Conversations 9

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Table of Contents

Cavell and Dialectic

EDITORIAL COMMENT

The ninth issue of *Conversations* responds to Cavell's thoughts against the backdrop of the history of philosophy in general, and phenomenology, especially Hegel and Heidegger; unfolding metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, political, and aesthetic ramifications. It is against that backdrop, that the question arises about the nature and function of dialectic in wording the world, the other, or ourselves, as acknowledged by Paul Franks and Espen Hammer.[1] The idea of the issue arose with an essay (an "attempt") I was working on, about Cavell, Wittgenstein, and Hegel, at University of Leeds, while also reading *The Phenomenology of Spirit*[2] with the Hegel Reading Group at the University of Oxford (Michaelmas term, 2020), and, meeting with the Cavellian Reading Group (that began at the University of Cambridge, now an international group), upon sharing the idea of the essay with Amir Khan, this started a series of discussions, which eventually resulted in an invitation to guest edit this issue. That idea of dialectic, as I understand, is Cavell's claim that philosophy leads us to speaking "outside language-games," that therefore the human animal needs to be brought back into language and natural forms of life.[3] The following provides an overview of the collection of critical essays herein.

The issue opens with an essay by Richard Eldridge which illuminates Cavell on selfhood by critical responses and rejoinders to remarks in Hegel's *Aesthetics*[4] and *Phenomenology*. At once we are thrown back into a reflection of ourselves, the dialectic of the "I" or subject, between the self and non-self (so to say, the internal and the external), by surveying its conceptual development (in Hegelian and Freudian terms),

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1. Paul Franks, according to Cavell, helped him appreciate the Fichtean problem of the other, and Espen Hammer, has suggested Cavell's philosophy is a sort of contemporary Hegelianism.
2. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, ed. and trans. Terry Pinkard and Michael Baur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).
3. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 207.
4. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T. M. Knox, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

in and from childhood to adulthood, and the impact of its interruptions of itself. The question for Cavell then is how crucial is the self's interruption of itself, the self getting in its own way, for the achievement of selfhood? In a description of the discontents of scepticism, Rupert Read's questions the human being's finitude, albeit an understanding of ourselves, i.e. our place somewhere between the finite and the infinite: that we are not only finite beings. In dialogue with Wittgenstein, Heidegger, and Iain McGilchrist, we are invited to rethink our conceptions of timelessness and temporality, of being-in-the-world, namely, a non-supernaturalistic subjectivity and inter-subjectivity, and to reconsider our limits if our lives are finite, and, our freedoms if our lives are not finite. Then Sandra Laughier offers a reading of Cavell's *The Claim of Reason,* proposing that set of writings as a study of the human voice. If Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*[5] consider the subject as voice, then Cavell's writings register the voice as subjectivity; which return it to philosophy. Like Wittgenstein, Cavell is recounting our understanding others and ourselves. In our self-understanding and understanding of others, the "we" in "I" needs to be recounted. The key idea is that of acknowledgement (confession, or expressiveness opposed to inexpressiveness), apart from which we may remain, so to say, hidden, private, or unknown. But in the case of knowing ourselves—subjectivity and intersubjectivity—how crucial is the function of acknowledgment (or its refusal)?

Taking up a dialogue between Cavell and Hegel, Andrew Norris shows the extent to which the latter influenced the former. For this reason, the questions of meaning and sublation are investigated. The surprise is how dialectical method, or Hegel's *Aufhebung*, was explicitly employed by Cavell. The shock, however, is that there may be a Hegelian implicitness—as though, unconscious for Cavell's self-consciousness—which remains unacknowledged. Next, Martin Shuster reads some remarks by Cavell and Adorno, in order to reflect on the concepts of philosophy and redemption. If Adorno claims that society has lost philosophy, then does Cavell proclaim philosophy's return into society? Has it been superseded? The position of redemption, in which to view each other, registers the human condition of mortality, and then what is needed: learning to die. Finally, Byron Davies provides an aesthetic analysis, in Ca-

5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* rev. 4th edn., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2009).

vell's *The World Viewed*,[6] on color. In conversing about film, art, and criticism, the aim is to help us understand Cavell's "de-psychologizing or un-theatricalizing" of the subject, provided by his experience of "serious color films," but does it explain the "feel of futurity"? In closing, a sort of afterword, is provided to remark on the remarkable (or unremarkable), namely, the claim that dialectic is inherent in ordinary language, despite constraints or limits of what we say we say, in our human forms of life, what I call, to acknowledge the unacknowledged other.

The issue wishes to further along the conversation of humanity, through a deeper understanding of Cavell's work on philosophy, literature, film, and so on. This collection of readings, reflections, reevaluations, reveal that in recounting what we should ordinarily say, or do—Hegel's Owl of Minerva returns, what Wittgenstein called imagining a private language, and Cavell called, a division of "Materialism and Idealism," or, the "real" and the "ideal"—is merely our coping with the "anxiety of progressive *inexpressiveness*."[7]

MOSES ESTRADA-ALVAREZ

6. Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edn. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).
7. Ibid., 472.

1. Cavell and the Achievement of Selfhood

RICHARD ELDRIDGE

Here is a passage from the discussion of rhythm in music in Hegel's *Aesthetics* that will, I suggest, help us to make sense of some important ideas in Cavell about the achievement of selfhood.[1] This runs some risk of explicating the obscure, Cavell, by reference to the unintelligible, Hegel, but Hegel also helps us here specifically to focus on the ontology and ontogeny of selfhood.

> The I is not indeterminate persistence and uninterrupted duration, but rather only becomes a self as collection and return into itself [als Sammlung und Rückkehr in sich].[2] It transforms this sublation of itself, through which it be-

1. I have a battery of interrelated reasons for focusing on a Hegelian understanding of selfhood. A) It is difficult to make sense of putative entities that do not occupy space and cannot readily be counted, such as a Cartesian soul. No entity without identity. In contrast, human bodies as loci of subjectivity can readily be counted. B) Insuperable interaction problems (noted by Hegel in the Introduction to the *Phenomenology*) arise if we posit primitive, internal, nonspatial purely mental representers. These problems include the problem of the external world, the problem of other minds, and the problem of non-material causality. C) The positing of such internal representers mistakenly intellectualizes experience into the receipt of data to be assessed, thus denying the multimodal character of our bodily involvements with objects. There is no implicit sub-basement to conceptualization. D) Primitive internal representers make it impossible to account for normativity and relations of material implication. E) "seems"-language and "appears"-language are temporally and logically posterior to "is-"language. F) Positing primitive internal representers unhappily encodes and reinforces alienation from materiality, experience, and other subjects. G) In contrast with Aristotle, who holds a similar view in some respects, Hegel is aware of the possibilities of alienation and of significant historical change in conceptual repertoires. Readers will recognize themes from Wittgenstein, Quine, Davidson, Sellars, and Brandom among others here. I do not dwell on these points here given that, first, each is worth an extended argument on its own, and, second, for resistant readers none of them is likely to carry conviction: we might do better to appreciate these points by understanding the practico-conceptual lives of human subjects downstream, as it were, rather than ontogenetically in the terms of ontogenesis that are favored within the natural sciences.

2. Hegel's use of "Sammlung" here bears interesting affinities to Augustine's account in the *Confessions* of the dawning nature of awareness of external objects, recognized under concepts.

To know objects as persisting things apart from me, "and as they actually are, is in reality only to take things that the memory already contained, but scattered and unarranged, and by thinking bring them together, and by close attention have them placed within reach in that same memory: so that things, which had formerly lain there scattered and not considered, now come easily and familiarly to us. And my memory carries an immense number of things of this sort, which have already been discovered and, as I have said, placed within reach—the things we are said to have learned and to know. Yet if I ceased to give thought to them for quite a short space of time, they would sink again and fall away into the more remote recesses of the memory, and I should have to think them out afresh and put them together again from the same place—for there is nowhere else for them to have gone—if I am to know them: in ocher "words they must be collected out of dispersion, and indeed the verb to cogitate is named

> comes an object to itself, into being-for-itself and is now through this relation to itself for the first time self-feeling and self-consciousness, and so forth. This collection essentially involves an *interruption* of merely undetermined change —which is what we had had before us—in that the arising and passing away, the disappearance and renewal of points of time was, prior to this collection, nothing but a merely formal passing over from each now to another similar one and thus nothing but an uninterrupted further movement. In contrast with this empty moving *forward*, the self is that which exists *with itself*, and its collection into itself interrupts the indeterminate succession of points of time, makes cuts in their abstract continuity, and frees the I, which remembers itself in these now discrete moments of its experience and retrieves itself in them, from mere self-externalization and change.[3]

Here neither the I nor the self is a fixed, given, persistent thing, if it is even correct to think of it as a thing at all. Rather, there is living, embodied human being who first develops an I or sense of self as a locus of agency through collecting its sensations, that is, holding them together as sensations that pertain to a *this* in the world.[4] We might think here of an infant developing not yet conceptually articulated proprioceptive awareness of the position of its hand and its own effects as agent on both the hand's motion and on the sensations that accompany it. In a second step, this initial sublation of itself through which it has become initially but inarticulately aware of itself as a thing in interaction with things in the world is then extended by memory and the focusing of attention on the object interacted with as distinct from other objects. The object—a hand, a rattle, a plush toy—is held in mind as a recognizable thing under a protoconcept, so that the infant becomes a conscious classifier or proto-claim-

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from this drawing together. For *cogito* (I think) has the same relation to *cogo* (I put together) as *agito* (I excite) to *ago* (I drive) and *factito* (I keep doing) to *facio* (I do). But the mind of man has claimed the word *cogitate* completely for its own: not what is put together anywhere else but only what is put together in the mind is called cogitation." (As the editor notes, the point here is that *cogito* is an intensification [and persistence] of *cogo* [that yields a stable product].) Augustine, *Confessions*, 2nd edn., ed. Michael P. Foley, trans. F. J. Sheed (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), 199.

3. G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Ästhetik*, Vol, III, ed. Karl Markus Michel and Eva Moldenhauer (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1986), 164-65 (my translation).

4. For a full explication of Hegel's individual developmental psychology or account of Subjective Spirit, as he lays it out in the Anthropology and Phenomenology sections of Part III of his *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, see Richard Eldridge, "Hegel's Account of the Unconscious and Why it Matters," *The Review of Metaphysics* 67, no. 3 (2014): 491-516.

maker: a being for itself who *takes* itself, as an object of which it is now aware, to be interacting with recognizable things. All this counts as the interruption, through the emergence of an embodied subject who thinks and does things, of what would otherwise be a mere succession of law-governed events in nature. Instead of indeterminate succession of mere events, there is now a subject attending to objects recognitively and holding them before itself. Through this interruption or cut in experience, the thus emergent subject is "freed from mere self-externalization and change," freed *to* begin to exercise agency consciously. Interestingly, the reason that this passage occurs in Hegel's discussion of rhythm in music is that the experience of rhythm can feed what the cognitive archaeologist Lambros Malafourdis, echoing Antonio Damasio, calls, a "complex associative enchainment between the 'internal' and 'external' elements of remembering."[5] The experience of rhythm helps our sensations, sense of agency, and registerings of objects as objects to sync up, thus bringing the world into view for an emergent subject.

That the I or the subject emerges, or that selfhood is achieved, in having a sense of agency in exercise and a somewhat stabilized point of view on things is, of course, also and even more familiar to us from Freud.[6] Freud adds or makes explicit the further thought that this emergence and achievement are never complete, as the ego remains caught between troubling libidinal fantasies and superego commands that are internalizations of the authority of others. Given, further, the varieties of others with whom we must engage and who frequently have conflicting habits of judgment and expectations for us, *how* to exercise agency and stabilize selfhood satisfactorily remains a fraught issue for us. The continuing, conflicting pressures on the subject in development are the stuffs of dreams, parapraxes, jokes, and neuroses. Hegel similarly notes the standing possibility of a "rupture [...] between my psychical [or primary process-sensual] and my waking [or ego-centered] being, between my spontaneous natural feeling and my mediated, intellectual consciousness, a rupture which,

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5. Lambros Malafourdis, "Between Brains, Bodies, and Things: Tectonoetic Awareness and the Extended Self," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences*, June 12, 2008, 363, 1499: 1993-2002, 1999. Malabouris presents what he describes as "a view of selfhood as an extended and distributed phenomenon that is enacted across the skin barrier and which thus comprises both neural and extra-neural resources" (1993).
6. Though it might go without saying, it is also worth noting that the Freud in whom I am interested here is not Freud as a neurophysiologist or scientist, but rather Freud as a reader of pressures on subject formation and of the expression of those pressures in various domains of the lives of subjects.

since everyone embraces these two sides in himself is of course a *possibility* in even the healthiest individual, but does not actually *exist* in everyone."[7]

Cavell's own experience of Freud is as formative for him as the experience of any other writer, save perhaps Wittgenstein, and the encounter with Wittgenstein was already prepared and shaped by his prior encounter with Freud. During his brief time at Juilliard in 1947-48, Cavell reports, he found his "ambition to compose music … replaced as it were by reading Freud ten to twelve hours a day, successively contracting the symptoms of hysteria and of obsession depicted in the *Introductory Lectures*.[8] In addition, Cavell himself twice entered psychoanalytic treatment, once in the late 1950s under the pressure of a foundering first marriage and as he was having difficulty completing his doctoral dissertation, once again in the late 1970s as he was encountering the demands of fatherhood for a second time and having trouble transforming the dissertation into what would become *The Claim of* Reason.[9]

Two thoughts that derive from his encounters with Freud are especially important for Cavell. First, thinking about a succession of minor childhood accidents, Cavell finds himself, he reports,

> responding to a recurrent surmise of mine that whatever happens—whatever is eventful enough for speech—is from the beginning accidental, as if a human life is inherently interrupted, things chronically occurring at unripe times, in the wrong tempo, comically or poignantly. This is not incompatible with Freud's view that there are no accidents. What that now means to me is that we chronically interrupt ourselves—say, we fail to give the right quality or quantity or time to our thoughts or deeds.[10]

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7. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), §406Z, 116. For an excellent account of how, after 1926, Freud came to regard anxiety (arising in the continuing course of subject formation and development) as the cause of repression, rather than vice versa, see Marcia Cavell, *Becoming a Subject: Reflections in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Somewhat more strongly than Freud, Hegel stresses that the fragile achievement of psychic health is also a fragile sociopolitical achievement, bound up with occupying social roles under which one wins recognition.
8. Cavell, *Little Did I Know: Excerpts from Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 185. Cf. 234 and Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 282.
9. Cavell, *Little Did I Know*, 108-9.
10. Ibid., 30.

