.

22. Cf. e.g., Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Book* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), p. 26.

23. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95.

(hereby PI) §123 is “[a] philosophical problem has the form: ‘I cannot find myself.’”²⁴ In turn, this means that the item itself divides out of consideration in a rather odd way, as all that matters is my reaction to it. In other words, some item is responded to in a philosophical manner when, and only when, I reflect on it in a doubting and critical way, regardless of the item itself. This is not to deny that there is a “grammatical structure” that partly constitutes this reaction, i.e., non-personal features of the doubt as it addresses itself to the item. However, it is to insist that the reaction, and the “grammar” therein, does not depend on the item that provokes it. Indeed, “[s]ome philosophers are able to make about anything into a philosophical text [i.e., react to some item in a doubting and critical manner], like a preacher improving upon the infant's first cry.”²⁵ In other words, though there is a structure that governs how the reaction works, it is critical that the reaction elides the item itself. Indeed, the item that provokes it can be anything or nothing, the cry of an infant, the loss of a friend, diamonds and squares that eloquently move across a proof in modal logic, and even the feeling of absence itself. Thus, the item divides out of view, and I am left with my structured philosophical reaction towards it.²⁶

However, such an emphasis on how I react may, in fact, lead me to grossly misunderstand the item by forcing it to be “philosophical.” For example, consider a true gift like being loved. To respond to the gift in a doubting or critical manner (i.e., to treat it “philosophically”) is to abrogate acceptance and destroy the spirit of the gift. Indeed, Cavell makes a similar point concerning Lear.²⁷ To react to love with doubt is to have already lost the very item one claims to reflect on. Indeed, as Wittgenstein insisted, there must be a distinction between “philosophy” and “its raw materials.”²⁸ Without minding this gap, we run the risk of systematically distorting or ignoring the item itself in the name of our dogmatic reactions to it, even if these reactions have a structure to them that is important.²⁹

Second, the personal account struggles with making sense of why philosophical reflections have the unique structure that they do. For example, Cavell notes that

24. Cavell, “The Investigations’ Everyday Aesthetics of Itself,” 23.

25. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 4.

26. Cf. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §293.

27. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 267-366.

28. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §254.

29. Cf. *Ibid.*, §131.

philosophical problems, and the grammar of a philosophical response, have a rather unique and specific structure that is lacking in, e.g., a physicist's critical reaction to a hypothesis. Specifically, philosophical problems seem to demand answers that are exception-less, universal, and apodictic.³⁰ However, it is simply unclear why philosophical problems should have this structure. As it were, it is not clear how the grammar of specifically philosophical doubt might differ from the grammar of a physicist who struggles with an experiment, or a person who struggles with a difficult love. And in turn, this might make mischief for various forms of therapy. Why doesn't the physicist need to learn to stop asking her questions? What is about the grammar of philosophy that demands the impossible?

Given this, let us turn to (c), my own account of what determines when the term "philosophical" is rightly applied. I argue, specifically, for two standards, one drawn from the professional account and one from the personal account. First, and with the professional account, I assume that specific non-reaction-based criteria determine if some item counts as philosophical. Expressly, I assume that for an item to count as philosophical, the item must be articulated and discussed either in a natural or constructed language. Moreover, I further maintain that such an articulation constitutes a reasoning practice. In other words, a critical standard that determines if some response is philosophical is that the item is reasoned about in language.

Let us briefly examine "reasoning practices" more thoroughly before moving on. First, I stress that a "reasoning practice" should be understood in such a way that the verb, "to reason," is given pride of place. Given this, second, the verb "to reason" is an activity verb in Vendler's sense.³¹ This is because (i) the transition from continuous tense to perfect tense is always licit (ii) the prepositional modifier used with the verb is "for" (e.g., "I have reasoned for an hour") (iii) the verb does not accept numbers (e.g., "I reason three times in an hour" is grammatically wrong).³² Third, given this, the verb is atelic. In other words, it does not code any "natural" stopping point. This point is particularly interesting as Wittgenstein stresses that "[t]he real

30. Cavell, S. *The Claim of Reason*, 49-125.

31. Zeno Vendler, "Verbs and Times," *The Philosophical Review* 66 no. 2 (1957): 143-160.

32. These are standard tests in linguistics for the lexical aspects of various verbs. See, e.g., Hana Filip, "Lexical Aspect," in *Oxford Handbook of Tense and Aspect*, ed. R. Binnick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 722-725.

discovery is the one that enables me to break off philosophizing [i.e., reasoning out loud] when I want to,”³³ a natural goal if the verb itself encodes no end-state. Fourth, the verb can accept other participants by using a with-clause (e.g., “I reasoned with John about his messy divorce”). Fifth, relatedly, the with-participant betokens the comitative case. This is because (i) sentences with “S reasons with-y” can be paraphrased as “S and y reason together” and (ii) the object in the y clause must be at least animate, if not human. Sixth, given that this is the comitative case, the practice of reasoning requires mutual cooperation on the part of both the subject and the participant.³⁴ Thus, much as the sentence “S walks with-y” encodes a shared activity that both willing participants in (otherwise S merely follows y), so too does the verb “to reason” encode such a shared activity. Finally, seventh, in turn, this means any non-mutual participation is a grammatical violation. In other words, the grammatical structure of the verb requires that power, appeals to authority outside the reasoning practice, and so on, divide out. Thus, a reasoning practice is a mutual exchange between willing participants wherein each works with the other to articulate some item in a manner that makes the item clear or senseful.³⁵

Second, and with the personal account, I assume that the personal reaction of a person to an item, and her subsequent attempt to articulate it, cannot be understood apart from the reaction. In other words, part of what renders an item philosophical is the felt need of a person to give it articulation in language. Thus, the personal account is quite right to insist that the shift from “raw materials” to “philosophy” requires that the person become confused, find some item odd, etc. In turn, this is in marked contrast to other academic disciplines wherein, e.g., the structure of the overall subject ensures that specific questions are licit and apt.³⁶ Indeed, an indeterminate number of items can provoke the sort of confusion or doubt that can then lead to articulation.

Given such a conception of “philosophical,” the nature of “response” is also rendered transparent. Accurately, to respond to a philosophical item requires that a

33. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §133.

34. For a helpful discussion, see, e.g., Thomas Stolz, Cornelia Stroh, Aina Urdze, “Varieties of Comitative,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Case*, ed. A. Malchukov and A. Spencer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

35. Cf. Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*, §122.

36. E.g., Peter Hacker, “What is a Philosophical Problem?,” *Think* 4, no. 12 (2006): 17-28.

reasoning practice emerges and that this practice be mutual and be focused on articulating some item that has confused one (or more) of the individuals. One way to ensure this mutuality is to stress the role of invitation and conversation. In turn, this helps my account avoid imperialism as the invitation to reason can be rejected. Moreover, it also helps explain why specific set topics, problems, and so on, tend to preoccupy philosophers and are counted as philosophical. It is not that these have some “essence” that links them. Instead, their persistence is explained in terms of invitations that were and are made, from the misty past to today, to address specific items jointly. Finally, third, such responses cannot rely on any sort of “coercive” power. In other words, the idea that one can be ‘compelled’ to change one’s mind is deeply problematic as such a violent metaphor vitiates the underlying mutuality that the reasoning practice relies on. Indeed, Wittgenstein³⁷ and Cavell³⁸ both stress precisely this rejection of war based metaphors, force, and violence for philosophy. The problem is that any coercion, even that “compelled” by the “light of reason,” already assumes a shared mutuality that may have yet to be established.

In sum, a “philosophical response” is a joint and mutual reasoning practice wherein individuals attempt to articulate an item so that it is clear/makes sense to them. With this in view, let us examine both if a myth can be a philosophical response and, if it can, what role a myth might play in a reasoning practice.

II. A Characterization and Defense of Mythology as a Philosophical Response

With my discussion of “philosophical response” in place, let us consider if mythology (or symbolic expressions) can be appropriately called a “philosophical response” as well as what function(s) such mythologies might play in a reasoning practice. To begin, mythology is often cast as either antithetical to philosophy or else as a form of propaganda that a philosopher might rely on to spread her “enlightening” views among “the herd.” Indeed, mythology, symbolic expressions, and metaphorical lan-

37. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1956), §113.

38. E.g., Cavell, “The Wittgenstein Event,” in *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (London: Belknap Press, 2005), 203-205.

guage, more generally, are often cast as merely parasitic deviations from literal discourse.³⁹ That being said, I argue that mythology can be counted as a philosophical response in our above sense. Moreover, I argue that mythology has a critical role in maintaining the ongoing reasoning practice at issue.