What this passage says is that in our efforts at achieving stable, fluent subjecthood—in Hegelian terms, freedom, or being with oneself in another, *bei sich selbst in einem anderen*—, we always, in circumstances we can't control, find ourselves getting in the way of ourselves: persisting in awkwardness and anxiety and failing to achieve full at homeness in what we do, as new things always happen. In light of this, it is inept to regard finding and sustain senses of value and agency in life as an engineering problem, solvable by grasping and applying a formula. Degrees of uncertainty and anxiety about stability and reception attach inevitably to the formation and expression of selfhood. Or as Cavell remarks, "I remain too impressed with Freud's vision of the human animal's compromise with existence—the defense or the deflection of our ego in our knowledge of ourselves from what there is to know about ourselves––to suppose that a human life can get itself without residue into the clear."[11]

Second, out of this experience of immigrancy in the exercise of conceptually structured agency, there then arises a sense of a need for liberation that Cavell also finds articulated in Freud. "The sufferer," Cavell remarks

> has to be, as Freud characteristically puts the matter, awakened [...] [from] feeling himself a prisoner of his circumstances. This sense of imprisonment, of the need for liberation, is critical both for Wittgenstein philosophizing and for Emersonian perfectionist aspiration. I have sometimes called it the crisis from which the wish for philosophy and for a morally comprehensible life begins.[12]

In this remarkable passage, Freud is invoked in order to characterize the motivation of the writerly, self-interrogative styles of doing philosophy—those of Wittgenstein and Emerson—that have been most immediately influential for Cavell's own philosophical writing and in furthering his sense of the contours of genuinely available liberation from chaotic succession and into greater practical self-comprehension, into a more morally comprehensible life. It is worth noting the strikingly Freudian sound of some of Cavell's own remarks about the practice of philosophy, early and late:

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11. Cavell, "Companionable Thinking," in Cary Wolfe, Cora Diamond, Cavell, and Ian Hacking, *Philosophy and Animal Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 121.
12. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 284.

> 1) That it "is to be achieved through mapping the fields of consciousness lit by the occasions of a word."[13]
>
> 2) That it is a matter of "proceed[ing] from the fact *that* a thing is said; that it is (or can be) said (in certain circumstances) is as significant as what it says; its being said then and there is as determinative of what it says as the meanings of its individual words are."[14]
>
> 3) That its progress is "not as from false to true assertions, or from opinions to proven conclusions (say theses) or from doubt to certainty, but rather from the darkness of confusion to enlightened understanding, or say from illusion to clarity, or from being at an intellectual loss to finding my feet with myself, from insistent speech to productive silence."[15]
>
> 4) "That we are the successors of ourselves [...] and not necessarily succeeding in a given order or direction (but capable of choosing upward or downward or neither), is a reasonable figure of the perfectionist life, seizing crises of revelation, good or bad, clear or confused, as chances of transforma-tion."[16]

Beyond various remarks about Freud, Cavell's own most extended and powerful pieces of writing on the development of the emergent subject away from anxiety and toward fluency as an unending task are "The Argument of the Ordinary" in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* and the "Excursus on Wittgenstein's Vision of Language" in *The Claim of Reason*. In the later, 1990 text, Cavell characterizes the "portrait of the human self" in *Philosophical Investigations* as one that, "like Plato's and Freud's visions" presents "a self that incorporates selves,"[17] thus alluding to the introjection of authoritative others into the formation of the superego that is essential to the emergence of selfhood. Kripke's error in reading Wittgenstein, as Cavell sees it, is that he "evades Wittgenstein's preoccupation with philosophy's desire to underestimate or evade the ordinary":[18] fails to recognize, that is, anxieties about selfhood in development in relations with others that themselves drive the human subject, as

13. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 103.
14. Ibid., 336.
15. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 328.
16. Ibid., 337.
17. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 83.
18. Ibid., 68.

Wittgenstein depicts it in the first voice of the *Investigations*—one of his contending voices and one of ours—ever anew to seek a ground of perfect authority in conceptual performance and thus to overcome the very possibility of shame. In this way, we live our skepticism, first, as a disappointment with the ordinary's inability to provide that perfect authority, as concept applications and resultant routes of practice and interest remain always in part divided and contested, and, second, in a resultant turn toward fantasized perfect authority in an unmediated encounter with something within.[19] The problem that leads to skepticism is not a self-standing intellectual problem to be solved by clever reasoning, but rather the very need to ask the question "do I know anything with absolute, unimpugnable certainty?"—a need that is always already motivated by the standing immigrancy of the human subject.

The "Excursus on Wittgenstein's Vision on Language" is oriented around the fundamental thought that "'learning' is not as academic a matter as academics are apt to suppose."[20] (Compare Socrates in the *Symposium*: one does not acquire wisdom in practice in the way that water "always flows from a full cup into an empty one when we connect them with a piece of yarn."[21] In particular, learning a language is neither a matter only of information intake and processing nor a matter of being told what a name means or learning new words.[22] Instead, it involves coming to recognize and to take an interest in some things in which others also take an interest and manifesting that interest in a bodily, behavioral repertoire that involves emotion, stance, gaze, and awareness of others as well as simply pronouncing some object *a* to be *F*. How much of all this is learned when is never fully settled—even if broad competence in a normal domain can be determined—insofar as what other, different subjects become interested in and how they may display that interest is itself never fully settled. "The learning is," as Cavell puts it, "never over, and we keep finding new potencies in words and new ways in which objects are disclosed."[23] Projections of words onto things are both stable enough to admit of being shared enough *and* tolerant of new

19. For a substantial elaboration and defense of Cavell's reading of both Wittgenstein and the motivation of skepticism, see Eldridge, *Leading a Human Life: Wittgenstein, Intentionality, and Romanticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), ch. 8 and 9.
20. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 171.
21. Plato, *Symposium*, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1989), 175D, 5.
22. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 173.
23. Ibid., 180.

usages. (Wittgenstein: "the use of [a] word [...] is not everywhere bounded by rules."[24]) It is always possible to find oneself with another in certain straits of circumstance where it unclear whether going on together is possible. Driven by existential anxiety about the authoritativeness of his claim-making as a subject, the skeptic removes himself from the communicative testing of mutual intelligibility, hoping instead to find absolute assurance within. "Nothing is more human than the wish to deny one's humanity, or to assert it at the expense of others,"[25] precisely by withdrawing from engagement with them. Exactly this unappeasable yet natural wish, together with the situation of the subject that supports it, is what is registered in *Philosophical Investigations* as Cavell reads it.

> Philosophical Investigations is in effect a portrait of the unsatisfiability of the human species with its solutions, a portrait-hardly the first—detailing human life as one of restlessness, exposure, insecurity; and more specifically, of [...] its articulation of the modern subject, namely its expected reader, as someone characterized by, among other traits, perversity, sickness, selfdestructiveness, suffocation, lostness, strangeness, etc.[26]

The fact that for Cavell it is within the communicative testing of mutual intelligibility and only within that testing—within the argument of the ordinary—that selfhood as at least partial at-homeness in conceptual and practical agency can be achieved explains Cavell's sense that in philosophy there are certain "arguments that must not be won."[27] To absent oneself from communicative interaction in a putative reversion to absolute conceptual authority is to abandon all possibilities of reassurance and recognition, even if nothing is more human than to do this. As early as "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," Cavell urged that introducing supposedly authoritative formulae in the form of necessarily true statements of necessary and sufficient conditions is often, even typically, a way of stunting one's own responsiveness both to diffi-

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24. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* rev. 4th edn., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2009), §68, 37e.
25. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 109.
26. Cavell, "Companionable Thinking," 110.
27. Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 22.

cult phenomena that require patient, ambivalent attention and to others who might respond differently and in doing so help one to notice things one might oneself have missed. In contrast with strict definition mongering, the definitional claims of philosophy ought rather to be modeled on the procedures of the ordinary language philosopher, who issues claims about what we say not in order to foreclose conversation but instead to test the possibility and shape of shared response. "Philosophy's first virtue, as it matters most to me, is," as Cavell puts it, "responsiveness,"[28] not doctrinal knowledge. We live and achieve selfhood, to the extent that we can, as assurance in exercises of conceptual and practical agency, always already within a largely shared but never fully fixed and bounded field of concepts and possibilities of interest, always already within a partially open form of life, with possibilities of expressive, vertical development. Cavell specifically warns "against supposing that the ordinary in human life is a given, as it were a place. I would say rather that it is a task, as the self is."[29] Within the field of the ordinary, with both its possibilities of meaning and its tensions, "the human necessity of the quest for home and the human fact of immigrancy are together seen as aspects of the human as such."[30]

We are now in a position to make fuller sense of a crucial early passage on the achievement of selfhood from *The World Viewed*:

> At some point the unhinging of our consciousness from the world interposed our subjectivity between us and our presentness to the world. Then our subjectivity became what is present to us, individuality became isolation. [...] Apart from the wish for selfhood (hence the always simultaneous granting of otherness as well), I do not understand the value of art. Apart from this wish and its achievement, art is exhibition.[31]

Initially, this passage bears some comparison with Pierre Hadot's work on ancient philosophy as a set of spiritual exercises or practices for the cultivation of the self within the various ancient schools rather than a body of systematic theory. Like Ca-

28. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 324.
29. Cavell, "Companionable Thinking," 96.
30. Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy*, 47.
31. Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edn. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 22.

vell, Hadot holds that, especially in its origins, "the philosophical act is not situated merely on the cognitive level[32]" but is rather initiated by "an unhappy disquiet before conversion."[33] Similarly, for Cavell, "the thinkers and artists" whose work he is most concerned to take up in *Cities of Words* each develop and enact "a perspective of judgment upon the world as it is, measured against the world as it may be, [that] tends to express disappointment with the world as it is, as the scene of human activities and prospects, and perhaps to lodge the demand or desire for a reform or transfiguration of the world."[34] For both Hadot and Cavell, philosophy begins in unrest, discontentment, disquietude, and belatedness, from within our immigrancy as emergent subjects and from a felt need for orientation to which *theoria* cannot ultimately answer.

According to Hadot, the displacement of spiritual exercises by *theoria* occurred first during the late medieval period with the systematization of theology as a master body of knowledge within the university, and it was then sealed in the early modern period in the work of Descartes.[35] Cavell similarly notes, just a page earlier than the key passage about the achievement of selfhood, that there has been a "human wish, intensifying since the Reformation, to escape subjectivity and metaphysical isolation—a wish for the power to reach this world, having for so long tried, at last hopelessly, to manifest fidelity to another."[36] (The allusion here is presumably to the kingdom of God or church triumphant as the object to which we once sought to be faithful.)

But where according to Hadot, this displacement might and should simply be reversed by taking up some elements of Epicurean and Stoic practice, as perhaps Nietzsche also urged,[37] matters are less clear with Cavell. The wish for selfhood—for heightened assurance in exercises of conceptual and practical agency—has intensified since the Reformation rather than being displaced. It is, if anything, more sharply present, intensified, albeit in an ineffective way, in Cartesian and post-Cartesian skepticism and realism—two sides of the same coin for Cavell; two responses to the

32. Pierre, Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, ed. Arnold Davidson, trans. Michael Chase (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), 83.
33. Ibid., 102.
34. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 1, 2.
35. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 107-08, 270-71.
36. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 21.
37. Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, 212, 273-74.

same initiating unhinging of subjectivity from the world—than in earlier practices of philosophy. There is, one might say, a certain fervor to modern and modernist pursuits of selfhood, as a sense of available grounds for achieving and expressing selfhood withinn coherent, meaningful, shared practice becomes increasingly attenuated.[38] And, unlike Hadot, there is for Cavell no obvious way out of the bearing of the wish for selfhood unsatisfied, at least in some measure. Nor was there any time in a recognizably human form of life in which that wish was not somehow born by some as freighted with existential anxiety. Achilles and Oedipus, for example were trying to figure who they could most coherently, intelligibly, and recognizably be in practice, albeit more under the sways of nature and luck than we are and under more fully shared, thick social scripts than we inhabit. We live among and with others who are different from us in various dimensions of interest and activity, where these differences, ramifying in modernity with technological development and broad and deep divisions of labor, are sharp enough to block standing general assurance and to leave its achievement always in question.

But while there is no obvious place to go either to satisfy or to be free of the wish for selfhood, there are also possibilities of responsive address to it that are manifest in the work of major artists and those among the philosophers who rank with them. Such figures—from Plato to Wittgenstein, from Shakespeare to Ibsen, from Thoreau to Emerson, from Frank Capra to Leo McCarey—sometimes find themselves in their work achieving a kind of fullness of attention to life and its difficult phenomena to which audiences of considerable circumference can and have resonated, where the object of resonance is less a formulable solution to the problem of the achievement of selfhood than a dramatized itinerary of either approach to it or evasion of it. When one finds oneself as a receptive subject in the grip of such resonance with an artistic work's achievement of apt attentiveness and point of view, then one has been summoned by the work to a like achievement and enactment of selfhood (with like and unlike objects of attention). One's life of habit and routine has been interrupted productively by an encounter with a fuller, more sublime mode of attention. Making art as a mode of address to the further formation of selfhood mobilizes and exercises

38. Compare Georg Lukács, *The Theory of the Novel*, trans. Anna Bostock (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1974) on the transcendental homelessness of the modern subject in contrast with the more fully role-identifying subject of Ancient Greek epic.

of powers of statement, memory, thematization, association, judgment, and craft, among others, in complex interaction with each other. In doing so, at least when things go well, it achieves attention to phenomena of shared life, and it invites and sustains imaginative participation in its modes of attention. It enacts the achievement of exemplary selfhood.

Toward the end of the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel wrote: "For it is in the nature of humanity to press onward to agreement with others; human nature only really exists in an achieved community of minds."[39] Taken as a biological claim, this remark is outrageously false. The existence of human nature biologically requires nothing more than being a living being with forty-six chromosomes. But this obvious falsity is here a mark of the metaphorical. The next sentence reads: "the anti-human, the merely animal consists in staying within the sphere of feeling, and being able to communicate only at that level."[40] This makes it clear that Hegel's thought must be, first, that we fail to exist as distinctly human *subjects* insofar as we fail achieve and maintain selfhood through exercises of conceptual and practical agency that win sufficient assurance and recognition, and, second, that we can do better. That it remains our task to do this ever anew and ever incompletely—the fate of reason, or of our being self-conscious, reflective beings—is a thought that has nowhere been kept more alive and movingly pertinent to us than in the work of Stanley Cavell, a post-Hegelian, post-Freudian thinker of the emergence of selfhood, always incompletely, in the inheritance of culture and in selfhood's finding of good enough modes of satisfaction in exemplary artistic responsiveness to its situations.[41]

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39. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans, A. V. Miller, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 43. The German reads:" Denn die Natur dieser [der Humanität] ist, auf die Übereinkunft mit anderen zu dringen, und ihre Existenz nur in der zustande gebrachten Gemeinsamkeit der Bewußtsein[e]." (Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michels [Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1986], 65. Miller's translation best captures this.
40. Ibid., 43.
41. My thanks to the participants in the Rio Grande do Sul conference on Cavell, Skepticism, and the Ordinary (especially to Eric Ritter for his written comments) and to the participants in the Ottawa conference on Inheriting Cavell for their useful and generous responses to earlier versions of this essay. One way to think of this essay is to take "inheriting" in "Inheriting Cavell" as an adjectival gerund.