Let us begin by attempting to characterize mythological or symbolic expressions. First, Cavell notes that “symbolical expressions, or uses, are places where we are trying to make sense of our efforts to make sense of our lives and are led to utterances [...] which Wittgenstein understands as a gesture in which you have expressed ‘how it strikes you,’ an expression to which he [Wittgenstein] thereupon pays attention.”⁴⁰ Second, somewhat pursuant to this, these myths are “not the end of the argument but its transportation into another mode of discourse.”⁴¹ Specifically, a myth allows us to bring into focus different *Weltanschauungen*.⁴² Moreover, third, myths accomplish this by helping to focus our attention not on the rules of a game, but on its point.⁴³ To use an example that we return to throughout this section, I can describe a room in a myriad of different ways, each of which can be correct or wrong. The room might be cozy, haunted by the absence of a dead loved one, 4 by 4 meters squared, have a desk and a chair, be brilliant in the sunrise, etc. However, which description I utilize shows how I take the room (or questions about it) to be, the key I rely on, the mythology that determines my ways of speaking and doing. “I cannot bring myself to go into the room. Ever since my son died, it feels like blasphemy to enter and defile his things” is one mythology, one way of making sense of ourselves to and with each other, as is, “I think we should paint the wall a calming color with stars, so that the little one [a smile and a touch on a ripe belly] can find some peace in her new world,” another. In other words, how I describe what I describe turns on the mythology behind it, how it strikes me,⁴⁴ and this striking is as much about me as the room, as much about how we exist with and for each other. “My soon-to-be-born daughter’s place in the world; let us try to make it as lovely as we can, for the world is so hard!” “My dead’s son tomb; I cannot bear to go into it any longer, a place

39. Max Black, “Metaphor” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 55 (1955): 273-294, for such a move. Though see, e.g., Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 74-82, for a radically different conception.

40 Cavell, “The Wittgenstein Event,” 197.

41 Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 365.

42. *Ibid.*, 363-366.

43. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §564.

44. *Ibid.*, §219.

where angels dare not tread.” Finally, fourth, Barthes can helpfully be read as harmonizing aspects of this. He claims that

[m]yth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way which it utters this message [...]. A tree is a tree [...]. But a tree as expressed by Minou Droeut is no longer quite a tree [...] [it becomes] laden with literary self-indulgence, revolt, images, in short, with a type of social usage which is added to pure matter.⁴⁵

Though Barthes’s subsequent analysis becomes bogged down in a structural analysis of language/myth, I take this insight to be critical. Indeed, Wittgenstein notes that “magic is always based on the idea of symbolism and language.”⁴⁶ In other words, language is never merely stapling labels to objects, sharpening our concepts so that their extensions are clear, and using possible worlds to grasp the intensions. Instead, language is itself a form of abstraction, a form of symbolism, a form of magic, a mythology.

Taken together, these features understand mythology as an attempt to bring into focus, not the objects and concepts that our words refer to or express (or whatever other theory of semantics one likes). Instead, it brings into focus how language itself frames the world, how our talking about a room in a certain way already has implications for how we deal with it, the sort of inferences we are likely to make, and so on. Thus, the role of a mythological expression is to give voice to how something strikes one, which is to say, how one’s initial descriptions of an item affect the sorts of properties, relations, etc., one is likely to ascribe to it. Given this, there is nothing *prima facie* problematic with a myth as a philosophical response. Indeed, such an attempt to examine the parameters that determine a particular initial description as well as how these parameters lend themselves to specific predicative patterns is in no way antithetical to philosophy.

However, given this, it is still unclear what role(s) such mythologies might play in a reasoning practice. To clarify one role that mythology might play in philosophy, let us consider Wittgenstein’s odd use of the painted pot parable,⁴⁷ as he develops his

45. Roland Barthes, “Myth Today,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang Press, 1972), 109.

46. Wittgenstein, “Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough,” in *Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951*, ed. J. Kluge and A. Nordmann (Cambridge: Hackett Press, 1993), 125.

47. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §297.

private language discussion, as well as how Cavell reacts to it.⁴⁸ I should note that Cavell calls this story of the pot a parable.⁴⁹ However, it seems to me that this sort of a parable is an instance of mythology as Cavell understands it,⁵⁰ and as I discussed above. As we shall see, part of the work of this parable is exactly to transpose an argument into a different key, a key that lets us see not the content of a description, but the process of it—i.e., how a particular picture of pain strikes a voice, and how we can spell out this voice's fears and reactions. Once in place, I then discuss one role that mythology might play in philosophy.

To begin, the painted pot myth emerges at a *prima facie* odd moment during the private language discussion. In the passage right before it, one voice has just stressed, “there is a Something all the same which accompanies my cry of pain!”⁵¹ Further, and following Cavell, this point can be read as an ethical insistence. In effect, the voice protests Wittgenstein’s arrogant attempt to make its pain vanish in a poof of logic. The voice has a pain, it feels it, and it is deeply offended by any slide of hand attempt to “prove” that this pain does not really exist (i.e., it is not a “Something”). Wittgenstein’s two reactions to this voice are crucial and bring into view what role a mythological expression, a parable in this case, might play in philosophy.

First, before giving his pot myth, Wittgenstein asks, “to whom are we telling this? And on what occasion?”⁵² Notice that there is a noticeable shift here from “I” to “we.” In turn, this can be read as Wittgenstein appreciating the force of the ethical point and trying to respond to it appropriately. As it were, the use of “we” functions to remind the voice, and the reader, that it is only our fellow human beings and things like them that can be said to feel pain.⁵³ Moreover, this reflects Wittgenstein’s refusal to rely on any proof to “compel” (which is to say violently force) a voice somewhere it does not want to go. Instead, Wittgenstein is seeking to restore a mutual understanding.⁵⁴ After this attempt to re-establish a shared connection with the voice, Wittgenstein offers us his pot parable, a moment of myth-making. He writes that:

48. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 332-343.

49. *Ibid.*, 332.

50. *Ibid.*, 362-363

51. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §296.

52. *Ibid.*

53. E.g., *ibid.*, §284.

54. *Ibid.*, §242.

Of course, if water boils in a pot, steam comes out of the pot and also pictured steam comes out of the pictured pot. But what if one insisted on saying that there must be something boiling in the pictured pot?⁵⁵

Notice that this response is mythological in the sense mentioned above. It does not contribute to an argument, understood as unfolding inferential and deductive relationships between propositions, say. Instead, it attempts to articulate how the insistence on “Something” in the voice’s initial description of the situation affects what sorts of inferences, predicative patterns, and so on, the voice is likely to accept. In other words, the painted point provides an “object of comparison”⁵⁶ wherein we can clearly see how an initial way of describing some x leads us towards certain questions, problems, and so on. Moreover, in this case, it seems that the object of comparison is meant to help both the reader and the voice realize that the insistence on “Something” is already problematic as it leads to flawed questions. Does the painted pot “really” have painted water that we cannot see? It simply is not clear what could address this, if it is taken as an epistemic question rather than an aesthetic one. Similarly, the question of if the voice “really” has a pain confuses an epistemic topic with an ethical demand. In each case, what Wittgenstein is trying to bring into view is “the conjuring trick,”⁵⁷ and he does so precisely by introducing an object of comparison that gives voice to the mythology guiding the initial description.

Abstracting from this, it seems that the role of mythology in philosophy is to remind us that how we describe some x is not merely “given” by the x itself.⁵⁸ Moreover, it also attempts to emphasize that this initial description has critically important ramifications for how arguments, understood as mentioned above, will work. And most interestingly, this use of a myth offers a way to circumvent the famed Agrippa trilemma. This trilemma begins by assuming that, for any proposition p, it is (i) justified by other propositions, (ii) so “certain” that questioning it, somehow, leads to irrationality or (iii) is a mere dogmatic assertion. The problem with (i) is that it either causes a regress or ends up being circular; the problem with (ii) is that there

55. *Ibid.*, §297.

56. *Ibid.*, §130.

57. *Ibid.*, §308.

58. Cf. Cavell, S. *The Claim of Reason*, 369.

simply is no such thing as perfect “clarity”; the problem with (iii) is that it begs the question against the objector. However, the trilemma presupposes that what is at issue is always already argumentation understood above. Part of the function of mythology is avoiding this assumption by reminding us that how we describe, our initial reaction, is not justified via inferential or deductive relations. Moreover, mythology achieves this precisely by being a literary form of language. In effect, this role of mythology is providing us with an object of comparison that shows the contours of how an initial description works.