2. Against "Finitude": How Understanding That We Are Not Only Finite Beings Can Help Cure Both Skepticism and Its Discontents

RUPERT READ

> But how can we help seeing that the essence of duration is to flow, and that the fixed placed side by side with the fixed will never constitute anything which has duration. It is not the "states," simple snapshots we have taken once again along the course of change, that are real; on the contrary, it is flux, the continuity of transition, it is change itself that is real. This change is indivisible, it is even substantial. If our intelligence insists on judging it to be insubstantial [...] it is because it has replaced this change by a series of adjacent states; but this multiplicity is artificial as is also the unity one endows it with. What we have here is merely an uninterrupted thrust of change—of a change always adhering to itself in a duration which extends indefinitely.
>
> HENRI BERGSON, *The Creative Mind*

> If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, Infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.
>
> WILLIAM BLAKE

In this essay, I seek to follow and draw upon resources in Ludwig Wittgenstein (and in an important contemporary follower of his, Iain McGilchrist) in order to pose a radical question. I question here the conventional "wisdom" across philosophical traditions (and cleaved to equally strongly by Cavell and Derrida, and for that matter by

Richard Dawkins and Donald Davidson), that says—or rather even, simply *assumes*—that we are finite beings.

I do so by thinking about the nature of our lives, and showing how one's life is a kind of open-ended, endlessly potential whole rather than a finite thing. And by thinking about the nature of infinity, and showing how thinking of infinity as a completed object fails to think infinity (and of its contrast with finite sequences, with numbers) adequately.

This line of thinking leads me inevitably to think about God, and to set out how the idea of God as a kind of completed super-being can fundamentally mislead us, while a very different idea of God as *potentia* can help to 'complete' the kind of thinking engaged in, in this essay. By helping us to become clear about ways in which we are like (such a) God, and of ways in which we are thoroughly unlike (such a) God.

The life that one is living is one's one and only life. One clearly has in the relevant sense nothing to compare it to. As life is lived, the present is the leading edge of the open-ended totality(-to-date) of (one's) existence. Now; that totality might thus be said from the point of view of the one living it even to be a kind of infinity … or, probably better, because less liable to mislead in ways that I shall indicate below: to be *non-finite*. It is "limited," as seen from without; but in a certain crucial sense it is "complete" and entire-unto-itself *without* being *limited*, as seen (felt, lived) from "within." For it is a whole that grows as one ages but, as experienced, it remains what it always was (i.e. *a whole* whose "limits" one describes "from the inside," as they ever-expand, *rather than* actually in any sense breaching or observing from without). It is not finite, in that it has nothing larger or other than it with which it can itself meaningfully be contrasted. Life, as lived, is this extraordinary possibility that in this crucial sense decidedly ill-fits the concept of being limited, of *having* (already) an end.

The term "complete" that I used at one point in the previous paragraph (albeit with scare-quotes around it) risks being misleading. The key sense in which one's life at any moment is 'complete' is really just that there is nothing necessarily *missing*

from it: one's life is always complete in the limited, negative but still important sense of being *not incomplete*. As, for instance, a life (or a game, or a speech, etc.) is incomplete if it has been *cut short*. Or possibly: As anything that is simply and genuinely finite could conceivably be argued to be incomplete (relative to a larger version of itself; or, some would say, relative to an alleged "actually-infinite" alternative?: see below, for my response to the latter thought.).

The essence of infinity, as Wittgenstein explicates, is that there can always be one more added.[1] This is true of life, as experienced: there can always be a succeeding moment. (Of course, this *doesn't* mean that there always *will* be a succeeding moment: it is true that there will be at every moment—until one's last…) This is "potential infinity" (in Aristotle's terms); whereas "actual infinity," a "completed" totality is, I would argue, not properly infinity. Anything completed, anything actual, is not properly infinite.

These thoughts fly firmly in the face of "conventional wisdom" in the philosophy of mathematics: it turns such "wisdom" on its head, to suggest that "potential infinity" is truer to the conceptual character of infinity than "actual infinity" is. For how can something actual—something that *is*—be "inferior" to something "merely" potential?!

Such seeming-craziness can emerge into clearer view (as the merest sanity) if we orient ourselves by way of the Heidegger—and Wittgenstein—influenced neuroscientist, Iain McGilchrist. His novel rendition of the left vs. right brain distinction, in his seminal work *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* can help us to understand why the conventional view seems so "natural"—and why it is awry.[2] McGilchrist sets out how the left brain mode of perception of the world has become dominant in our culture. That mode of perception, roughly, is never perception *of the world*; it is only perception of fragments. We are absolutely superb now at understanding details; science in its microscopic vision is

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1. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, rev. edn., ed. G. H. von Wright, R. Rhees and G. E. M. Anscombe (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1978), 278-9, part V, sec. 19.

2. Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary: The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009). See especially McGilchrist's discussion of this, including of the need to reverse the 'valences' of actual and potential infinity, in Lecture 3 of his Laing Lectures, delivered at Regent College, Vancouver, March 10 2016. See also McGilchrist's analysis of our tendency overly to *assimilate* mind and body at 220-3. Cf. also, on the same point, Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* rev. 4th edn., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2009), sec. 339, and for further examples, see 196, 317.

unrivalled. But it is as if we now see everything only through a microscope, or even through the wrong end of a telescope. We have lost the capacity for wholistic vision.

The conventional view gets things the wrong way around, in taking static actuality as categorially superior to open becoming. The unalloyed left brain would divide up time into a sequence of dimensionless points.[3] From a left-brain perspective (e.g. that of "Analytical Philosophy"), doing so is simply analysis, harmless and indeed necessary. But there is no such thing as assembling time from dimensionless points.[4] One needs to *begin* with dimension, with Bergsonian *flow* or *flux*; otherwise it is perpetually unavailable. Life, time as lived, *is* that flow.[5]

We tend (tacitly) to treat the finite as a kind of horribly inadequate version of infinity, and to treat the infinite as a kind of endlessly strung out finite. This is an example of how the left hemisphere alone, while it loves *dichotomies*, nevertheless seems incapable of seeing the true profundity of real *difference!* The left hemisphere is not open to *incommensurability*.

Life is not finite, in that it has nothing larger than itself with which it can saliently be contrasted. It is in that sense like the visual field, or like the universe (which is continually expanding—but not *into* anything). It is a whole, "but" a necessarily open-ended one. (The left hemisphere cannot comprehend how *wholes* exist, let alone *open-ended* wholes.)

Birth is not an event of life: birth is the radical *beginning* of life.[6] This is true whether we count as 'birth' the moment of emergence from the mother's womb into the world, or some earlier or later time. The grey area surrounding when "precisely" one can be said to be born does not affect my present argument.[7] Though: my argument should suggest, helpfully I think, that we should probably count as birth in the psychological/philosophical sense a period considerably before birth in the sense of entering into the world through the birth canal. It is probably an egocentric delusion

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3. This can be seen in cases of serious damage to the right brain—see McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 76.
4. See Rupert Read, "Against Time-Slices," *Philosophical Investigations* 26, no. 1 (2003): 24-43.
5. See the Heideggerian discussion of how we live time at McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 153.
6. Here, I am "adapting" a thought of Wittgenstein's, who wrote, in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 1961), 6.431 & 6.4311: "[I]n death… the world does not change, but ceases. // Death is not an event of life. Death is not lived through."
7. To think that it *does*, is to take up a pernicious left-hemisphere stance that insists always on an extreme (parody of) "exactness." For a saner vision of vagueness, see Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, sec. 71-88; or the 3rd of McGilchrist's 2016 Laing Lectures.

of adult life to assume, as I think we tend to do, that the latter moment is as utterly crucial, defining and beginning as we generally take it to be.

Birth is when life begins: Thus ipso facto it is not experienced. It is the *onset*, rather, of experiences.[8]

Thus one's earliest experiences in particular (that is, all the totality of one's experiences, i.e. one's life[9]) are not just a matter of minutes/days/months/years, let alone of dimensionless instants: they are, as one might best ("therapeutically"[10]) put it, everything. One helpful way to see the force of my argument thus far is to see that it is most misleading of all to think of ordinary time-sense as being potentially available to one newly-born. For such a one is (rather): experiencing an entire 'universe' of existence coming into being.[11]

This helps us to see why it is not merely some kind of cognitive/psychological contingency that we do not have memories of the earliest parts of our life. Now: There may be good factive or quasi-factive cog.sci. explanations for why we lack such memories. But: I am suggesting that such explanations are "supererogatory"; for the argument I have made gives a reason that is already decisive. Something (i.e. experience) non-finite unfolding *out of nothing*: this cannot *closely* resemble our lives once we grasp and so long as we live the "ordinary" nature of time: for it is incompatible with it. For… how could we have such memories, given (as we might put it) life's startlingly *generative* nature, at and close to its onset:[12] something from nothing. Life *qua* experience is creation *ex nihilo*.

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8. As already suggested above, this implies that "birth" in this sense may well occur well before one's emergence from the womb into the shared world, and I suggest that we ought to *accept* this, i.e. accept the reality of pre-natal life, pre-natal *being*. (This suggests a reason why concerns about late-term abortions should not be pigeon-holed as objectionable right-wing ideology. A properly feminist outlook on a woman's legal "right to choose," which I would broadly endorse, should not become a catch-all excuse for inflicting pain or obliteration on a *being*.)

9. And in fact this point turns out to be available, potentially, at ANY point in that life. Cf. also n.11, below.

10. In Wittgenstein's sense of this term: see e.g. *Philosophical Investigations*, 133.

11. I would want to suggest, as many Buddhists have suggested, that the withdrawal from ordinary time-sense back to a sense of immediacy and of startling "growth" in one's experience-base is in a certain sense always available to one. (This point appears to contradict points I have already made, above, but does not really do so: I am not literally claiming that one can go back to experiencing in the very way that one did as a new-born! (The occurences of the term "sense" in the present note need to be noted.) But, metaphorically, I *am* claiming this or something like it.)

12. In this regard, my argument bears a resemblance to Ernest Schachtel's: See e.g. his "On memory and childhood amnesia," http://www.unz.org/Pub/Politics-1948q1-00128. For a similar reason one cannot experience the onset of a dream (See n. 27, below, and *supra*). This "cannot" is logical, not merely psychological.

A broadly similar point can be made about the onset of sleep. Experiencing it is not literally compossible with its actually occurring, except perhaps under extreme circumstances of duress (e.g. under the influence of certain powerful anaesthetic drugs: and even then, the logical point remains intact. There is no such thing as experiencing the very cessation of consciousness itself. The idea of experiencing the cessation of experience is self-defeating.). Falling asleep demands to be non-experienced. It has to be allowed; it cannot be forced, cannot be consciously undertaken. This, after all, is why Wittgenstein liked to compare the activity of *philosophy*, properly understood (i.e. as an activity that is, in McGilchrist's terms, right-hemisphere-*led* throughout), with falling asleep. It is a remarkably counter-intuitive analogy: *until* one sees the point being made here. (It is an analogy which seems crazy, to the left hemisphere by itself. But what this actually tells us is: that the left hemisphere by itself is crazy.)

We are accustomed to thinking of our lives and ourselves as finite, and in many contexts this can be an important reminder, a way to prevent ourselves from slipping into fantasies of immortality, of omnipotence, of interminable growth,[13] etc. . But what, I believe, understanding and drawing out the ultimate implications of the kind of thinking that McGilchrist and Wittgenstein engage in can make available to us is what I myself am setting out in the present essay: namely, a non-supernaturalistic sense in which, equally (if not more so), and equally crucially, *our lives are not finite*, and thus in which we are not well described if we are described only as finite beings.

"Equally crucially"—for, becoming clear about a real sense in which we are not well described as finite can help us in a number of ways: above all, it can help us escape the confines of a conventionally-theologically defined existence, in which we are permanently and radically *inferior* to God. In which, that is, we measure ourselves (sacreligiously) *on the same scale* as God.

Not incidentally, contemporary atheism still exists mainly within the confines of just such an existence—only, now with the figure of God simply eliminated, which leaves us with an unavoidable lingering sense of inferiority (and intolerable frustrati-

13. I have in mind for instance the kinds of fantasies that made up the work of Julian Simon: http://www.economist.com/node/604696. But such fantasies are in fact extremely widespread. They are, unfortunately, hegemonic.

on: if only we were gods!: So we act as if we *are*, now imagining for instance that we can "engineer" the entire planet, or the entire genome), but without our even having the blessing of there being a Being who we are inferior *to*... The real "god delusion" is the delusion that we *are* (or at least, *ought* to be) gods.

Coming to sense ourselves as not merely finite beings is a necessary (though not sufficient!) condition, I would argue, for us finding ourselves and our lives through and through complete, and wonderful, and full. Such that we no longer suffer from god-envy.

An actually-infinite God, ironically, would not be ontologically different enough[14] from the universe and its beings.[15] From things. And God is no thing.[16] And: From beings. And God is no super-being. God as potential-infinity is closer to the mark. God is something like *potentia*. Omni *potentia*... God, we might now say, is *becoming*.[17]

An image of this that makes some real sense, in its ever-changingness and in the *telos* of that change, is: life. Becoming is *exemplified* in our world by *life*.

So in the end this work (that the likes of McGilchrist and I are engaged in) is about defending life against death.[18] Or better: about defending life against the dreadful kind of absence of vitality that one finds in much schizophrenia, in much Modern Art, in some science, in most Analytical Philosophy, in most economics...

God is life. Not the sum of beings. But life *itself*.

Life *versus* a kind of listless or lifeless deathlessness, or death-in-life, or the complete absence of vitality: there is the real opposition, the real stakes in the ongoing struggle against the blundering quest of the left hemisphere to suborn the right.

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14. The point generalises: The left hemisphere way is not to make different enough. The right hemisphere understands wholes, it unifies; but it doesn't do so falsely. It is open *to profound difference*. The left hemisphere aggressively *differentiates*, dichtomises, but *without* registering what Heidegger calls *ontological* difference. Cf. also n. 2, above.
15. Cf. Jean-Luc Nancy's useful remark at the close of his "God, Charlie, No One," trans. Gianmaria Senia, *Psychoanalysis* (2016), http://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/god-charlie-no-one-2/: "The "infinite" is not something enormous or unattainable. It is simply not stopping at anything determined, fixed, identified and named with a presumably proper name."
16. Rowan Williams has recently been making this clear, in various talks. Cf. also the argument made by Mark Johnston in his *Saving God* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011).
17. This latter thought is explored expertly by McGilchrist in Lecture 3 of his Laing Lectures.
18. Holderlin understood what we are defending life against, because he had the great misfortune, impossibly, to experience its opposite... (See Louis Sass, *Madness and Modernism* (New York: Basic, 1992), 310, where he quotes from one of Holderlin's letters, thus: "a wondrous horror...overcomes me, and silently I remind myself of the terrible truth: a living corpse!")

This is perhaps why some of the best musings on immortality *when that immortality is conceived of as endlessly prolonged life* successfully characterise it as a kind of death-in-life, an absence of life.[19]

My line of thinking in this segment of the text may help to explain the profound spiritual and intellectual power today of pantheism and (especially) of panentheism, which improves upon pantheism by keeping a sense of God as transcendent, as always more, always becoming.[20] Life is sacred, and is always becoming. Everything is sacred, for all things are tied together, and God is in all things and (especially) in all livings things, and (*especially*) in all beings.[21] I believe that panentheism will be the basis of religion in the age which we are now entering,[22] if that age is not to eliminate human civilisation: for panentheism profoundly centres the importance of *potentia*, of becoming, of life.

We (all beings, even all living things) are made in God's image: we are non-finite, we are always becoming. God then is the very *essence* of what we are. In both senses of this phrase (both with the "is" being the sign of equality, *and* with it being the copula): God IS Becoming. Self-unfolding potential in all its grandness. But that of course means that God cannot be pinned down; God is always more than we know (and thus one must be intensely aware of the necessary limits of the kind of enterprise that I am engaged in right now, and of what I keep implicitly or explicitly circling

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19. I find this done very well in some mythic children's stories of our time. *Dr. Who* has managed to do this successfully, once or twice (most notably perhaps, at the end of "The Five Doctors"). So does Garth Nix, I believe, in his fine trilogy, *The Old Kingdom*. Part of the wonderful conceit of this trilogy is that it poses an heroic alternative to necromancy. An "abhorsen," in NIx's novels, is one who sends the dead to death, rather than allowing them to seek prolongation of life. Something similar is going on in Ursula le Guin's marvellous *The Farthest Shore*, the culmination of the *Earthsea* trilogy. And in the trajectory of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* trilogy, as it moves to liberate the dead from their undying pointless existence. And of course there is a connection here with *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. In Gollum, and in all who come into contact with the Ring. (Compare also of course Bernard Williams's classic presentation of the boredom of unending temporal existence, "The Makropoulos Case" in his *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).)

20. For some detail, see Jay Michaelson, "The Meaning of Avatar: Everything is God (A Response to Ross Douthat and Other Naysayers of 'Pantheism')," *Huffington Post*, 22 Dec. 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jay-michaelson/the-meaning-of-avatar-eve_b_400912.html. (Thanks to Iain McGilchrist also, for vital discussion on this point.)

21. This is why Quakers, such as me, speak of "that of God in everyone." (I would include other beings besides humans in this "everyone." However, I restrict the term 'beings' to those creatures that have some *open-endedness* in their openness to their environment. Some capacity for learning in its true sense, the germ of (potential for) culture and moral evaluation. Thus dogs or crows or pigs or seals or octopi are certainly beings, but ticks and trees are presumably not. Of course, all life, beings and non-beings alike, is linked in a web, and forms a kind of marvellous dialectical whole, a whole also incorporating much that is not alive, such as the rocks of the planet itself.)

22. See https://medium.com/@GreenRupertRead/religion-after-the-death-of-god-the-rise-of-pantheism-and-the-return-to-the-source-54453788bbaa.

back to, in the present paper: the crucial role and nature of metaphoricity, a metaphoricity that is not merely disposable, not transitive.). God is not a thing that happens to be unsayable whose character can nevertheless *somehow* be said. To say: "If God could be spoken, *this* would be 'His' form: _____," is never adequate, never sensical. God's word or will is not a sense-like object that just happens to be hidden from our powers of meaning. The dire hazard of postulating God as 'actual' rather than 'potential' is that it gives one the (once more, sacreligious) illusion of being able to name, fully know and encompass God. This has been the bane of much theology and of much belief, especially literalistic/fundamentalistic strands.

As I mentioned near the start of this essay (in setting out how my line of thought flies in the face of conventional "wisdom"), an obstacle to understanding all this is the following: in general, "potential" means something like "conceptual but not (yet) real/realized," whereas "actual" means "achieved, finished, real." Whereas what McGilchrist's book (by contrast) enables us to realise is that reality (i.e. the deep nature of all "things"[23]) is always potential *as well as* actual; and that the actual, *if* staticised or frozen from that flow of becoming/potential, is *merely* actual, merely a closed fragment.

Reality is both *(t)here* and ever *open-ended*. All things that are real are potential, *becoming;* and the 'actual' (without this) is then merely a re-presentation that lacks the properties of the properly real. This makes the terms "actual" and "potential" *as they are used by left-hemisphere-dominated philosophical / scientific* etc. thinking very confusing, basically reversed in their valence from how they ought to be. (But until one recognises that confusion, and mentally (and societally!) sorts it out, it will superficially appear as if it is the kind of thinking that *I* am engaged in here that is confused.)[24]

So we need to turn these terms around, as I have sought to do thus far in this piece. We need to come to see potential as "greater" than—realer, if you will, than—actual… To focus on the actual WITHOUT presencing (its) potential is death(-in-life)

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23. The scare-quote here is advised; because an implication of the line of thought I am exploring in this essay, explored at vast length in McGilchrist's most recent work, is that, as that word puts it, there is something *The Matter With Things* (London: Perspectiva Press, 2021). Following Bergson and Whitehead, the very (left-hemisphere) conception of things is awry. It's not just that God is no thing; *things* [even medium-sized dry objects] too are not what the concept "thing" has us believe of them…
24. My thinking in this paragraph is directly owed to correspondence with McGilchrist.

—and that is what the left-hemisphere does. The rhetoric of philosophers thus typically makes it appear as though actual is superior to potential. Whereas actually (See how high the tides of language run here!), actual *is a kind of frozen, unalive version of potential.*

Infinity in its true sense is nothing but endlessness in the only sense in which this can be realised: there can always be more. (Numerically, which is our paradigm case: there can always be one more. You can always add one. There is no largest-number-of-all.) Thus I've pointed up here how life is not finite. Indeed, one can radicalise this thought, as Wittgenstein does in the closing pages of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.[25] A *moment* (phenomenologically speaking)—the present—is endless because it has no frontier: there can always be more (of it). It is an open whole, not-incomplete.[26] It is in this sense non-finite.

And more moments: that's life; that's (of course) essential to what it is to be alive, that there can[27] be more moments. Life is end-less, like a dream.[28] Life is a whole "composed" of wholes.[29]

Life is not however just more moments for the sake of it. Life is the potential of being (not the mere having/consuming of experiences). Life is becoming. Insofar as our longing for the infinite is authentic in the sense I've outlined, one might say, then we are not finite. The infinite is in this sense *in* the *finite*. Life has (or should have) meaning, even from the start.

For, while we might characterise the actual quite simply as finite, still the potential is infinite; and potential is what life *is*. The potential becomes—reduces to—the actual once its living potency is exhausted.

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25. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, 1961).
26. This may account for the deep phenomenon of what some have called intimations of immortality, as for instance in Romanticism (thanks to Ian Christie for this point). I am insisting in the present piece that it is a complete mistake to think of immortality as endless temporal "duration." But immortality in/as true dwelling in the non-finite present moment: that is something one can have intimations of. And indeed: more than merely intimations.
27. So far as one is subjectively concerned. Of course, and as I have already (and mundanely) admitted, sometimes (i.e. in some cases at what turns out to be the very end of one's life) it will turn out that this "can" is delusive. The "can" here is necessarily, vitally, felt, not necessarily objective.
28. This point is explored and explicated brilliantly in Christopher Nolan's *Inception* (2010): see particularly the sequences in the dream-Paris with Cobb and Ariadne. (It is important however to note that this striking respect in which life is like a dream is absolutely not the respect supposed by Descartes! The point I make in the text here is in no way conducive to scepticism or solipsism. On the contrary: it brings us into close attunement with life, with reality, with others.)
29. On which, see the first shloka of the *Ishavasya Upanishad*, http://www.swamij.com/upanishad-isha-purna.htm.

When it's authentic, the actual manifests the signs of the infinite from which, as it were, it was born.

It's essential to life, as it is to a dream, that its start and end are not experienced, and that in this way it is both startless (a word which I believe we should familiarise ourself with) and endless. (It is not a counter-example to this to point up that one sometimes does get to experience the end of a dream, seemingly: through becoming lucid, or through waking up/being rudely woken up. These are not in the relevant sense experiences of the dream ending: they are rather *ruptures* to the dream. They no longer subsist in the space of dream-consciousness. (This implies, as we might put it, that a "lucid dream" both is and is not a dream. It is like dreams but also like "day-dreams" or even imaginations, which may in most cases properly be said to have beginnings and ends.) This accounts by the way for why one cannot die in a dream: for genuinely dying in a dream (as opposed to living through death) would run counter to the logic laid out here.)

At life's very beginning (and I mean here, as explicated earlier: psychological life), one doesn't have anything like: "Oh, I'm conscious! *Ergo sum*!" One has rather the onset of something. Both that onset and that 'thing' are only available to consciousness later, *in media res*. Similarly, at death, which is the reverse process (sunset rather than onset, as it were), a process usually (though not always) rather telescoped, one still does not have "OK, that's it. No more moments at all. Consciousness ends *here*." You do not get to experience the *here* here, if it is meant to be the instant of consciousness ceasing. There is no such thing as experiencing a/the "There cannot be any more moments/any more of this moment" moment. (Again, this is a constitutive point, a logical point, that has been available to us since Wittgenstein's *Tractatus,* as I will shortly set out.)

Extraordinary as it might sound, then, both life *and (even) each moment in life* have a better claim to be understood as infinite (or at least: non-finite, or not simply finite) than do the trans-finites, considered as numbers. A completed—actual—infinite is a contradiction in terms. It fails to embody the character of openness, of 'there can always be more', of what Wittgenstein called the "unendliche Möglichkeit" that IS what we (can successfully) mean by "infinity." A life, or a moment, or a view (I mean: a visual impression in its true, full sense), or linguistic meaning: these

have a better claim to be taken as non-finite — as not captured by the idea of finitude, of actuality with a dimension and an end — than the "transfinites" do, considered as numbers. The central delusion of "infinity" has been, of course: it's being taken to be a number.

We delude ourselves by thinking of infinity as if it were a thing, or an object (such as a number). Infinity is best thought-of, rather, as a negative: It is the un-finite. Where what is finite is *defined*: as numbers are defined. "Infinity" simply is the potential for new numbers beyond a set of numbers mentioned. The delusion we fall into when we think of ourselves as finite is to think that what it is for us ourselves to be finite is defined. Whereas actually what we know is life: and that has roughly the same kind of openness as 1,2,3,4..., where the ellipsis is *not* parsed as an abbreviation.

This helps us understand why endless life is not what we usually think it is. 'Endless temporal duration', properly understood, is not a temporal duration. (Rather, it's a fantasm: it's the fantasy, the delusion, of "actual infinity" allegedly-realised temporally.) "Endless temporal duration" is <u>not</u> *a period of time*. (See on this Wittgenstein's *TLP* 6.431 & 6.4311 & 6.4312: "If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present.// Our life is endless in the way that our visual field is without limit.") To think that it <u>is</u> to make the same kind of deep delusive error as is present in thinking of infinity as a number. Infinity is no more a number than eternity is a length of time. To see this, it can be helpful to bear in mind that God does not "live forever." God's eternity is not a matter of simply stretching an ordinary "finite" life back and forward so far that it has no beginning or end (which is how the left-hemisphere would picture immortality). Understanding why requires, again, that one overcomes the crude dogma of thinking of God as a super-person, and requires one to exit any crudely literalist or fundamentalist form of theology.[30]

One who truly lives in the present lives well in infinity, in eternity, because, as we might risk putting it, they live in a *flow* of infinities (better: of non-finities). They live in the flow of the great non-finite (of) life—which is necessarily "assembled" from non-finite "components." (Notably, as McGilchrist reminds us, such a sense of flow is impossible for many sufferers of right-hemisphere strokes etc. The left hemisphere

30. Such exit is implicit in McGilchrist's work: cf. especially Lecture 3 of his Laing Lectures.

seems incapable of sustaining such a sense, and instead tries, hopelessly, to reduce time to points and then to reassemble life from that.[31])

For: There simply is no such thing as assembling something infinite from finite components. To think that there *is* such a thing is to fail to understand the "categorial" gulf between the finite and the infinite, and other similarly profound categorial gulfs.

It is to fail to make different enough.

Now: It's generally *easier* for an old person than for a young adult to master the practice of in this sense living in the present, and not falling into comparison; for it is easier for a young person to get caught up by the vastness of their summers, etc., and not to remember that they will die. Not to be mindful of each moment, each moment that is or can be (as) a lifetime, a totality that can be wonderfully without beginning or end as experienced.[32]

It will nevertheless probably be objected to my entire line of argument that I seem to be denying the most elementary of truths: that, as it is most often put, we are finite beings who live finite lives. This point seems essential to the thinking of some of our greatest recent thinkers, such as Cavell, who again and again in his thought emphasises our "finitude." Of course, *in the sense in which this point is happily and helpfully intended* I don't deny it for a moment; indeed, on the contrary, I think its tacit (or indeed explicit) denial one of the more disastrous features of the age we live in, an age that childishly resists *all* sense of limits and fantasises endless growth[33] and even fantasises biological immortality as desirable.[34] And yet…: there *is* a *sense* in which I do deny it, too… From without, we can be said to live finite lives, with a beginning and an end. And indeed, as Heidegger (cf. his concept of "Being-toward-death") and many others have rightly argued, one key to understanding life is to understand that—as we can see when we see people dying, etc.; and we ought to see them, and *be with* them—it has an end. And it's been crucial to my argument that life in an

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31. This procedure closely resembles the hopeless effort to literally compose lines from points, an effort dissected by Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures: Cambridge 1930-2* (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1980), 108.

32. In this sense, life actually is like a dream: as explored and explicated brilliantly in Christopher Nolan's film *Inception* (Cf. n.27 above, and *supra*). We can see better now why it is essential to life—as it is to a dream—that its start and end are, as I have set out, not experienced, and that in this way it is endless. (This point is also present in Buddhism, especially in and around the Zen tradition; for instance, in Thich Nhat Hanh's work.)