In sum, a mythology or a symbolic expression is an attempt to bring into focus how we initially describe some item throughout a reasoning practice. Given this, it is clear that mythology can play a critical role in philosophy as it offers us tools to examine how our initial descriptions affect the subsequent argumentations, predications, etc. we are likely to make. Indeed, “[t]he mythological would then be what the idea of the metaphorical [the parable of the pot, the dead son’s room/tomb, the yet-to-be daughter’s place in our world] here is a metaphor for.”⁵⁹ They focus not on what we describe, but how and why we do so. And it seems clear that such operations, such reminders that I can describe a room in terms of the area just as well as in terms of hope of comforting reassurance (or dreadful echoes), are critical to philosophy. Is the soul a bad driver torn between two horses or is the soul a moment of infinity harmonized with, and in love with, the finite (“Eternity is in love with the products of time”⁶⁰). How we think, argue, express, interpret, etc., ourselves, our world, our language, depends critically on the mythologies below these questions. Indeed, arguments presuppose the mythology. And to display this and, perhaps, bring someone to see a new aspect, depends on objects of comparison that re-present a new myth, a new way of going on, a new way to be struck by the same old room.⁶¹

59. Ibid, 364.

60. William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (New York: Dover Publisher, 1994), 31. For the need to violently master our ‘lower’ selves, see Plato “Phaedrus,” in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters*, ed. E. Hamilton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). For a radical love of the finite so deep it causes us pain, see Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*, trans. H. Hong and E. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 431-524.

61. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, II, xi. See also Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 369-370.

III. Cavell's Myth: The Tragic Weight of Humanity

In this section, I turn to the mythology that seems to guide Cavell's reading of the metaphysical/everyday distinction. I note here that this section will be somewhat different from the above two in that the goal is not argumentation per se. Instead, the goal is trying to bring into focus how Wittgenstein strikes Cavell and how this guides his interpretation.

To begin, it seems to me that the best mythology to use to foreground how Wittgenstein strikes Cavell comes from John of Silence and his mythic tales of two knights.⁶² I should note here that the passages I draw from, and John of Silence's book more generally, strike me as perhaps the most beautiful mythic prose written in philosophy. Ergo, my excerpting cannot do justice to the wit and beauty of the work. Regardless, Silence, who counts himself as a knight of resignation, tells us that "[I]t is about the temporal, the finite, everything turns in this case. I am able to renounce everything, and then find peace and repose in pain [...]. But by my own strength, I am not able to get the least of the things which belong to finiteness, for I am constantly using my strength to renounce everything."⁶³

To begin to mythically unpack this, in a manner akin to the pot, it is critical to realize that the knight of resignation is someone who has recognized the profound limitations and felt the strictures of being a human being. He is someone who, for whatever reason, has come to realize that what we often take to be iron cords between the "ich" and the "du," the supposedly necessary steel that sits below our social practices and ensures that they run correctly, rules with rails that stretch beyond infinity and guide us if only we listen, are simply absent. What ties us, you and I, together are not iron cords but diaphanous and fragile threads, a spider's web that, were it to rupture (and heaven forbid it does!) we feel that we have to repair with our coarse fingers,⁶⁴ that below our practices and our society is not the hard steel of some necessity but cities of words that float, as if by magic, in the air⁶⁵, that the rules we see so clearly and whose voices echo so forcefully in our minds are

62. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*.

63. *Ibid.*, 40.

64. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §106.

65. *Ibid.*, §118.

nothing but figments and ghosts from Frege's third realm.⁶⁶ In other words, a knight of resignation is someone who has:

seen the moment of my greatness flicker,
And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,
And in short, I was afraid.⁶⁷

From here, the knight of resignation reacts to this moment, the moment where the eternal Footman snickers, and we see how little is truly in our control, by resigning. To be more specific, and less circular, the knight of resignation withdraws from the world where a loved woman may reject us, where a dear friend may become an enigma, where our words and our deeds may cease to make sense, where we may be dragged off to the madhouse, and retreats into his "I." Further, this movement, this withdrawal, renders the world a scary place, a place where our finitude, and our knowledge of an utter lack of control, is allowed to absorb everything else. Indeed, a knight of resignation is so painfully aware of how nothing he says or does can call out to another as he wishes, that he is alone with only his "I," that only a faith she lacks can save her.

With this myth in view, let us turn to Cavell. To begin, Cavell himself suggests that our inheritance of Kierkegaard's mythology of the knights helps make sense of Wittgenstein and the role of the everyday. Indeed, it is "the knight of faith alone who achieves not exactly the everyday but "the sublime in the pedestrian."⁶⁸ Moreover, this suggests something else as well, something that further aligns Silence's text with Cavell's inheritance. For Silence, and from his perspective, the knight of faith is never seen, and surely not understood. Indeed, he looks just like a tax collector, and none of his movements betray either the resignation or the return.⁶⁹ Similarly, and tellingly, it is unclear what might mark the difference Cavell insists on—what is the difference between the everyday and the sublime in the pedestrian? It seems as though Cavell has faith in it, as Silence has faith that the knight of faith exists. But how shall we un-

66. *Ibid.*, §201.

67. T. S. Eliot, *Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock and Other Poems* (New York: Amereon Ltd, 2002), 12.

68. Cavell, "Declining Decline," 39.

69. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 39.

derstand this faith? And who is Cavell's second knight? We take this up again in the next section.

In any case, Cavell goes on, dancing between lists of philosophers of culture and Kierkegaard, to explore what the everyday is.⁷⁰ We are told that “[y]ou cannot understand what a Wittgensteinian criterion is without understanding the force of his appeal to the everyday; and you cannot understand what the force of Wittgenstein's appeal to the everyday is without understanding what the criteria are.”⁷¹ In other words, it seems as though the everyday, and the force of Wittgenstein's reminders about it, take their strength exactly from philosophy. And Cavell appears to confirm this as he notes that

what it [the above binary relation between the everyday and philosophy] means is that what philosophically constitutes the everyday is “our criteria” (and the possibility of repudiating them) [...]. It is another way of saying that skepticism underlies and joins the concept of criterion and that of the everyday, since skepticism exactly repudiates the ordinary as constituted by [...] our criteria.⁷²

This clearly locates skepticism as the central concept, for both philosophy and Wittgenstein's reminders of the everyday.

Given this, Cavell unsurprisingly tells us that Wittgenstein's “teaching is everywhere controlled by a response to skepticism.”⁷³ Further, this skepticism arises from precisely the sort of moment that the knight of resignation has endured. Something has gone wrong, horribly wrong. And the knight (and Cavell and his Wittgenstein) begin from this moment of rupture. Specifically, they insist that “[t]he weapon [of language and its mythologizing] is put into our hands, but we need not turn it upon ourselves. What turns it upon us is philosophy, the desire for thought, running out of control.”⁷⁴ Notice, critically, that the error Cavell locates, the point at which philosophy emerges and exiles our words, is a loss of control.⁷⁵ In other words, philo-

70. Cavell, “Declining Decline,” *passim*.

71. *Ibid.*, 51.

72. *Ibid.*

73. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 7.

74. Cavell, “Declining Decline,” 45

75. E.g., *ibid.*, 36-37.

sophy as a response to a rupture in the everyday, is governed in and by a skepticism that marks our loss of control, our inability to stop.⁷⁶

From there, we are told that Wittgenstein's method, his aim, his teaching, "shows us that we did not know what we were saying, what we were doing to ourselves."⁷⁷ Wittgenstein tries to remind us of the fact that, in the garden of the ordinary, in most of our lives, when we cry out in pain or the words "I love you" are forced from our lips, things run correctly. However, critically, "there is no absolute escape from (the threat of) illusions and the desires constructed from them [...] no therapy for this in the sense of cure for it."⁷⁸ Indeed, "[t]his [the spiritual nausea that betokens philosophy] as it were pre-moral, philosophically chronic demand (this stand against destiny) is a piece of the intellectual fervor in the Investigations."⁷⁹ By "illusion," I take it that Cavell means our restive and restless demand, our all too human dream, that some steel will yet be found, that some iron cord can connect us together, that Cordelia can answer Lear. And by "stand against destiny," I take it that Cavell both registers the futility of what the PI does, the limits of therapy, as well as the nobility of the attempt—rage against the dying light. There is no escape from either of these poles in that (a) there are no such iron cords and (b) it is all too human to demand, insist, hope for them. In other words, the knight of resignation does not renounce the world once, which is to say both his human longing and a naïve assumption that everything runs smoothly, but continuously. Indeed, he continually reminds himself both that breakdowns are almost inevitable and that his only recourse when they occur is a certain self-control, a willingness to jump into the breach, and do his best to repair the spider's web with his human hands. And, as Cavell noted, both poles are governed by skepticism. The rupture occurs and one feels both the groundlessness of one's life ("how could she, whom I love so deeply, hurt me so badly?") and the need for assurance that there is iron somewhere ("she must not, could not, have intended it that way; she must explain it, herself, to me").

In turn, Cavell's myth continues, Wittgenstein's aim in philosophy is "to free the human being from the chains of delusions [e.g., particular philosophical problems

76. Cf. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §133.

77. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 62.

78. *Ibid.*, xx.

79. Cavell, "Declining Decline," 66.

and reactions]”⁸⁰ by “an effort to free ourselves from philosophy’s chronic wish to instill our words with, or require of them, magic [...] by reminding us of ordinary cases in which words have their genuine effect.”⁸¹ In other words, Wittgenstein’s therapy and method aim to remind us of the ordinary, to attempt to lead our words back from this dangerous precipice, this void that has opened before them and into which we throw them in a quixotic attempt to restore shared community. In other words, Wittgenstein seeks to perform a genetic sort of therapy, a therapy of tracing a philosophical response back to the original cause.⁸² And once the root has been found, the hope is that we can break the

control [e.g., a philosophical response to a problematic situation] is the constant purpose of the later Wittgenstein [...] [it is] intent upon unmasking the defeat of our real need in the face of self-impositions which we have not assessed (PI §108) or fantasies [...] which we cannot escape (PI §115).⁸³

Moreover, and of great importance for the next section, Cavell sees this therapy as a “diurnalization of philosophy’s ambitions, his [Wittgenstein’s] insistence that [...] philosophy’s call is to find itself [...] on a stair, meditating a direction.”⁸⁴ In other words, genetic therapy is meant to shed light on the roots of our illusions and, by doing so, dissolve them in the beauty of Plato’s sun at noonday.

However, and yet again, notice that the game is hopeless, completely, and utterly hopeless. On the one hand, there is no ordinary any longer for the knight of resignation. His naïve belief in it is shattered, and nothing can restore it. Indeed, Cavell’s reflection on “Austinian criteria” speak to this.⁸⁵ Nothing, no close observation, not blood and organs, not a genetic analysis, can restore to us the lost belief that there is a goldfinch that happily flutters about our garden, chirping away and bringing beauty in her wake. We have fallen, and our words are already cast out. Indeed, Wittgenstein “does not, I think, say very much about why we are victims of these fortunes,

80. Cavell, “The Wittgenstein Event,” 293.

81. Cavell, “Freud,” 295.

82. Cf. Cavell, “Declining Decline,” 60.

83. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 72.

84. Cavell, “Declining Decline,” 23.

85. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 65-85.

as if his mission is not to explain why we sin, but to show that we do.”⁸⁶ On the other hand, the knight must hope, must will herself to believe that somehow, somewhere, someone can remind her of the ordinary, can bring her back to the garden again. Thus, as Cavell notes,

I do not picture my everyday knowledge of others as confined but exposed. It is exposed, I would like to say, not to possibilities, but to actualities, to history. There is no possibility of a human relationship that has not been enacted. The worst has befallen, befalls everyday [...]. Tragedy figures my exposure to history as my exposure to fortune or fate.⁸⁷

The knight is continuously aware of her exposure, continually trying to repair the inevitable breaks, and constantly falling back to myths she cannot believe.

In sum, notice that this mythology “invites disappointment, since on its first approach it seems to deprive us of, rather than to give us, something precious.”⁸⁸ This note, in particular, is critical. The deprivation we feel, it seems to me, is engendered by the fact that we realize that faith is all we have and that faith does not satisfy us. Faith is all we have in that if the genetic therapy works, we recognize that there are no guarantees when it comes to the ordinary and re-establishing attunement. What holds us together, what makes us human beings, what makes our marks words and our sounds sentences, is nothing other than reciprocity between people and us. However, such a faith does not satisfy us any longer. Indeed, as with all faith, an aspect of it is horrifying. One can only trust that a conversation partner will hear one’s sounds as sentences, see one’s marks as words, and so on. Indeed, it is both profoundly human and deeply tragic to both long for and to realize that we cannot obtain something more, some moment of forced grace that assures and ensures that our words and world run smoothly.

Granting this, let us turn to PI §116 and the metaphysical/everyday distinction. Specifically, I want to reflect on where our words are when they are put to a metaphysical use, if this myth is followed out. In other words, where is it that Wittgenstein

86. Cavell, “Declining Decline,” 55.

87. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 432.

88. Cavell, “Freud,” 295.

must go to lead them back from the brink, which is to say, to restore us to the ordinary? In my mind, at least, the impression I get from Cavell, not so much in passages but the tone and spirit that pervades his work, is that our words are akin to lost children in a dark woods where the straight way is lost.⁸⁹ They have wandered away from the watchful gaze of knights of resignation, have confused themselves, cannot find themselves. They are scared kids who yearn to return home, who long for the tender embrace of their elders. And this casts the philosopher as a Janus faced figure. On the one hand, he is a sort of monster or tempter. He is someone who entices our words away from their home, who leads them to such horrible places with promises of transcendence only to abandon them. In this spirit, it is little wonder that Cavell began a quarrel with philosophy.⁹⁰ Our words are not safe, and they can never be safe. On the other hand, the philosopher is also cast as an ever-watchful guardian over our words. She is ever resigned to find them, yet again when they have been tempted away, to remind and restore them to sanity, to bring them home to the ordinary. Moreover, what unites these two forms of philosophy, in spite of their marked difference, is their shared longings for some transcendental x. The monstrous form, in its hubris, believes that if only we, e.g., add more indexes, characters, boxes and diamonds, p's and q's, we can, at last, find iron cords. The knight of resignation, though feeling the pull of this hopeless hope, resigns herself to its impossibility. For her, the goal is coping with the longing, not solving it. However, in both cases, it is clear that the playfulness of our words, their ambiguities, and profligate projections, are a crucial source of problems. And, in both cases, the goal of the philosopher is removing this temptation by rendering our words "clear."

In closing, and perhaps most important of all, is that Cavell's myth leads us to put forward that "[a] philosophical problem has the form: 'I cannot find myself.'"⁹¹ What is critical here, precisely as we expect, is that Cavell's focus in on the "I." The knight of resignation, by the action of her withdrawal, has nothing left but this "I." Indeed, it is striking how often Cavell's texts display an odd tension within themselves. On the one hand, they are incredibly supple and respond admirably to other voi-

89. E.g., Cavell, S. "Declining Decline," 34-37. The tone I hear in Cavell is perhaps clearest in Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 198-199.

90. Cavell, *Themes Out of School: Effects and Causes* (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press, 1984), 31.

91. Cavell, "The Investigations' Everyday Aesthetics of Itself," 23

ces that Cavell allows to speak. On the other hand, the end goal is always therapy, always self-salvation. Indeed, the entire point of genetic therapy, of reminding, and the use of sunlight as a disinfectant, is only focused on the individual “I.” This is precisely what we should expect if our Kierkegaardian mythology is correct. The knight of resignation is precisely someone who has withdrawn, renounced, and retreated into the “I.” Further, the notes we made concerning the personal account of philosophy speak to this. The Other divides out.