33 Cf. n.13, above, and *supra*.

34. See e.g. http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/russian-scientist-injects-himself-ancient-immortality-bacteria-1522150.

obvious sense has a beginning (i.e. that we are born). *But* our lives as lived, I submit, are nevertheless not finite. Just as the bounds of sense (and the space of reasons) are not finite.[35] It only makes sense to claim that these are finite if one can somehow position oneself outside them. But this is just what it makes no *sense* to do. There is no such thing as doing other than *describing* them from within, in roughly the following sense: life means nothing except as understood already in terms of life;[36] and the same holds of meaning. Imaginations outside life—and outside meaning—are in this sense only: *delusions* of sense.[37]

One might put it in the following way. That this way of putting the matter is "paradoxical" should not prevent us from risking contemplating it: We are finite beings; *and* we are not finite beings.[38] It is too weak, actually, merely to say "In one sense we are, and in another sense we are not." Lived from within, we *are*; viewed from without, we are *not*. And a complete view of ourselves needs to take in both of these (radically discrepant) perspectives/truths. (We need to embrace the incommensurable left- and right- hemisphere perspectives; without reducing one to the other.)

A less paradoxical way to express these truths might be (and I leave it to the reader to decide whether or not it is better hereabouts to seek to be less paradoxical!): We are as such *neither* finite *nor* infinite: the blunt dichotomy doesn't hook up well with the very nature of our lives.

We crudely think we are only finite beings because we have not thought through the sense, just outlined, in which we can be said to be not finite beings; and/or because we have rashly assumed that it makes sense to contrast ourselves to alleged infinite (super-)beings: beings that "live forever," that are "infinitely powerful," etc.: thus it is that I've shown that and how we remain (in this sense) in thrall to the very questionable[39] assumption that a literal theology can be meaningfully contrasted with our own existence. (The bald claim that "We are (only) finite beings" is a particular

35. See on this the argument of Alice Crazy and Rupert Read, eds., *The New Wittgenstein* (London: Routledge, 2000).
36. Sartre's concept of the *pour-soi* is close to this point. John Foster (personal correspondence) calls this "radical insideness": most things *except* life have an inside only relative to their contemplation from outside, but life as reflexive consciousness exists inherently from inside itself.
37. They can of course be very marvellous and indeed instructive delusions: great films and artworks often consist of just such.
38. The situation is parallel to that outlined by Shunryu Suzuki, "Ordinary Mind, Buddha Mind," in his *Not Always So: Practicing the True Spirit of Zen* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 58-59, wherein he argues that one is Buddha, and an ordinary man.
39. Questionable, I have suggested, both "metaphysically" and morally.

religious claim, not a factive claim. In this regard, many of the "hardest-headed" contemporary "atheistic," etc. thinkers are, irony of ironies, unconsciously in thrall to a theological religion. I say this not by way of belittling religion in general—nothing, as I hope is self-evident from this paper thus far, could be further from my intentions—but rather to start recontextualise the claim that "We are finite beings" back into its *proper* setting, and to problematise any over-interpretation or imperial interpretation—i.e. an interpretation excluding other interpretations—of it.)

The blanket assertion of our finitude, I think, makes it *harder,* ironically, for us to accept the ecological limits to growth;[40] and the limits to life (mortality): for we suppose tacitly (and absurdly) that we could be or could have been gods, and/or that our embodiment is essentially a limitation/an accident, etc. Now: It can make of course perfect sense to say "I know my limits," perhaps in a conversation with one's doctor or one's spouse; or to say "I guess I've reached my limit," when one reaches (say) a weight that one simply cannot lift. But it *doesn't make sense* to say "I'm limited," or "I'm finite" apropos of nothing, or apropos of everything. (That's why I suggest that baldly to state such things, if it is successfully a claim at all, is at best a particular kind of religious one. To speak in the abstract of 'our finitude' is in the end to speak in a way that fails us, philosophically.) To think that it *does* make sense to assert one's finitude as a metaphysical truth is to fall into precisely the mythic error examined at great length by Wittgenstein in *On Certainty*.

This point is quite general, about any bald/general claim that we are limited/finite. Additionally I have made, above, a more specific point, a point about "universes": the universe of sense, the universe of one's life, and the universe. Wholes that are "complete," without in the relevant sense it making sense for there to be anything *outside* of them (When they expand they don't expand *into* anything (else)). In *these* cases, it's not only that it doesn't make sense to make a bald decontextualised claim of finitude; it's that in the end it can make *better* sense to make a claim of *non*-finitu-

40. Because, as John Foster argues (in his *After Sustainability* (London: Routledge, 2014)), we have lost in urban-mechanical living and in the takeover of the Earth by industrialism (on which, see especially the brilliant and disturbing end of Chapter 11 of McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*) the only kind of real contact with our infinitude-in-finitude which we can have (namely: the wild as intimately-inhabited metaphor for our whole selves). And so we now react to our increasingly recognised ecological finitude, disastrously, *as if it were a challenge to be overcome*, rather than as a vital condition of free creative being (Cf. Giorgos Kallis's 2016 lecture "Limits Without Scarcity: Why Malthus Was Wrong," https://youtu.be/ENZXoxj0eSg: he sees Castoriadis as offering the best route to seeing how limits condition our autonomy and creativity.)

de.[41] And that is another way of saying: we need here to give the greatest weight, in the end, to the right-hemisphere perspective on these matters…

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What this paper seeks to describe is very difficult actually to *describe*; that is an *inevitable* feature of it. Thus some of my strange formulations, occasional neologisms, the circling progress of my writing here.[42] The difficulties are the difficulties of the true paradoxes one sometimes encounters in life, paradoxes that one cannot, *contra* much philosophical 'wisdom', simply dissolve.[43] Indeed, the difficulties here are structurally *the very same* as and that Wittgenstein endeavoured to describe throughout his life (see e.g. the Preface of the *Tractatus,* and *Philosophical Investigations* sections 103, 240-242 and 499-502).[44] They are also the difficulties that McGilchrist is wrestling with in his work.

One of the ways in which *The Master and His Emissary* helps us in that McGilchrist has of course a kind of *account* of these difficulties. His metaphorics of the left and right hemispheres can make more perspicuous to us to how paradoxes which seem catastrophic to thought (from a solely left-hemisphere perspective) can be reckoned with and indeed relaxed through (once one shifts to the right hemisphere). Let us consider for a moment an example quite pertinent to our case in the present essay:

> Take the sorites paradox. This results from believing that the whole is the sum of the parts, and can be reached by a sequential process of incrementation. It tries to relate two *things*: a grain of sand and a heap […]. It also presupposes that there must either be a heap or not be a heap at any one time: "either/or"

41. For how it can be *possible* for us to be finite *and* yet not to be finite - for how these two things can be true even if they contradict one another—see again McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 97-8 and 137-140, especially his discussions of the nature of paradox in relation to the two hemispheres. See also the discussion immediately below.
42. Thus my style, at times, rhymes with Wittgenstein's.
43. For why, see ibid., 200, which recovers Romanticism's recovery of the vitality and ineradicability of paradox.
44. The philosophically-well-read and attentive reader will recognise the latter half of the present essay as shot through with thoroughly "New Wittgensteinian" ("resolute") thinking, thinking for which these cited passages from Wittgenstein are especially iconic.

> are your only alternatives. That is the left hemisphere view and sure enough it leads to paradox. According to the right-hemisphere view, it is a matter of shift in context, and the coming into being of a *Gestalt*, an entity which has imprecisely defined bounds, and is recognised whole: the heap comes into being gradually, and is a process, an evolving, changing "thing." Failure to take into account context, inability to understand Gestalt forms, an inappropriate demand for precision where none can be found, an ignorance of process, which becomes a never-ending series of static moments: these are signs of left-hemisphere predominance.[45]

Note the scare-quotes that McGilchrist uses around the term "thing,"[46] when it occurs under the auspices of the right hemisphere. And especially, notice the nature of a heap as an open-ended whole. There is a direct kinship here (I don't want to overstate it, but it is worth dwelling on for a moment) with the argument of the present piece. The idea that one can understand life as a finite object composed of something like seconds is akin to the idea that one can understand a heap as literally and exhaustively composed of grains. Of course, a heap *is* composed of grains—take away the grains, and there would be no heap (similarly: a life of no seconds duration is no life)—but the mistake is to think that there is no qualitative difference between grains and a heap. A heap is a whole. Formed by a process that in advance has no limit. One can always add one more. But that doesn't imply that one can always take away one more. A heap is open-ended. It is not very well understood as an object, a thing. It has vague boundaries. It is a little like a life.

I don't want to pretend that saying the kinds of things I've said above solve everything or makes everything magically perspicuous. On the contrary: I've explicitly noted that the difficulties one encounters hereabouts are coincident with the limits of sense, and with the difficulties in describing those limits. But the limits of sense have usually been wrongly imagined as an area outside which there is a banned ineffable or somehow substantial area. No; there is nothing outside the limits of sense, not even a "vacuum," just as there is not a vacuum outside the universe.

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45. McGilchrist, *The Master and His Emissary*, 138-39.
46. On this point, McGilchrist's more recent work is more explicit: see n. 22 above.

This most certainly does not mean that we are entitled to dogmatically insist that there are no feelings that cannot be put into words, nor that ordinary language must (be able to) capture without residue every reality that there is. What it means is just that we must avoid tacitly (or indeed explicitly!) positing that there are senses or sense-like things outside the bounds of sense. And that we must avoid positing the bounds of sense as something that we can peer over or demarcate from both sides (Thus Wittgenstein's important remark: “In so far as people think they can see the “limits of human understanding,” they believe of course that they can see beyond these.”[47]). And, therefore, that we must consider the bounds of sense as like the edge of the universe, or the edge of the visual field. The word “bounds” or “edge” is being used here, inevitably, in a “non-standard,” transitional sense: in that, normally, but *not* in these cases, when one can describe the edge of something one can point to or describe what lies on the *other* side of the edge, too.

The limits in question here are not then limits dividing any *this* from any *that*. Rather, they divide what *is* from *nothing;* truly a nothing, that can only masquerade as or (better) be fantasised as a something. It is of course to fall into a disastrous fallacy of misplaced concreteness to think that the universe begins with one's life and ends with one's death. It is an awesomely tragic failure of imagination and humanity thus to be unable to take seriously the lives of others (That disaster, we call “solipsism”; and it is present of course in some philosophy as well as in some psychopathology); but it is unavoidably, conceptually-certainly the case that there is (in an obvious and important sense that I am meaning to index and to characterise in the present paper) nothing of one's *own* life before one's birth or after one's death. This is a tautology that nevertheless shows us something, “transitionally,” and relative to various possible and actual confusions and delusions. One’s own life is a whole entire unto itself. It is not bounded, as experienced. Any experienced life is in this sense, I have shown here, not finite. It means nothing to actually touch or experience, let alone to exceed, its horizons: one does not experience one's birth or one's death. *Life is in this way end-less.*

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47. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. Von Heikki Nyman (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 15.

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Stanley Cavell counterposes skepticism to finitude. He shows how we yearn to escape what he calls our "finitude," and that this yearning is inevitable but deeply problematic. My argument by contrast has been that the very assertion of finitude is itself all-too-complicit with what Cavell calls skepticism. To actually overcome the dialectic between the two, *one needs to question the "finitude" wing of it just as much as the "skepticism" wing*.

Cavell is rightly discontented with skepticism. And he shows beautifully throughout his work how skepticism is discontented with our lives as they are. With, as I say, what he calls our "finitude." But I am showing here how (t)his way of being discontented with skepticism stays too close to its orbit.

So I have in this paper been questioning the assumption/assertion that humans are finite. The "finite vs. infinite" distinction has its home in maths. That's what it was best designed for. It ill-fits the universe, physicality and spatiality. It especially ill-fits us: i.e. we (thinking, struggling, learning, questing, loving beings) are not at all well-described if we are described (only) as finite. For, the question one ought to ask whenever someone says that something is finite, is: *As opposed to what?* A number is finite, as opposed to the endless *possibility* of adding one to it, and generating new numbers as a result. But if we say that our *life* is (simply and only) finite, we have to countenance far more dubious (pseudo-)"possibilities," of endless temporal duration. And/or we have to contrast ourselves unfavourably to alleged super-beings, (which turn out to be) utterly puffed up versions of ourselves. Assuming or asserting our finitude turns out to be a way of (hopelessly and dangerously) keeping us in the same game as gods, rather than, as one might superficially have thought, enabling us to overcome that game.

Rather, we should notice (and celebrate) that our life as lived *consists* of the endless possibility of adding to it. Life essentially involves the open-endedness of moment-after-moment being/becoming. Flow. What Bergon called "creative evolution."

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I have made a difficult argument here. It would be relatively easy, in my view, to illustrate a sort of non-finitude in our inter-temporal nature: that is, in our being beings who essentially have children. I argue elsewhere [48] that our deepest care—that for our descendants—ramifies thereby into a permanent care for the future of just as profound a depth. For it iterates without end.

This non-finitude is enriched once one appreciates also an end-less-ness in our inter-personal nature. That is, in our being beings who essentially live in communities, beings who *essentially* are first-person *plural*,[49] and indeed whose communities stretch out to include (or at least to touch and be touched by) non-human animals and in a sense the whole of life and of ecology, including the Sun and more. I've argued previously that Wittgenstein provides resources for coming to understand that and how we are such beings,[50] and how important this is in relation to giving us a sound sense of (supra-personal) "self" as we find ourselves in relation to the great struggle of this century: the political and eco-logical struggle to stop us from utterly destroying our civilisation and our planetary home.

I have sought here to go further: to show a vital non-finitude even in our own individual lives (and even: in the *moments* of those lives, in our living in the present, moment after moment). If my argument has been successful then it will have serious consequences for the many, diverse "mainstream"—hegemonic—authors, institutions and discourses which, implicitly or explicitly, suppose otherwise. It should shake up the complacencies of religious and 'anti-religious' thinkers alike, of "scientific" "common-sense," and of the philosophers, including top contemporary brains from Analytic metaphysics and philosophy of mind, and the great thinking of Cavell and Derrida.

My line of thought should help us to resist the siren voices that belittle us, and/or that urge us (absurdly, hubristically, disastrously) to leave behind our "finite" planet or species.

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48. See my *Parents for a Future: How Loving Our Children Can Prevent Climate Collapse* (Norwich: UEA Publishing Project, 2021).
49. On this, see Andrew Norris's magnificent book, *Becoming Who We Are: Politics and Practical Philosophy in the Work of Stanley Cavell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
50. See especially ch. 10 of my *Wittgenstein's Liberatory Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2020).

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Is there more to say about *why* it is so widely assumed that we are finite beings? I think the ultimate reason is a shared scientism that infects the likes of Derrida just as much as it does the likes of Dawkins or Dennett. A widely shared preconception that to say anything other than that we are finite necessarily courts a dangerously hubristic supernaturalism or superstition. I have shown, to the contrary, that the assumption of finitude *itself* reflects an undue complicity in traditional theology: a conception of God or gods too much as if superpeople with superpowers. To assert that this superperson(s) exists and to deny that they exist are just two sides of the same bad coin. To do either is to take part in the same game, a game far past its sell-by-date. When one embraces instead a conception of God *as* potential itself, and/or a conception of ourselves as endlessly becoming, then one is at last escaping the grip of the finite vs infinite dichotomy. As Wittgenstein taught, and as the greatest wisdom traditions have long held, we can stop pining for everlasting life—as literalist religious believers and "transhumanists" alike do—when we real-ise the power and presence that is possible, without limit, in simply being present. In becoming. Moment after moment.

Life as it is lived. Presence, always-changing; that is the great prize. Most of us live to very roughly three score years and ten (Though that risks shortening, if we don't get more serious about overcoming our mutually-reinforcing fantasies of being limited and being unlimited.). But we can live in eternity, if we stick to inhabiting fully the endless open door of now. (And if we do so, that will reduce the likelihood that we will trash this living planet so badly that we prematurely bring this adventure to an end.)

Where exactly, finally, then, does this *leave* us in relation to God? It certainly involves our leaving behind our sense of being comparable to and utterly inferior to God. It's misleading to describe God as actually-infinite, and misleading to describe us as merely-finite; there is no useful way of *comparing* us and God.

That sense persists in most Postmodernists *and* in Cavell *and in the dominant scientistic worldview*, when they present us as finite. We have to move beyond faux-"humble" illusions of finitude, or silly illusions of infinitude. To compare us with God

is already to fall into the trap of assuming the ubiquity of commensurability. We need instead a thinking that is willing to teach and be taught differences. Especially, the profound difference between finite and infinite. Without rash assumptions as to how (if at all) that difference maps, beyond the mathematical.

Such thinking is challenging, and of course I don't claim that it can proceed without metaphor: what can? But the price of intellectual freedom [51] is the exercising of eternal *vigilance* with regard to ones metaphors, rather than lapsing into dogmatism with regard to them.[52]

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51. Or, in Wittgenstein's sense, *liberation*: cf. for discussion and citation n.76 of Michael Kremer's "The cardinal problem of philosophy" (in Alice Crary, ed., *Wittgenstein and the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007). Or again, in Kant's sense, which we "resolute"/"new" Wittgensteinians inherit and radicalise (including de-individualizing it): *autonomy*. For detail, see my *Wittgenstein's Liberatory Philosophy*.

52. The best metaphor I know, to help one in that enterprise of undying vigilance in the service of intellectual autonomy, is McGilchrist's, of *the master* and his *emissary*…

Thanks to Sam Earle, Ian Christie, John Foster and Hannes Nykanen for very helpful comments on earlier drafts. Thanks to the late Jacques Derrida for discussion. Many thanks to Iain McGilchrist and to Aseem Shrivastava for discussion and correspondence that have incalculably enriched the paper.
Finally, I owe a great debt to my teacher, Stanley Cavell, with whom I discoursed about the matter of this paper across the years. It is an enduring sadness that he too was, of course, mortal.

3. *The Claim of Reason* as a Study of the Human Voice

SANDRA LAUGIER

Cavell's goal in *The Claim of Reason* has been to "bring the human voice back into philosophy."[1] For Cavell, the stakes of ordinary language philosophy (particularly Wittgenstein and Austin's work; see Toril Moi, Avner Baz) are to make it understood that language is spoken; pronounced by a human voice within a form of life. In *The Claim of Reason*, his aim is to shift the question of the common/shared use of language—central to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*—toward the less-explored question of the definition of the subject as voice, and the re-introduction of the voice into philosophy as a redefinition of subjectivity in language.

To say that the subjectivity is voice shifts the problem of expression to the question of the adequacy between subject and voice. There is also the question of the "WE." The voice is both a subjective and general expression: it is what makes it possible for my individual voice to become shared.

In voice, there is the idea of a claim. The singular claims a shared, common validity. Subjectivity becomes a political question that arises: the question of representation and the subject's expression by her community—and, inversely, the community's expression by the subject.

The philosophical interest of turning to "what we say" appears when we ask ourselves not only what it is to *say*, but what this *we* is. How do I, myself, know what *we* say in such or such circumstance? In what way is the language that I speak, inherited from others, mine? Cavell hears the echo of these questions in the opening lines of the *Philosophical Investigations* (which begin with the quote from Augustine: be-

1. See, Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 58; Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

cause, says Cavell, "all my words are those of another.").[2] Everything we say is a claim.

> 1. Augustinus, in den Confessiones I/8: cum ipsi (majores homines) appellabant rem aliquam, et cum secundum eam vocem corpus ad aliquid movebant, videbam, et tenebam hoc ab eis vocari rem illam, quod sonabant, cum eam vellent ostendere. Hoc autem eos velle ex motu corporis aperiebatur: tamquam verbis naturalibus omnium gentium, quae fiunt vultu et nutu oculorum, ceterorumque membrorum actu, et sonitu vocis indicante affectionem animi in petendis, habendis, rejiciendis, fugiendisve rebus. Ita verba in variis sententiis locis suis posita, et crebro audita, quarum rerum signa essent, paulatim colligebam, measque jam voluntates, edomito in eis signis ore, per haec enuntiabam.
>
> I. Augustine, *Confessions*, I. 8: When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved toward something, I saw this and I grasped that the thing was called by the sound they uttered when they meant to point it out. Their intention was shown by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having, rejecting, or avoiding something. Thus, as I heard words repeatedly used in their proper places in various sentences, I gradually learnt to understand what objects they signified; and after I had trained my mouth to form these signs, I used them to express my own desires.[3]

Here, we find all the classic themes of the *Investigations*: language learning; community; meaning; desire. But, at the same time, the subject, voice, and expression.

Wittgenstein takes up the idea of confession again at the end of the second part of the *Investigations*. In the *Investigations*, speaking is defined in the mode of confession, which is defined as external (it is that on the basis of which one judges the inner: there is nothing else):

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2. Cavell, *This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein* (Albuquerque, NM: Living Batch Press, 1989), 74.
3. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), §1.

> There is indeed the case where someone later reveals his inmost heart [*sein Innerstes*] to me by a confession: but that this is so cannot offer me any explanation of outer and inner, for I have to give credence to the confession.
>
> For confession is of course something exterior.[4]

Wittgenstein's work in philosophical psychology, particularly his *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology, The Inner and the Outer*, invites us to shift our focus from a critique of interiority to a new conception of subjectivity defined as voice.[5] Not that Wittgenstein reverts to any form of mentalism or psychologism; rather, he is here pursuing the project started in the *Tractatus* of depsychologizing psychological concepts, and therefore, as Cavell memorably puts it, of undoing 'the psychologization of psychology' Wittgenstein's last works are an attempt to depsychologize subjectivity not by eliminating it but by redefining it by voice. Much work has been done to underline the importance of subjectivity in Wittgenstein's work, but it has focussed on so-called grammatical or first-person matters of his thought. The power of Cavell's reading is that it allows a redefinition of subjectivity itself by an ability or competence to expression, to meaning, conceived inseparably as an upheaval of the temptation of inexpressiveness, and of the fear of over expressiveness (being expressive beyond your means, whatever these means are).

Again, this is the topic of *The Claim of Reason*. Wittgenstein is traditionally read as seeking to deny the inner, or more precisely, to dementalize it; as rejecting the idea that there could be anything at all going on in the "mind" or the "soul." He is seen as challenging the mythology of the "inner process"—the "mental" process that allegedly accompanies language:

> Ever and again comes the thought that what we see of a sign is only the outside of something within, in which the real operations of sense and meaning go on.[6]

If this idea comes "ever and again," it is because—like all ideas whose obsessive presence is noted by Wittgenstein—it has its reasons: we "are inclined to say" that there

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4. Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2007), 100.
5. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology: The Inner and the Outer, 1949-1951*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1994).
6. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, 140.

must be an inner process accompanying speaking, we need such a process if the spoken sentence is to be more than a lifeless string of signs. Indeed, what could *give life* to language, make it expressive, significant, if not an inner process? Wittgenstein relentlessly exposes the many problems stemming from the notion of an inner process —what has been called the myth of the inner. But to read this as straightforward criticism or wholesale rejection of the inner and the mental—as is often done in behaviourist interpretations—is to lose sight of the radicalness of Wittgenstein's thought, which leads him, not to deny the existence of an "inner," but to rethink inner-outer dualism. When he writes: "The distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' does not interest us,"[7] Wittgenstein is not denying the importance of reflecting on the inner and the outer, but what he is interested in is the way inner and outer are, grammatically speaking, *articulated*; that is, the way we speak of an inner only if there is an outer, and vice versa. This, as we shall see, does away with the notion of an inner as something hidden, so to speak: an inner with no outer, a *private* inner, unknown; as also with the notion of an inner 'on its own', immediately legible. The idea of expressing *unknownness*, central to Cavell's reading of film in *Contesting Tears* comes from this questioning in Wittgenstein.

> An essential dimension of Bette Davis's power is its invitation to, and representation of, camp; an arrogation of the rights of banality and affectation and display, of the dangerous wish for perfect personal expressiveness The wish, in the great stars, is a function not of their beauty, but of their power of privacy, of a knowing unknownness.[8]

Cavell adds, on a more political note, that "It is a democratic claim for personal freedom," "something Davis shares with the greatest of the histrionic romantic stars."

The point may also be the capacity, in an actor, of expressing inexpressiveness, as for example in Capra's *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) (connected to the essential and wonderful vulnerability of the Gary Cooper character and expressivity). So to understand the human nature of expression would be to understand the possibility of

7. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Grammar,* (CA: University of California Press, 2005), 100.
8. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 128.

unknownness, privacy, neither as a hidden "thing," nor as "nothing" but as the privileged object of exposure. A passage from the *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* is pertinent here:

> But if we dispose of the inner process in this way,—is the outer one now all that is left?—the language-game of description of the outer process is *not* all that is left: no, there is also the one whose starting point is the expression.[9]

When Wittgenstein examines the grammar of expressions bearing on the inner and the outer, he is looking to challenge a kind of exaltation we have about the inner life being entirely *private*. This does not amount to his rejecting the idea of an inner life. Wittgenstein contests the idea that we have privileged access to our sensations, and he suggests that we know our own pain no better, perhaps less well, than we know someone else's. But there is something misleading in these familiar, paradoxical affirmations; for, as Cavell recognized, the stake here is not so much evidence of one's access to someone else, as the difficulty (and anxiety) of accessing one's own inner life, translated into skepticism. The question is expressed in some seemingly ironic moments in Wittgenstein, in the last writings—a book he didn't get to really read closely, but which is perfect material for *The Claim of Reason*.

> I *can* not observe myself as I do someone else, cannot ask myself "What is this person likely to do now?" etc.[10]

> My own relation to my words is wholly different from other people's. [...] If I listened to the words of my mouth, I might say that someone else was speaking out of my mouth.[11]

Wittgenstein is led to produce a theory of *inaccessibility*, or self-ignorance, which Cavell takes to be the central theme of the *Investigations*; and, in the same breath, to

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9. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. I* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1988), §659.
10. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 10.
11. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 192.

question "The apparent certainty of the first person, the uncertainty of the third."[12] The separation of both questions would in any case only be an artificial one: the question of my own inaccessibility to what is going on in me being also (even if not exactly *the same* as) that of the other's accessibility to himself. It seems as if, towards the end, and after moments of criticism of the "self" (as in the *Blue Book*), Wittgenstein returns to an original question of the *Tractatus* (the self, mysterious), and asks again, though in a new way, the question of the nature of self. Wittgenstein continues in his attempt to define the non-psychological self, the threat of solipsism gives way to that which it masked: the anxiety of the relation to self, as translated in the myth of inexpressiveness. Here again, Cavell's analysis is powerful: the alleged unknowability of the other masks the refusal, or anguish, to know oneself, or rather to *feel* oneself.

> It is as though Wittgenstein felt human beings in jeopardy of losing touch with their inner lives altogether, with the very idea that each person is a center of one, that each *has* a life.[13]

What Wittgenstein often says about the confusion inherent in the idea that we have no *access* to the other has in fact to do with this core anxiety, that of our access to our own sensations and thoughts—being unknown. Opting for this perspective lets us gauge the full extent of the problematic nature of behaviourist interpretations of Wittgenstein. What would be someone's examination of her own external reactions? As if, it is here precisely that the threat of denial of the inner is the fear, or uncanniness, of expressivity—"I hear the words coming out of my mouth." In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein repeatedly states that he is not denying the existence of inner processes; for example: "What gives the impression that we want to deny anything?"[14] A typical and misleading remark is the following, which appears to call for a behaviourist interpretation: "An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria."[15] But it can be interpreted differently, witness Cavell:

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12. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 951.
13. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 91.
14. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §305.
15. Ibid., §580.

> The technique in this instance is, roughly, this: The background of the statement, to which it is a response, is that people (philosophers) are led to say that remembering or thinking or meaning, etc. are inner processes, as though that explains something. The message is that until you produce criteria on the basis of which, in a particular case, or count something as an 'inner process', you have said nothing [...].[16]

The deep problem is that once the presence of an inner process is made dependent on criteria, nothing is solved; for criteria are outer, not inner. As Cavell then notes:

> But the immediate context of the statement seems to convey this message: Once you produce the criteria, you will see that they are merely outward, and so the very thing they are supposed to show is threatened.[17]

Wittgenstein puts the expression "inner process" in scare quotes. This should move us to be circumspect, and guess that he does not mean anything as obvious and boring as: you can know that something is going on inside you without me knowing it, so that for me to know it you would have to send me the right signals informing me of it. Better Wittgenstein is asking himself: when you have sent me your signals so that I am informed of your inner world, do I really *know* that world, or do those signals come from a source which will, to me, always remain unverifiable and private, so that they are the sign of something I can never know?

That the expression "inner process" is in quotes means that what is required are (outward) criteria to *say* that something is (what we call) an inner process. This obviously does not deny the existence of the inner; criteria being, by definition, (outward) criteria for the *inner*. The best way to understand this is through a closer examination of the structure of inner/outer, constant in Wittgenstein but invisibilized by the regular translation of both "*innere*" and "*seelisch*" indiscriminately by "mental," which is inadequate in both cases. "Inner" means nothing—even if only in terms of spatial localization—independently of "outer." First because of the grammatical struc-

16. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 96.
17. Ibid., 96.

ture of inner/outer; but it is not only a matter of grammar, we have here to do with a dualism that seeps through all the uses of language, and has therefore a *logical* structure: "The inner is tied up with the outer not only empirically, but also logically."[18] That the duality is a *logical* one means that for Wittgenstein the inner can only be thought (or spoken of) in relation to an outer; that we have here to do with a *structure*; that there is no inner without an outer, and vice versa:

> "In that case something quite different must be going on in him, something that we are not acquainted with."—*This shews us* what we go by in determining whether something that takes place "in another" is different from, or the same, as in ourselves. This shews us *what we go by* in judging inner processes.[19]

We judge, read, see the inner by means of the outer; and this tells us nothing about the empirical relationship between inner and outer. So we need to add to the definition of meaning by *voice* the idea of a *confession*.