IV. A Different Mythology: The Endless Joy of Play

In so many ways, Cavell’s mythology is profoundly human and, for that very reason, genuinely compelling. So often, we feel that “[I]t is impossible to say just what I mean!”⁹² However, it seems to me that such a mythology is too pessimistic, too haunted by echoes of dead hopes, too modernist in the literary sense. Indeed, the genre of modernism, and its deep pessimism and longing for something elsewhere, is critical for Cavell as Cavell tells us that his reading of Wittgenstein (and so his mythology of how Wittgenstein strikes him) depends partly on it.⁹³ Given this key, the mythology I am about to offer, and the reading of Wittgenstein that it unfolds can be called “postmodern” provided this is taken in its literary, not philosophical, sense.⁹⁴ What I mean to say is perhaps best seen in Joyce. The Joyce of *Ulysses* is an author obsessed with authenticity and clarity, by a particular way of writing that fuses style, form, and substance together so that it conveys precisely what Joyce wants it to. A master who regiments his language and the worlds he builds from it with such precision that no error is possible, that his words literally say what they mean. By contrast, the Joyce of *Finnegans Wake* is someone who has learned to let go, who does not seek to control his words or the worlds that emerge from them, to shepherd them back to the safety of a closed space, but who trusts them and follows the words wherever they want to go. This postmodern Joyce, and his magnificent night book of dreams, is someone

92. T. S. Eliot, *Lovesong of J. Alfred Prufrock and Other Poems* (New York: Amereon, 2002), 13.

93. Cf. Cavell, S. “Declining Decline,” *passim*.

94. Especially in ‘analytic’ philosophy, “postmodern” is profoundly misunderstood. It entered the philosophical lexicon well after the fact and, as with so many other political terms, functions as nothing so much as a category designed to lump together people we do not like.

who learns to see the gaps between us, the misunderstandings that arise, the finitude of language, and the inability to control our words, as something gracious in a religious sense. Joyce marvels at our ability (his own and his readers) to “play, and make up the rules as we go along [...]. And even where we alter them, as we go along.”⁹⁵ *Finnegans Wake*, unlike *Ulysses*, may be (and in some circles has been) discarded as a Nothing, an empty and meaningless heap of broken shards. And yet Joyce has faith. Joyce does not believe his audience will understand, for to “understand” *Finnegans Wake* is already something of a misnomer but has faith that the reader can learn to delight in it. As it were, for this Joyce, the breakdowns that separate us, the lack of iron cords between us, are invitations to beautiful accidents and wondrous misfires. There is no steel. And for that very reason, we can play and dance. As it were, a lack of meaning is an invitation to mean, not a horrifying void to be withdrawn from but a blank page that invites writing. And the human thing to do is not trust only ourselves and our words, but to have faith that others too can find the keys to our souls. But here I have already gotten ahead of myself.

To lay this out clearly, I return to Silence again. I lay out his mythology of the other knight, the knight of faith, and reflect all too briefly on this. Then I use this to help us reread the metaphysical/everyday use again. Specifically, I discuss where Cavell's myth and my own agree (they agree on quite a lot) and then how they diverge. I close by arguing that my myth changes how we should see the philosopher and what it means to lead our words back from their metaphysical use to their everyday use.

To begin, Silence (or, perhaps, in this case, Kierkegaard, the editor) is already playing with us when we turn to the knight of faith. On one level, the knight of faith vanishes, is meant to vanish, into the They that we are supposed to resist. However, and very much in the spirit of the old Danish saint, nothing is as comical as a counter-culture as it presupposes the very culture it supposedly counters. Indeed, the endless and frantic insistence on “authenticity,” “control,” and so on, that make up the modern are, from the postmodern's perspectives, amusing because they depend on what they claim to counter. Regardless, Silence tells us that a knight of faith “takes delight in everything, and whenever one sees him taking part in a particular pleasure, he does it with the persistence which is the mark of an earthly man whose soul is ab-

95. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §83.

sorbed in such things [...] he is interested in everything that goes on, in a rat which slips under the curb, in the children's play, and with the nonchalance of a girl of sixteen. And yet he is no genius [...]. And yet, and yet [...] this man has made, and every instant is making the movements of infinity."⁹⁶

Let us unfold this myth further. First, the knight of faith sees the world as clearly as the knight of resignation does. For the writers that Kierkegaard was kind enough to edit, this point is often critical. A religious person is not a person who accepts the fairy tales that she has learned on her mother's knee. Indeed, there is a constant danger, especially in philosophy, but in our broader intellectual world as well, of confusing faith with blind belief. Pace this, faith is not an epistemic propositional attitude towards the world but a way of trusting it. Pursuant to this, a knight of faith does not have a blind belief in her everyday, the sort of naivetés of children who feel that their language reflects thought perfectly and that others are shadows by comparison. Instead, a knight of faith and a knight of resignation both know that this "everyday" is a vanishing point, an accident. However, whereas the knight of resignation renounces the everyday, and its sweetness, the knight of faith, trusts it. We shall return to this later.

Second, such a knight of faith has a rather odd attitude towards the unfolding of our life and language. Silence writes that "[t]owards evening he [our knight] walks home [...]. On his way, he reflects that his wife has surely a special little warm dish prepared for him [...]. If he were to meet a man like-minded, he could continue as far as East Gate to discourse with him about that dish [...]. His wife hasn't it—strangely enough, it is quite the same to him."⁹⁷ Notice that what delights this knight, this person who sees as clearly the supposed horrors of being as a knight of resignation, is not the thought of certainty, not grand reflections on the necessities that surely must lay below our feet, but a little warm dish prepared by his wife and idle talk with someone (the They? *It does not matter!*), musing on good things awaiting him at his home.⁹⁸ Further, it is crucial to notice that what makes this dish unique is not that it is the calf's head he expects but that it is there at all. Indeed, here, we begin to see what trust means. The knight of faith trusts his wife, for Silence, one imagines his

96. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, 30-31.

97. *Ibid.*, 31.

98. Cf. Cavell, "Declining Decline," 64.

world, to respond to him with kindness and understanding. Relatedly the knight also trusts his conversation partner by speaking with her about things good for human beings, rather than adopting some haughty pretensions and empty distinctions between his special status and their unenlightened ways.⁹⁹ Indeed, the point of this mythic figure, this wondrous knight, is precisely how human (and in love with this) he is.

Third, the knight of faith does not interpret breaks with the ordinary, and breakdowns in understanding, as horrifying moments that must be prevented at all costs. Instead, she sees them as invitations. It is precisely because there is so much out of our control that we can learn to be with one another properly.

Given this form of trust, not doubt, a radically different conception of philosophy and the metaphysician emerges. To begin, recall that section I linked "philosophical" to reasoning practices and argued that mutual articulation is key to making sense of these practices. In turn, when someone speaks metaphysically, she is not casting our words out from their safe garden. Indeed, such an understanding of what a metaphysician is doing refuses to meet her on her terms—rather than a competent speaker inviting us to play with her, she is cast as a mad-woman, someone in need of "re-education."¹⁰⁰ Instead, the metaphysician is trying to say something buried in her heart, something that she herself does not yet know how to say. She is asking, trusting, having faith that her metaphysical use of words is an invitation to the Other to help her say what she means. Indeed, the thought that I already know what I need, that this is clear to me, is a far more deleterious myth than that of the philosopher casting our words out, a point we return to more fully in a moment.

In any case, in a stunning dialectical twist, one may say that the knight of faith rejects the knight of resignation's trust in her "I"—in the idea that what she means is clear to her, even if to no one else. Pursuant to this, when the knight of faith's words go on holiday, they are not idling sinfully or mischief-making. Instead, they are playing. And though it is important to remind ourselves that such playing cannot make up all of life, that a kind person must lead the words back from the playground of the metaphysical to their homes, where a loving parent has prepared a warm dish,

99. Cf. *ibid.*, 68-69.

100. Cf. Baker, *Wittgenstein's Method*, 287

it is imperative that they learn to play, which is to say, learn to grow up. And, in the end, the insight of the knight of faith, and of true religion generally, is that there is no such thing as moving out of childhood.

With this in view, let us turn to Wittgenstein. As I will make clear in a moment, a fundamental problem with Cavell's myth is that it leads him to read Wittgenstein as always responding to the skeptic, to ruptures and breaks, to something harmful and awful. And what such a reading elides is the sheer playfulness and enjoyment of the PI. Wittgenstein delights in puns and witty metaphors, he responds to the voices that object and doubt not with the seriousness of the grave, but with stories of talking pots in fairytales¹⁰¹ and people who buy copies of the same newspaper to confirm that a claim is right.¹⁰² Indeed, it is stunning both how sensitive Cavell is to the polyphonic (and musical) structure of the PI and how much his myth leads him to set this insight aside. Wittgenstein reasons with skeptics as much as Platonists, philosophers as much as the woman on the streets, gods as much as demons. The voices in the PI are far more complex than even the Platonic dialogues, and Plato's (perhaps latent) thought that there are "types of persons." Wittgenstein seeks to meet each voice on its own terms. And not all voices are skeptical. Some are loving, others despairing, some remind us and others hide from what they know. In any case, they are not all are the voice of someone trapped by her delusions and horrified by skepticism.

Following from this, let us begin to read Wittgenstein as a knight of faith and a champion of play. Wittgenstein tells us, wants to begin, with the thought that "[t]he preconception of crystalline purity can only be removed by turning our whole inquiry around (One might say: the inquiry must be turned around but on the pivot of or real need)."¹⁰³ Cavell's and my mythic way of reading this claim align to a large extent. For both, the earlier Wittgenstein and his inhuman demand for perfect rigidity, for a timeless transcendental structure that claims that "proposition, language, thought, world, stand in line one behind the other, each equivalent to the other"¹⁰⁴ is the thought guiding the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. The transcendental preconceptions laid down are ideals, and yet they are ideals earlier Wittgenstein clings to, as it

101. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §282.

102. *Ibid.*, §265.

103. *Ibid.*, §108.

104. *Ibid.*, §96.

is the only way to ensure that language, thought, and reality aligns in the right way. Indeed, in this key, the threat of nonsense is something that earlier Wittgenstein is obsessed with—trying to construct a perfect system or an elucidation method that allows us to see through it, ban it, excise it, free ourselves from it. Further, Cavell and I both agree that this quest for the ideal, for the preconditions of the world, for not accidental ways things are but essential ways things must be, is at once compellingly human and doomed. We demand hard steel over the pit of contingency. More philosophically, we want to discover “the essence of all things. It [the hoped results of such a quest] seeks the foundations of things [...] it arises [...] from an urge to understand the foundations, or essence, of everything empirical.”¹⁰⁵

It is the parenthetical comment in PI §108, where Cavell’s mythology and mine begin to diverge. Specifically, Cavell notes that

Wittgenstein does not harp on the word “need” [...] any more than on the word “turn,” but the weight of an idea of true need in opposition to false need seems to me no less in the Investigations than in those philosophical texts that more famously [...] contain early considerations of artificial necessities, such as the *Republic* and *The Social Contract* and *Walden*.¹⁰⁶

This claim occurs in a section wherein Cavell develops the idea that there is a vertical and a horizontal dimension of Wittgenstein’s concept of form of life. And he seems (rightly, in my mind) convinced that Wittgenstein’s supposed conservatism is due to a realization that certain attempts to escape the human would annul it completely. To suffer at the loss of a child or the absence of a loved one are human reactions, reactions of our form of *life*. And to take these away because suffering is pain and pain is bad is not to make life better, but to demand a new sort of life, an inhuman one.

However, what Cavell is at once aware of and yet unable to get into view, is this distinction between true and constructed needs that he noted above. Thus, Cavell claims that “[t]he rhetoric of humanity as a form of life [...] standing in need of something like transfiguration—some radical change but as it were from inside [...] is

105. Ibid, §89.

106. Cavell, “Declining Decline,” 43-44.

typical of apparently contradictory sensibilities.”¹⁰⁷ Moreover, “leaving the world as it is [...] may require the most forbearing act of thinking [...] to let true need, say desire, be manifest and be obeyed.”¹⁰⁸ And, most importantly, “Wittgenstein’s appeal or ‘approach’ to the everyday finds the (actual) everyday to be as pervasive a scene of illusion and trance and artificiality (of need) as Plato or Rousseau or Marx or Thoreau had found it.”¹⁰⁹ In other words, Cavell casts around for some Archimedean point, some axis of true needs, that diurnal philosophy can bring into view by dissipating shadows of artificial ones, as we await the coming of the real needs into the clearing opened by the light. Notice that this way of thinking about the turn itself turns on Cavell’s modernism. Modernism in part depends on precisely the sort of dichotomies that Cavell seems to proffer here—true needs and constructed ones, that which shines forth in the light and the shadows, authenticity and idle chat. To presage a bit, one wonders what happens to the knight of faith annoying his peers with empty chatter of warm dishes made by his beloved and his keen interest in a rat as it runs here and there, doing rat things?

In any case, one problem this mythology faces is that it seems to require a distinction and then a distinction within the distinction. For the first distinction, it may look as though Cavell needs some dichotomy between everyday uses of words, and the authentic desires they express, and extraordinary uses of words, and the constructed (or illusory) desires they are pegged to. However, Cavell rightly notes that this is far too simplistic, as it stands. And this is because we do not merely have authentic needs and natural expressions for them. To bring this into view, Cavell powerfully develops projections of words and how these create new worlds, complete with new selves and new ways of being in relationships. Thus, consider that as Cavell’s daughter learns her words, she tries to extend them, project them, play with them, learn their meanings by seeing their limits. “Kitty” gets used for soft things, to refer to four-legged beasts, to reflect the human need to be petted and loved, and so on. This is, it seems to me, a compelling account of our ways with language.¹¹⁰ We do not merely staple labels to things and pretend that we do not understand when a child (tries) to use

107. *Ibid.*, 44.

108. *Ibid.*, 45.

109. *Ibid.*, 46.

110. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 169-190.

“kitty” for “pet me.” Indeed, such a feigned lack of understanding is reminiscent of Augustine’s story of language learning where his elders beat him until he conformed. Instead, as mentioned in section II, language brings with it an entire mythology, complete with new ways of describing and relating, new points and projects, new ways of being human. For Cavell’s daughter to use “kitty” as a request for love and affection is as much for her to form and foster a new desire, and a new way of being, as it is to express herself. However, if this is so, then the role of diurnal philosophy becomes increasingly hard to bring into view. The daughter’s request for a new relationship, for affection, when she finds herself lonely or scared, her use of “kitty” as opposed to screaming into the void¹¹¹, changes her- it constructs at once a new need and a new way to request it be fulfilled. And it is simply unclear if we can (or should) use the blinding light of the sun to dispel this.

Ergo, to sustain this deep insight on Cavell’s part, to keep before our eyes that being human cannot bear to be divided between animalistic urges like food and cultural wants like company, a distinction within the distinction is required. My everyday use of words reflects nothing so much as the limits of my current world.¹¹² However, and blessedly, that limit can be upset as my world changes. I may fall in love and find myself with new needs and new words to convey them. I may find myself speaking in trite ways about warm dishes my beloved has prepared for me and find myself not caring if she hasn’t. In turn, the only way for diurnal philosophy to function, the only way that it can dispel illusionary needs while remaining true to Cavell’s insight that words open up worlds and worlds need new words, is by insisting on a further break, another distinction. In effect, there are the extraordinary uses of words (writing bad love poetry, say) and metaphysical uses of words. And it is this metaphysical use of words that is, in some yet to be specified way, inauthentic and so illusory, and so in need of the pure light of relentless philosophizing.

However, this attempt to make a distinction within a distinction, to insist on genuinely new worlds that call for new authentic languages, on the one hand, and mere illusions thrown up from elsewhere, on the other, is problematic for an exegetical, a philosophical and, most importantly, a mythological reason.

111. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §244.

112. Cf. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge Press, 1974), 5.6.

Exegetically, Wittgenstein points out that “I believe I summed up where I stand in relation to philosophy when I said: really one should write philosophy only as one writes a poem.”¹¹³ This quote seems to cancel the difference between writing poetry as one learns how to be in love and doing metaphysics as one learns one way, among others, to come to grips with our humanity. In each case, there is a grave threat that we misunderstand what writing does—i.e., we take our panegyric poems of the beloved to describe them, and then we come to be disappointed when our angel shows herself to be a human being, and, in a profoundly similar way, when we take our metaphysical play with language to “explore the essence of all things. It [metaphysical philosophy] seeks to see the foundations of things [...]. It arises [...] from an urge to understand the foundations, or essences, of everything empirical,”¹¹⁴ and then feel deprived or furious when we cannot draw G-d’s mind down from heaven and study it as biologists study bugs. However, the source of this confusion is not the writing. Instead, it is our interpretation. Indeed, Wittgenstein notes that “[h]ere it is easy to get into that dead end in philosophize where one believes that the difficulty of the problem consists in our having to describe phenomena that evade our grasp.”¹¹⁵ The issue here, critically, is not the philosophizing, not a flawed skeptical reaction to a break with the ordinary, not a way of driving out artificial need. Instead, the issue is that we are led to a dead end when we think about philosophy in terms of descriptions at all.

Relatedly, my mythology also shifts what Wittgenstein means when he says, “[t]he real discovery is the one that enables me to break off philosophizing when I want to.—The one that gives philosophy peace, so that it is no longer tormented by questions which bring itself into question.”¹¹⁶ The discovery here is not internal to philosophizing, as Wittgenstein has pointed out that the reasoning practice of philosophy makes no such discoveries.¹¹⁷ Instead, the discovery is the realization that philosophy is not meant to describe it all—be it the hard cords of necessity or the deferred phantom of the everyday.¹¹⁸ And the peace that is sought for philosophy is not a peace internal to the process. Indeed, Wittgenstein stresses that what torments philo-

113. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 28.

114. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §89.

115. *Ibid.*, §436.

116. *Ibid.*, §133.

117. *Ibid.*, §126.