> There is indeed the case where someone later reveals his inmost heart (*sein Innerstes*) to me by a confession: but that this is so cannot offer me any explanation of outer and inner, for I have to give credence to the confession.
> For confession is of course something exterior. [20]

Wittgenstein suggests here a paradox of expression: it comes to the same thing to say something goes on in me and something outside, because that is precisely what we *mean* by *outer* (and *inner)*. This interdependence of inner and outer is registered, put before our eyes, in film:

> "I see the outer and imagine an inner that fits it."
>
> When mien, gesture and circumstances are unambiguous, then the inner seems to be an outer; it is only when we cannot read the outer that the inner seems to be hidden behind it.

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18. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 63.
19. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §340.
20. Ibid., §558.

> There are inner and outer concepts, inner and outer ways of looking at a man. [...]
>
> The inner is tied up with the outer not only empirically, but also logically. The inner is tied up with the outer logically, and not just empirically.[21]

Here, the question is no longer about the limit between subject and world, or between outer and inner, but about the very nature of a *subject*, which is no longer *between*, but *both* inner and outer. As noted, Wittgenstein tirelessly repeats that he is not *negating* the existence of inner processes. What emerges in the later Wittgenstein, is a re-examination of the nature of the inner, of the mythology of a hidden interiority. See, for instance, the following remark: "'What is *internal* is hidden from us.'—The future is hidden from us."[22] "For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us."[23] The inner (or meaning) as hidden does not interest us because what interests us is the inner as expressed, put before us, affecting us. One of our first uses of "inner" is precisely its association with our inner states, and it can well be asked if the idea of the *hidden* best defines our ordinary use of "inner." Wittgenstein makes this important remark in *Philosophical Investigations*: "That what someone else says to himself is hidden from me is part of the *concept* 'saying inwardly.' Only 'hidden' is the wrong word here."[24] Cavell follows the intuition when he asks:

> But why do we think of a state (of mind, say) as *inner*? Why do we think of the meaning of a (some particular) poem as inner? (And mightn't we think of some states of a physical object as inner? Perhaps not its hardness; but its magnetic power? or its radioactivity?) What pertains to the soul is thought of as inner. But why? "Inner" means, in part, something like inaccessible, hidden (like a room). But it also means *pervasive,* like atmosphere, or the action of the heart. What I have in mind is carried in phrases like "inner beauty," "inner conviction," "inner strength," "inner calm." This suggests that the more deeply

21. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 63-64.
22. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 223.
23. Ibid., §126.
24. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 220-221.

> a characteristic pervades a soul, the more obvious it is. (Cf. envy as a sharp feeling and a state of the soul.) [25]

This ordinary notion of "inner" refers therefore to both the private and the *manifest*. This might well summarize the problem of skepticism, and show how skepticism is not resolved, nor negated, but expressed, in film. I do not have access to the inner (thought, mind) except via the outer (outward criteria, gestures, speech). But here the question finds a new expression:

> Whatever the criteria tell us by way of identifying the other's state (or process, etc.), they are still *outward*.—Outward as opposed to what? What would an inward criterion be?—Not opposed to an inward *criterion*, maybe; but as opposed to *something* inward.—Name something. [26]

If we examine the external criterion, it will only be that: external. And so, it is useless to ask of the external—the criteria—that it give more than it has, or than it is. In other words, the criterion is, by its very nature, disappointing; this is the main thesis of the first part of *The Claim of Reason*, but it is so only inasmuch as we started off with an erroneous interpretation of what the inner is, and what, the outer:

> Silent "internal" speech is not a half hidden phenomenon which is as it were seen through a veil. It is not hidden *at all*, but the concept may easily confuse us, for it runs over a long stretch cheek by jowl with the concept of an 'outward' process, and yet does not coincide with it. [27]

Wittgenstein's suggestion is that only the outer gives us access to the inner. See *The Claim of Reason*:

> I feel: That "something or other" is in there is what "outward" *says*. In itself the word deprives the notion of a criterion of none of its power; and adds none to it. But a false idea of the inward produces a false idea of the outward.[28]

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25. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 99.
26. Ibid., 99.
27. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 220.
28. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 99-100.

Cavell dismantles standard interpretations of Wittgenstein by showing how the *Investigations* in various ways explore the idea of an outer *confinement*. The skeptical problem is transformed: no longer a skepticism about *other minds*, or about knowledge of others, but about *access* to others, for which the obstacle is not otherness or privacy, but the impossibility for oneself to access one's self: "If I take the space I am in to be outer, I have to imagine for the other an inner space which I could not possibly enter. Which *nobody* could possibly enter; for *he* didn't *enter* it."[29]

For Wittgenstein and Cavell, false conceptions of inner and outer mutually engender and comfort each other. Cavell notes that "the correct relation between inner and outer, between the soul and its society, is the theme of the *Investigations* as a whole."[30] This corrective labour gives birth to a conception of subjectivity as voice, which we shall now attempt to unravel. If the subject is neither within, nor a mere limit, where/what is it?

Wittgenstein throughout his philosophizing remains obsessed with the idea of the self and the non-coincidence between voice and identity. What, from the *Notebooks* to the *Last Writings*, obsesses Wittgenstein, is precisely this mixture of tautology and difference in use: the idea, both trivial and obscure, that the relation (connection) I have to myself is, in some way, not the same as the one I have to others.

> My own relation to my words is wholly different from other people's.
>
> I do not listen to them and thereby learn something about myself. They have a completely different relation to my actions than to the actions of others.
>
> If I listened to the words of my mouth, I would be able to say that someone else was speaking out of my mouth. [31]

> My words and my actions interest me in a completely different way than they do someone else. (My intonation also, for instance.) I do not relate to them as an observer. [...] My words are parallel to *my* actions, his to his.
>
> A different co-ordination. [32]

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29. Ibid., 100.
30. Ibid., 329.
31. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 9.
32. Ibid., 10.

This is precisely the point at which emerges the peculiar status of subjectivity, defined by the specific interest we have in what we ourselves say or do and investment in our intonation and expressivity, "a different coordination." What is then this special relationship that Wittgenstein tries to describe between the I and what it says/does? Well, it is a linguistic relationship: the subject is a subject of language; she makes use of a common language, and this use is her own, subjectivity is no longer an object but a property of what(ever) is said. We are left with a language that is no longer *private* but *subjective*. The publicity of language (its outwardness) is not opposed to its, so to speak, "intimacy" (a better term is needed here, if privacy doesn't work—intimacy is nice as it evokes a conversational tonality).

A language without inwardness would *appear* (outwardly) strange. When we do not know what is going on in someone else, our uncertainty, says Wittgenstein, does *not* refer to something going on in the inner. The hesitation concerns the *expression* (*Ausdruck*) itself: the inner finds its expression in the bodily.

Again, as we saw about what Cavell calls "the body of our expressions," the outer, the *body* is perceived as what *gives expression* to the inner. We can see that this conception of expression radicalizes the structure of the inner/outer. Here the question of subjectivity becomes a matter not of some difficulty and confusion in accessing the inner, as being private, but again of the definition of *expression*. that Wittgenstein does not so much seek to question the private character of the soul as the idea that the private is a matter of knowledge, and therefore of *secrecy*. Recall his criticism of a conception of the self as something hidden *inside*, as if meaning were mythologically hidden in the sentence: there is nothing other than what you see (don't you see the whole sentence?). But just as the sentence *means*, with nothing hidden; is not a string of dead signs, but not because something hidden (or added, or supposed) gives it life; the outer *expresses* without anything being hidden. Recall the passage in which one might listen to the words of one's mouth.[33] But my relation to myself is not one of knowledge. It is not even, as Wittgenstein's vocabulary indicates, a *relation* (this would be highly obscure, if not nonsensical): more an attitude—*Einstellung*, or (in an ordinary, nontechnical sense), a disposition. "My attitude towards

33. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 9 and *Philosophical Investigations*, 192.

him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul."[34] And the following, less familiar, passage: "Our attitude to what is alive and to what is dead, is not the same. All our reactions are different."[35]

As Cavell notes: "his teaching on this point [is] rather that what is accurate in the philosophical or metaphysical idea of privacy is not captured, or is made unrecognizable, by the idea of secrecy."[36] The idea of being alive is somehow more important. What is private is not inaccessible: my private life (or a private conversation, or a private joke) is perfectly accessible to those who I want to give access to it. Film gives us access to the private lives of their characters,

> That what someone else says to himself is hidden from me is part of the *concept* "saying inwardly." Only "hidden" is the wrong word here; for if it is hidden from me, it ought to be apparent to him, *he* would have to *know* it. But he does not "know" it [...].[37]

Skepticism would then be less a cognitive problem (the possibility of knowing the world, or others, or of having access to someone else's inner self) than a symptom: that of the denial or refusal of expression. The question of the knowledge of other minds acts like a mirror, or a mask, of my own accessibility (to the other, to myself). There is no secret, "nothing is hidden," not because everything is external, but because the only secrets are those we do not want to hear, and the only privacy that which we do not *want* to know, or refuse to give access, or expression to. We conceive of language as the (outer) expression of an (inner) state or thought, and therefore of private language as language that is somehow doomed to remain inside, not exteriorizable: "Well, there is no such thing as outer mediated and inner unmediated evidence for the inner."[38]

But it could just as well be said, following Cavell, and the evidence given in film, that Wittgenstein radically changes the discussion on privacy. The problem is not our inability to express or externalize what we have "inside," to think or feel

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34. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 178.
35. Ibid., §284.
36. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 330.
37. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 220-221 and *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, §880.
38. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 67.

something without being able to say it; the problem is the reverse: to not being able *mean what I am saying*. Here, we might be uncovering one of the sources of the notion of a private language: not a difficulty to know but a refusal—or terror—to mean, or to *expose oneself* to the outside.

We would rather believe that our private self is secret, lose touch with ourselves, than recognize the true nature of that private self, which is that it is entangled in a structure and fatality of *expression*. Such is the nature of the outer/inner relation: "That an actor can represent grief shows the uncertainty of evidence, but that he can represent *grief* also shows the reality of evidence."[39] This remarkable passage is connected to the whole discussion on pretence which runs through the last writings. Cases of pretence or make-believe are put forward to show the inadequacy of outer to inner; whereas, for Wittgenstein, the possibility of pretence shows precisely the *adequacy*—the fact that the exterior does indeed express the interior. Austin's *Pretending* is not far... We can only *simulate* ordinary behaviour; and to simulate means to imitate the inner, so to say, just as much as the outer ("This shews us *what we go by* in judging inner processes").[40]

Actors, as we all know from cop shows, can simulate hiding something, lying, pretending. Again, it is the very possibility of expression (linguistic or bodily) that defines subjectivity. Here, the myth of the private gives way to, or perhaps, as Cavell has it, *becomes*, the myth of inexpressiveness. The idea of inexpressiveness turns out to be the very anxiety of expression, the anxiety of the *naturalness* and fatality of the passage from inner to outer, anxiety of exposure: "What reason have we for calling 'S' the sign for a *sensation*? [...]—So in the end when one is doing philosophy one gets to the point where one would like just to emit an inarticulate sound."[41] As if the passage *outward* were precisely a loss of control of what I *mean*, and therefore, as if, ultimately, an inexpressive sound were preferable to a meaningful expression:

> So the fantasy of a private language, underlying the wish to deny the publicness of language, turns out, so far, to be a fantasy, or fear, [...] of inexpressiveness [of the kind] in which what I express is beyond my control. [42]

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39. Wittgenstein, *Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology*, 67.
40. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §340.
41. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §261.
42. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 351.

The question of the secret and the private is transformed and becomes that of the fatality of meaning, or of my "condemnation" to signification. The problem is thus not meaninglessness or the impossibility of "making sense", but rather the fatality of expression.

> The question, within the mood of the fantasy is: Why do we attach significance to any words and deeds, of others or of ourselves? [...] A fantasy of necessary inexpressiveness would solve a simultaneous set of metaphysical problems: it would relieve me of the responsibility for making myself known to others—as though if I were expressive that would mean continuously betraying my experiences, incessantly giving myself away; it would suggest that my responsibility for self-knowledge takes care of itself—as though the fact that others cannot know my (inner) life means that I cannot fail to.[43]

To understand that, as Wittgenstein said, language is our *form of life* means accepting the naturalness of language, the fatality of signification. This is not easy to achieve. It is from here that skepticism in its various forms is born: the impossibility of accessing the world is a mask for my own refusal to recognize it—that is to say, to bear signification, meaning, expression having a voice. From here, realism in its various form is born—my claim to know or theorize the real is a mask for my refusing contact, proximity with things. To mean, or to know what one means, would be first and foremost to place the sentence, to quote Wittgenstein, back in its "country of origin," its "natural milieu"; to recover the naturalness of language. This was the task of the ordinary language philosopher; as Wittgenstein says, "to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use."[44]

The Grammar of Claim

The philosophical interest of turning to "what we say" appears when we ask ourselves not only what it is to *say*, but what this *we* is. How do I, myself, know what *we* say in such or such circumstance? In what way is the language that I speak, inherited from

43. Ibid., 351.
44. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §116.

others, mine? Cavell hears the echo of these questions in the opening lines of the *Philosophical Investigations* (which begin with the quote from Augustine: because, says Cavell, "all my words are those of another."[45] Language is an inherited form of life). Everything we say is a claim.

> Their intention was shown by their bodily movements, as it were the natural language of all peoples: the expression of the face, the play of the eyes, the movement of other parts of the body, and the tone of voice which expresses our state of mind in seeking, having, rejecting, or avoiding something.[46]

Here, we find all the themes of the *Investigations*: language learning; community; meaning; desire. But, at the same time: the subject and voice.

In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell calls into question our *criteria*—that is, our common agreement on, or rather *in* language, in "form of life" and, more precisely, the *we* at stake in "what we say when." All that we have is what we say, and our agreements in language. We agree not on meanings but on usages, as Wittgenstein saw. One determines the "meaning of a word" by its uses. The search for agreement (asking "what we should say when…", as Austin constantly did) is grounded on something entirely other than meanings or the determination of speakers' "common sense."

For Cavell, the radical absence of foundation to the claim to "say what we say" (first discovery of his) is not the mark of some lack of logical rigor or rational certainty (a second discovery) in the procedure (ordinary language philosophy) that starts off from this claim. This is what Wittgenstein means when speaking about our "agreement in judgments" and in language: it is founded only on itself, in the *we*. It was already explicit in *Must We Mean What We Say?* in the cult passage:

> We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals

45. Cavell, *This New Yet Unapproachable America*, 74.
46. Ibid., §1.

> nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of [...] of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation—all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls 'forms of life.' Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (and because it is) terrifying.[47]

But *The Claim of Reason* aims to go even further. Cavell shows *both* the fragility and the depth of our agreements, and focuses on the very nature of the necessities that emerge from our life forms. The fact that our ordinary language is founded on life-forms is not only a source of disquiet about the validity of what we do and say; it is the revelation of a truth about ourselves that we do not want to recognize: the fact that "I" am the only possible source of such validity.