118. Cf. Cavell, “Declining Decline,” 73-74.

sophy is not philosophy, but questions outside of it that put it into question. In other words, what torments philosophy and what torments writing poetry as well, is a culture that insists on practicality and seriousness to the exclusion of all else. Penning poems to one's beloved is childish, as is speculating about the nature of necessity, as is talking endlessly about hot dishes. And it is this, the child's voice and her insistence on play, that Wittgenstein seems to want to defend.

Philosophically, the problem with Cavell's distinction in the distinction, his attempt to use daylight to separate out new worlds and authentic words, and the metaphysical use of language, is that it does not seem viable at all. This can be seen in several ways. One can point out that the abstract-to-the-point-of-useless attempt by Frege and Russell to reimagine logic and link it to mathematics (and language), created new worlds and new words and sciences for it. One can point out that Rousseau's thought of the natural goodness of humanity and the corrupting power of externally imposed power-structures echoes powerfully in our political thinking. However, the most pressing question of all is how we come to make this distinction in the first place. How do we come to know our real needs and illusions? And, as Cavell seems to both acknowledge and disavow, we can only do so in and through metaphysics itself. Indeed, without this very projection, this curse that burdens language so, the idea of true needs becomes itself, problematic. True needs over and against what?

The mythological point flows from this, in turn. Specifically, Cavell's modernist mythology leads him, ironically, to be skeptical of our needs. There are some that our illusory, flawed, and inauthentic, and our task as philosophers is to expose these. In turn, this casts trust, or faith, as dubious. Indeed, here, trust would be little more than insisting that "I follow the rule blindly."¹¹⁹ However, this skepticism, this distrust, has two problematic effects. First, the ordinary is forever pushed away, as we simply do not know when we have struck it and when we have found only the illusions that lay over it.¹²⁰ Again, the knight of resignation, Cavell's knight and his Wittgenstein, refuse the sweetness of the world for fear of being mystified. Second, it misunderstands the nature of faith and the trust that underwrites both my mythology

119. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*, §219.

120. Cavell, *Themes Out of School*, 46.

and my Wittgenstein. Trust is not mere blind belief, nor less is it an antidote to illusions. I can think of no better way to say this than:

God has pity on kindergarten children,
 He pities school children—less.
 But adults he pities not at all.

He abandons them,
 And sometimes they have to crawl on all fours
 In the scorching sand
 To reach the dressing station,
 Streaming with blood.

But perhaps
 He will have pity on those who love truly
 And take care of them
 And shade them
 Like a tree over the sleeper on the public bench.

Perhaps even we will spend on them
 Our last pennies of kindness
 Inherited from mother,
 So that their own happiness will protect us
 Now and on other days.¹²¹

In other words, faith is not a trust in, or return to, the everyday. Instead, faith is something we achieve by dragging ourselves, streaming in blood, to the dressing station. It comes by trusting that someone at that station can and will help us. And it comes from realizing that the last precious pennies of kindness we inherited from our mother are to be shared. It comes not by resigning and disillusioning oneself, but by

121. Yehuda Amichai, *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 1

trusting that someone (or Someone) will answer our call, be they an illusion or not.¹²² For what is an illusion, after all, than a fragment of modernism's insistence on authentic and real?

Let me develop this mythology, this Wittgenstein as a knight of faith, a bit further before I return to the question of how to bring words home. Thus, consider PI §15 and PI §42. In PI §15, Wittgenstein offers us a game with clear rules, well-defined actions, crisp words, and a sharp everyday (one imagines). To wit, Builder-A shows Assistant-B a sign "a," and she must go fetch the tool with a carved into it. However, in PI §42, Wittgenstein later asks if "even names that have never been used for a tool [e.g., 'X'] got a meaning in this game [i.e., PI §15]?"¹²³ It seems that Cavell's myth would lead him to answer this question in the negative. The problem with such a sign "X" is that it is not ordinary as rigidly defined by PI §15, it is not an authentic sign, and it cannot possibly reflect the tool Builder-A needs at this point. Indeed, what is Builder-A doing holding up such a sign? Does he not realize that "X" has no role, is idle, and on holiday? Is Builder-A trying to expel Assistant-B from the paradise of such a well-regulated ordinary? Wittgenstein goes on, "even such signs could be admitted into the language-game, and B might have to answer them with a shake of the head. (One could imagine this as a kind of amusement for them.)"¹²⁴ This quote is striking for so many reasons. The function of "X" in the hands of Builder-A is, especially if we take the parenthetical comment seriously, an invitation for Assistant-B to play as well as an acknowledgment of Assistant-B's humanity, her ability to play and respond without or outside of the rules, or even the everyday. Further, such giving a home to "X," helping each other and ourselves make sense of it, is, far from deleterious, a human thing, one to be celebrated and encouraged. Moreover, if my above discussion was persuasive, it is unclear if this extraordinary use, this "X" with no tool and no home, and Builder-A with no true need, can be differentiated from a metaphysical use. Indeed, perhaps metaphysics is a form of play? A point we return to in a moment. In any case, and finally, what governs this, what can assign a meaning to "X," is a faith in play. Salvation, it seems, comes from the jesters.

122. Cf. Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*, 457.

123. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §42.

124. *Ibid.*

With my mythology in view, we finally turn to where our words are and how Wittgenstein leads them home. To begin, my mythology refuses the modernist distinction between authenticity and illusion, extraordinary uses and metaphysical ones, and so on. Indeed, the metaphysical use is just another form of projection, just another way of playing with our words and following where they may lead us.¹²⁵ Moreover, in this mythology, metaphysical uses are striking because they are among the most human uses we can imagine. I cannot help but read Plato's dialogues or Leibniz's letters and feel the pull they have, the need to articulate something they cannot quite say, and the hope that others can help them articulate. New words and new worlds they struggle with, new ways of being human, new ways to use "kitty" (a tired word) for requests for love and understanding. Indeed, metaphysicians here are not madmen talking in ways they do not understand, but human beings who have realized that they can only say what they want with the help of Others. Metaphysics need not be the dreary business of regimenting language and hashing out modalities. Metaphysics can be a form of play, a concept-poetry that may very well help us come to grips with our finite status. Metaphysics is the perfect object of comparison. And to seek to remove it, to mitigate it, to train someone to stop it, is akin to Augustine's elders beating him into using his words correctly.

In turn, this recasts Wittgenstein, the place of our words, and their homes. For Wittgenstein, he is no longer understood as possessed by an almost inhuman fervor and demand for the destruction of all illusions.¹²⁶ Nor less is he cast as a policeman, a therapist, or a god of death who shows the cares of mortals to be no different than the games of children (of course there is no difference and that elevates both). Instead, Wittgenstein is cast as a loving parent who calls us "du," the "you" of lovers, and of Buber. Moreover, he leads or shepherds our words and ourselves home not with the violence of Augustine's martinet elders nor with the frantic pace of a fanatic, but with the tenderness of a parent who guides them as they play.¹²⁷ And he leads them home not to lock them away, not to prevent them from playing again tomorrow, from projecting themselves and growing, from tripping and falling, from bruised knees and hurt feelings, from the beautiful illusions that make up so much of childhood, but to

125. Ibid, II, xi, §250.

126. Cf. Cavell, S. "Declining Decline," 66-67.

127. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §172.

remind them that, though play is important, it is not the whole of life, that warm dishes and pennies of kindness matter too. Indeed, in this myth, Wittgenstein is a parent who realizes that “[I]f people did not sometimes do silly things [like play in metaphysics], nothing intelligent would ever get done.”¹²⁸ Thus, “[d]on't, for heaven's sake, be afraid of talking nonsense [e.g., projecting metaphysically]! But you must pay attention to your nonsense [e.g., remember this is a game].”¹²⁹

Given this, the metaphysical use of words is also transformed. It is not an illusion, a constructed want, a phantasmagoric error. Instead, it is recast as what it is, one more form of projection, one more way of playing with our words and ourselves, one more attempt to expand our words and worlds. Indeed, as mentioned, and as Wittgenstein said, “I believe I summed up where I stand in relation to philosophy when I said: really one should write philosophy only as one writes a poem.”¹³⁰ What, after all, is metaphysics but a sort of poetry? An attempt to invent new ways to say new things? Indeed:

People caught in a homeland-trap;
to speak now in this weary language a language,
a language torn from its sleep in the bible: dazzled,
it wobbles from mouth to mouth. In a language that once described
Miracles and God, to say car, bomb, God¹³¹

What languages, after all, are not asleep and do not need such new words for new worlds? And what is philosophy, after all, but one attempt to find and invent new terms for our longings?

In sum though Cavell's mythology and his knight of resignation are surely correct that a perennial temptation and a pernicious mistake is to misunderstand what metaphysics is, to confuse a kind of concept-poetry with a super-physics. However, his mythology goes wrong by reiterating modernist binaries—binaries between everyday and extraordinary, authentic and idle, illusion and reality, light and dark-

128. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 50.

129. *Ibid.*, 56.

130. *Ibid.*, 28.

131. Amichai, *The Selected Poetry of Yehuda Amichai*, 57.

ness. Indeed, what such binaries occlude is something that Peirce rightly points out about another age of metaphysics. Pierce notes that the best way to understand scholasticism is

to contemplate a Gothic cathedral. The first quality of either is a religious devotion, truly heroic. One feels that the men who did these works really believe in religion as we believe in nothing. We cannot easily understand how Thomas Aquinas can speculate so much on the nature of angels [... it was simply because he held them to be real. If they are real, why are they not more interesting than the bewildering varieties of insects which naturalists study.¹³²

Critically, the sheer beauty and rigor of St. Thomas's work, the felt sense of piety and the love and care he took with it, is unaffected by the supposedly sharp line between illusions and reality. For Pierce, scholastic metaphysics was concept-poetry written for and about G-d. And to deny the nobleness of this because we now “know” what true needs are; because diurnal philosophy has exposed St. Thomas's true needs; because our modernist ways have shown that St. Thomas's angels are mere specters— strikes me as merely a sad remnant of modernism and its relentless insistence that we grow up. What can be more human than the contemplation of dancing angels?

And, similarly, for Wittgenstein as a knight of faith, and for the postmodern myth we have unfolded, the mistake is not metaphysics—any more than it is walking, delighting in rats running here and there, small dishes and annoying chats about them, etc. Rather, the mistake is to cast this human, beautifully human, desire to play with each other, to project our words and follow where they lead, to trust each other to make sense of ourselves and our hearts, and to have faith in a parent who lovingly leads us home for a quiet night so we can play tomorrow, as itself an illusion, a child of the darkness, something best removed. In other words, Wittgenstein's real fear is not the ghost of skepticism per se, but a culture that has forgotten how to write poetry and lost why musing on angels is a painfully beautiful thing human beings do. And what is diur-

132. Charles Pierce, *The Essential Pierce: Selected Philosophical Writings Vol. 1*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 86.

nal philosophy or genetic therapy but a way of eliminating this, of using the cold and inhuman sun to dissipate the “illusions” that make us who we are, of making us take seriously serious things? Critically, though, and pace modernism and its mythology, “[e]ven in the darkness there are divinely beautiful duties. And doing them unnoticed.”¹³³ In the darkness, that is where we see the knight of faith, slowly walking home as the dusk settles in, towards his loving wife, and his trusted world.

V. Therapy: A Pharmakon¹³⁴

I want to close by briefly reflecting on the rather widespread assumption that Wittgenstein is an intellectual therapist and that the peace he aims to give us is the peace of a world without philosophy.¹³⁵ I should stress here that the version of therapy I lay out is not Cavell *per se*. Instead, it is one way of inheriting him. First, I lay out briefly the myth that seems to be lurking here as well as what pharmakon [treatment or cure] is being offered to us. Second, I argue that if we were to take this pharmakon [poison], we would be given a peace that resembles nothing so much as the peace of the dead- intellectual euthanasia.

To begin, the myth that seems to ground the image of “Wittgenstein as therapist” casts him as a tormented individual and his view of “philosophical problems” as a sort of mental disorder. The myth is sustained in a myriad of ways including examination of the Nachlass,¹³⁶ reflections on his tortured life,¹³⁷ and so on. From here, the myth goes on to ascribe to Wittgenstein a host of different methods,¹³⁸ each designed to help us learn to stop asking specific questions, stop raising problems, and to help us return to the ordinary. Indeed, this myth nicely aligns with Cavell's myth of heroic struggle against our all too human nature.

133. Johann Georg Hamann, “Letter to Christian Jacob Kraus,” in *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth Century Questions and Twentieth Century Answers*, ed. J. Schmidt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 177.

134. Obviously, the person who did the most to play with the double meaning of “pharmakon” is Derrida. See Jacques Derrida, “Plato's Pharmacy,” in *Dissemination*, trans. B. Johnson (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

135. Cf. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §133.

136. Baker may be the most sustained examination of the Nachlass in this way. See Baker, *Wittgenstein's Method*, *passim*.

137. Ray Monk, *The Duty of Genius* (New York: Penguin Press, 1991), *passim*.

138. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §133.

However, we should reflect on what such therapy would actually achieve, were it possible. In other words, if we could learn to accept our finite status and learn to stop asking specific questions, raising certain problems, and so on, what would this brave new world look like? I argue that such a phamarkon would remove something essential, and fundamentally human, about our ways with words. Indeed, it is striking that Conant, a champion of the “Wittgenstein as therapist” myth, acknowledges and represses this. Thus, we are told that, after therapy, what we are left with is “our own sense of deprivation”¹³⁹ without mythically exploring why we feel so deprived.

To begin, it seems like the goal of this therapy is to re-educate philosophers so that they learn to stop doing certain things with their words. In turn, if therapy is successful, such people would accept that words mean only in their home language-games, that trying to cast them outside of this game is inherently problematic. The critical problem, though, is that such a resignation renders projection, analogies, play, and so on, with words rather hard to understand. Cavell's daughter, one imagines, would accept that “kitty” refers to felines and would not try to use the word to ask for affection, say.

In turn, such an acceptance drastically alters our relationship with our language. Language becomes, as it were, something foreign and outside us, a set of tools with clear uses that we have polished in such a way that we see how they work and where to put them. And we, the language users, are more akin to tool users who deploy words to do jobs. The problem, though, is just that “words can be wrung from us- like a cry. Words can be hard to utter.”¹⁴⁰ Our words, and our relationships with them, are not that of a carpenter and a tool. Indeed, consider Augustine's use of language in *The Confessions*. Augustine is not merely reporting his life, using dead words to convey forgotten deeds. Instead, Augustine tells us that he is trying to use his words to call upon Something he does not know and cannot understand. Indeed, Augustine is at once painfully aware of how limited and limiting his language is when compared to the Divine and how it is all he has to offer, that he and his words stand before God. Furthermore, this attempt to express himself, to say something to a God

139. Conant, “Throwing away the Top of the Ladder,” 337.

140. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §546.

that already knows what is in his heart and his past, is not so much reporting as constituting. Augustine needs words for God precisely because Augustine needs to be a self that can stand before God. And this tendency, this longing for something we cannot ever quite get into view, is part of what drives us to write poetry, perform confessions, and yes, even to do metaphysics.

Given this, if we take the pharmakon offered to us in the form of philosophical therapy, it seems like what it would ameliorate or excise is precisely this felt need for something we know not what. Granting this, it is clear that the people who emerge after taking the phamakon, after unbending the bow of their longing, would have a feeling of peace in the same way Nietzsche's last humans have a peace.¹⁴¹ In both cases, humanity becomes a domesticated animal, their words become wholly dull things, knowing their places and never causing problems, and their hearts would learn to accept that if they cannot say it, it must be passed over. And such a shift, such a pharmakon, would lead to a passive acquiesce. Indeed, I daresay that the therapist, not the metaphysician, is the one who does not know what she is doing, who cures us by exterminating the most beautiful aspects of us—our longing and restiveness, St. Thomas's beautiful reflections on angels as they dance splendidly on pins. To remove philosophy is to remove its source. And its source is wonder, as has been often said and often forgotten. To remove wonder, one trains people to accept that "[t]he earth has become small, and on it hops the last human being, who makes everything small [...]. They abandon the regions where it is hard to live [...]. 'We have invented happiness' say the last human beings, and they blink."¹⁴² Such a peaceful world strikes me as inhuman—the peace of a place where nothing lives any longer.

In closing, the real tragedy, it seems to me, of casting Wittgenstein as a therapist, as a figure who helps us resign, as an inventor of happiness, is that Wittgenstein himself fought so hard against precisely this cultural tendency to reduce all problems to puzzles and all longings to clear preferences. We are told that "Man has to awaken to wonder—and so perhaps do peoples. Science is a way of sending him to sleep again."¹⁴³ It seems to me that the role of the pharmakon Wittgenstein supposedly of-

141. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. Pippin and A. Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

142. *Ibid.*, 10.

143. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 5.

fers us is that of “[a] bit of poison once in a while; that makes for pleasant dreams,”¹⁴⁴ a way of sending us to sleep again.

144. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 10.