To reject this, to try to erase skepticism, amounts to reinforcing it. This is what Cavell means by his proposition in *The Claim of Reason* that skepticism is *lived,* not a theory or thesis but *a form of life*. This is a new understanding of the fact that language is our form of *life*. Acceptance of this fact—which Cavell defines as the "the absence of foundation or guarantee for creatures endowed with language and subject to its powers and weaknesses, subject to their mortal condition"[48]—is thus not a consolation, but an acknowledgement of the everyday. It is on this condition that one can regain "lost contact with reality": the proximity to the world and words broken in skepticism.

Cavell's originality indeed lies in his reinvention of the nature of language and in the connection he establishes between this nature of language the agreement, *(Übereinstimmung*) in language and *human nature*, finitude of life. It is in this sense that the question of language agreements reformulates the question of the human

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47. Cavell*, Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 52.
48. Cavell, "Préface," in *Les Voix de la raison. Wittgenstein, le scepticisme, la moralité et la tragédie*, trans. Sandra Laugier et Nicole Balso (Paris: Le Seuil, 2012; trans. mine).

condition, and it is in this sense that acceptance of this natural condition goes hand-in-hand with acknowledgment of these (language) agreements.

The philosophical problem raised by ordinary language philosophy is thus double. First: by what right do we base ourselves on what we ordinarily say? And next: on what, or on whom do we base ourselves to determine what we ordinarily say? But—and this is the genius of Cavell's arguments in *Must We Mean What We Say*? and in *The Claim of Reason*—these two questions are but one: the question of the connection of the I (my words) to the real (our world).

That is to say, for Cavell, the question of our *criteria*. In order to see this, let us return to his investigation of language agreements: we share criteria by which we regulate our application of concepts, means by which, in conjunction with what Wittgenstein calls grammar, we set up the shifting conditions for conversation.

According to Cavell, this explain the very particular tone of the *Investigations*, which have something autobiographical about them—though a curious autobiography, which would also be our own.

> It can seem sometimes that Wittgenstein has undertaken to voice our secrets, secrets we did not know were known, or did not know we shared. And then, whether he is right or wrong in a given instance, the very intention, or presumption, will seem to some outrageous.[49]

This brings us back to the voice and the question of the foundation of agreement: that is, the question of the nature of the *I*—of *my* capacity to speak, and thus, to conform to shared criteria. Indeed, for Cavell it is crucial that Wittgenstein says that we agree *in* and not *on* language. This means that we are not agents of the agreement; that language as form of life precedes this agreement as much as it is produced by it and that this circularity constitutes an irreducible element of skepticism. A solution cannot be found in conventionalism, because convention does not constitute an *explanation* of the functioning of language, but an essential difficulty. But convention cannot account for the real practice of language, and it serves instead to prevent us from seeing the *naturality* of language. To agree *in* language means that language produces our

49. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 20.

understanding just as much as it is the product of an agreement; that in this sense it is natural to us, and that the idea of convention is there to at once mimic and mask this necessity: "Underlying the tyranny of convention is the tyranny of nature," Cavell will say later in *The Claim of Reason*.[50] In the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein searches out and determines our criteria, which govern what we say. But *who is he* to claim to know such things? It is this absence of any foundation to the claim to know what we say that underlies the idea of criteria and defines a claim. The central enigma of rationality and the community is thus the possibility for me to speak *in the name of others*. It is not enough to invoke the community; it remains to be seen what authorizes me (gives me title) to refer to it.

> When I remarked that the philosophical search for our criteria is a search for community, I was in effect answering the second question I uncovered in the face of the claim to speak for "the group"—the question, namely, about how I could have been party to the establishing of criteria if I do not recognize that I have and do not know what they are. [...] to emphasize that the claim is not that one can tell a priori who is implicated by me, because one point of the particular kind of investigation Wittgenstein calls grammatical is exactly to discover who."[51]

That we agree *in* language is certainly not the end of the problem of skepticism, and conventionalism is not an answer to the questions asked here. Indeed, for Cavell it is crucial that Wittgenstein says that we agree *in* and not *on* language. This means that we are not agents of the agreement; that language precedes this agreement as much as it is produced by it and that this circularity constitutes an irreducible element of skepticism. I am not "by definition" representative of the human. The agreement can always be broken. I can be excluded (or exclude myself) from the community, both linguistic and political. The possibility of disagreement is inherent even to the idea of agreement; from the moment I claim (with my words) my representativeness. This

50. Ibid., 123.
51. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 22.

ever-possible disagreement sums up the threat of skepticism: a break in the passage, a suspension of the generalization from *I* to *we*.

Still I am not "by definition" representative of the human. The agreement can be broken. I can be excluded (or exclude myself) from the form of life, both linguistic and political. The possibility of disagreement is inherent even to the idea of agreement; from the moment I claim my representativeness, the risk is exclusion from form of life.

For Cavell, the question of the social contract underlies the question of language agreements, as his analysis of Rousseau at the beginning of *The Claim of Reason* shows. If I am representative I must have my voice in the common conversation. If my society is my expression it should also allow me to find my voice. If others stifle my voice, speak for me, I will always seem to consent. One does not have a voice, *one's own voice*: it must be found so as to speak in the name of others and to let others speak in one's name. For if others do not accept my words, I lose more than language: I lose my voice.

> We do not know in advance what the content of our mutual acceptance is, how far we may be in agreement. I do not know in advance how deep my agreement with myself is, how far responsibility for the language may run. But if I am to have my own voice in it, I must be speaking for others and allow others to speak for me. The alternative to speaking for myself representatively (for *someone* else's consent) is not: speaking for myself privately. The alternative is having nothing to say, being *voiceless,* not even mute.[52]

The error is to see an alternative between private and public (this is the prejudice that underlies discussions of "the private language argument"). Cavell explodes this alternative. To not be public is not to be *private*: it is to be *inexpressive*. "Voiceless, not even mute." If I do not speak, it is not that there is something inexpressible, but that I *have* nothing to say, and this is not only about sharing a life form with others, but about *being alive*. Our agreement (with others, with myself) is an agreement of voices: our *übereins*timmen, says Wittgenstein. "That a group of human beings *stimmen*

52. Ibid., 26.

in their language *überein* says, so to speak, that they are mutually voiced with respect to it, mutually *attuned* top to bottom."[53]

Cavell thus defines an agreement that is *not* psychological or inter-subjective, and which is founded on nothing other than the pure validity of a voice: my individual voice claims to be, is, a "universal voice." Claiming is what a voice does when it founds itself on itself alone in order to establish universal agreement—a claim that, as exorbitant as it already is, Cavell asks us to formulate in a yet more exorbitant manner: in place and stead of any condition of reason or understanding. In *Must We Mean What We Say?* Cavell posed the question of the foundation of language in the Kantian terms of "universal voice," showing the proximity of Wittgenstein and Austin's methods to a paradox inherent to aesthetic judgment: basing oneself on *I* in order to say what *we* say. Cavell refers to the well-known passage in §8 of the *Critique of Judgment*. In aesthetic judgment, Kant leads us to discover "a property of our faculty of cognition that without this analysis would have remained unknown"; the "claim to universality" proper to judgments of taste, which make us "ascribe the satisfaction in an object to everyone."[54] Kant distinguishes the agreeable from the beautiful (which claims universal agreement) in terms of *private* versus *public* judgment. How can a judgment with all the characteristics of being private claim to be public, to be valid for all? Kant himself noted the strange, "disconcerting" nature of this fact, whose strangeness Wittgenstein took to the limit. The judgment of taste demands universal agreement, "and in fact everyone supposes this assent (agreement, *Einstimmung*)." What Kant calls the universal voice (*allgemeine Stimme*) supports such a claim. We hear this "voice" in the idea of agreement, *übereinstimmen*, the verb used by Wittgenstein when he speaks of our agreement *in* language.[55] The universal voice expresses our agreement and thus our claim to speak in the name of others—to speak, *tout court*. The question of the universal voice is the question of the voice itself and its arrogation—an individual voice claiming to speak in the name of others. What is, then, the status of the voice?

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53. Ibid., 32
54. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, ed. Paul Guyer (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 99.
55. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §241-242.

This question only receives a response in *A Pitch of Philosophy*. The philosopher speaks with ordinary words, and nothing says that others will accept these—though the philosopher claims to speak for all. By what right?

Before being a term of the political idiom, a claim is a way of expressing oneself publicly to make a claim, a request, a right or, quite simply, to make one's voice heard. This is the meaning of the term "claim," and why Cavell has made a central element of his philosophy of ordinary language.

From the old French word *clamer* (in Latin clamare, of the same semantic field as clarus "clear," "strong"), to claim means first of all in its first historically attested literary uses, "to call, shout, clamor" (calling loudly). Yet, to claim and the noun claim are unparalleled in French today. The current French translations of claim, "*revendication, réclamation, prétention*," all have a tone, if not a pejorative tone, as if the request thus expressed needed additional justification. However, *claim*, in its first legal or political uses, on the contrary, raises a claim as well founded, in kind if not in law, and could be adequately translated as "title," which refers to the notion of law which emerges late and from which claim (in the sense of a claim based on a need) perhaps constitutes a first form.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, *claim* moved from the political and legal fields to the theory of knowledge, and then generally to the philosophy of language. The notion is then a "claim to knowledge," a "thesis." This use raises the question, stemming from English empiricism and then taken up by Kant, of the legitimacy of knowledge, of the validity of my claims to know. There is a German lexical equivalent to this use (*Anspruch*).

Claim originally referred to a claim related to the satisfaction of a physical need or the recovery of a vital asset that has been taken from you? *Claim* is a request to obtain a title deed to an object that already legitimately belongs to me. This use of the concept is extended during the conquest of new land by pioneers: in the US and Australia, *claim* refers to a parcel acquired by occupation (not granted nor inherited).

This "local" meaning of claim underlies a certain conception of the claim to property rights as fundamental rights, and perhaps also rights in general as (re)taking possession of a territory of one's own. It should be noted that a territory claimed by the Indians as the first occupants is called an Indian claim. Thus a meaning of

claim to a right is clarified: I ask what is mine and has always been mine. This refers to the request for something as it is due. A claim is then made by "requirement" or "title." This raises the question of the legitimacy of the request, which is answered with the emergence, apparently later, of the term right. The legal (and philosophical) meaning of the notion then becomes more specific: "assertion of a right to something" (Oxford Dictionary); and a whole vocabulary develops around claims, as evidenced by the multiplicity of expressions (lay a claim, make a claim, enter a claim) that have penetrated ordinary language. This grammar structures Cavell's *The Claim of Reason*.

This claiming inherent in the notion of claim I also epistemological. The question of empiricism is that of *legitimacy*, of the right to know: what allows us to say that we know? Hume, examining our claim to know by reasoning from experience, wonders by what right we can say that we know anything. This question is repeated by Kant, in whom we can detect a claim equivalent: *Anspruch*, which refers to the *claim of reason* to ask questions that are beyond its power, but that are legitimate and natural. The legal meaning of a claim, which is found in the Kantian *quid juris*, then applies to Reason, which is conceived as a claim that is both inevitable and impossible to satisfy, and therefore intended to always remain in the state of a claim.

It is this tension between arrogance and the legitimacy of the philosophical claim to know that is at the heart of Cavell's *The Claim of Reason*. Cavell defines claim from the outset as a community agreement based on singular expression and common use. From this perspective, what underlies the question of the foundation of knowledge is the political and not only epistemological question of the foundation of our common use of language. For Cavell, the claim of knowledge is the mask/cover of a first claim: the claim to speak for others, and to accept from others that they speak on my behalf.

The philosophical invocation of "what we say," and the search for the *criteria* call for (are claims to) community. However, the community claim is always a search for the basis on which it can be, or has been, established. The legal and epistemological problems raised by the notion of claim become that of our common criteria, our agreements in language.

The question becomes that of an individual's belonging to the community of a language and his representativeness as a member of that community: where does he

get this right or claim to speak for others? In this usage, claim is inseparable from the possibility of losing my representativeness, or my belonging, of being silenced: All claims about what we say go hand in hand with the awareness that others may well disagree, that a given person or group may not share our criteria (not share at all).

The political agreement is of the same nature as the language agreement: it exists only to the extent that it is claimed, claimed, invoked. Thus is defined with claim an agreement that is not psychological or intersubjective, but is based on nothing more than the validity of an individual voice that claims to be a "universal voice." We find here the first meaning of claim (clamor "shout [to] call") and also the irreducibility of the cry. The voice, but also the *clamour,* are thus constantly underlying the concept of the claim. Claim is what a voice does when it relies solely on itself to establish universal assent—a claim that, however exorbitant it may be, Cavell asks to formulate in an even more scandalous way, that is, without being based, as in Kant, on anything transcendental, or on any condition of reason. Reason claims itself (it is the meaning of genitive in Cavell: claim of reason). Without any outsourced warranty for the claim.

To show how the redesigned claim concept is an answer to skepticism, Cavell evokes the universality of Kant's aesthetic judgment. For him, the proximity of this approach to that of ordinary language theorists is that both of them always admit that they must rely on me to say what we say. To understand this connection, we must refer to what ordinary language philosophers mean by "what we say when": The aesthetic judgment serves as a model for the kind of affirmation (claim) produces by ordinary language philosophers.

How can Kant be considered a thinker of claim? The idea of a universal agreement based on my singular voice appears in the famous §8 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. With aesthetic judgment, Kant makes us "discover a property of our ability to know": "the claim (Anspruch) to universality (*Allgemeingültigkeit*)" specific to the judgment of taste, which makes us "attribute to everyone the satisfaction brought by an object."[56] We remember that Kant distinguishes the pleasant from the beautiful (which claims universal consent) in terms of private judgment against public judgment. How can a judgment that has all the characteristics of a private one

56. Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 99.

claim to be public? That is the problem with the claim. The judgment of taste requires and requires universal assent, "and, in fact, everyone assumes this assent, without the subjects who judge opposing each other on the possibility of such a claim (*Anspruch*)." What supports such a claim is what Kant calls a "universal voice" (*allgemeine Stimme*). This is the "voice" we hear in *übereinstimme*n, the verb used by Wittgenstein about our agreement "in language." The proximity between the universal Kantian voice and the theses of the philosophy of ordinary language appears with this ultimate meaning of *claim*, both *Anspruch* and *Stimme*: a claim, empirically unfounded, therefore threatened and raised by scepticism, to speak for all.

In his analysis of the concept of claim, Cavell identified the different *strata* (legal, political, epistemic, expressive) on which the acceptable uses of the verb to claim are developed. The ordinary grammar he proposes suggests that our affirmations or theses (claims) are always based on an agreement in language, on a claim of my representativeness, therefore on the legitimacy of my voice as singular and universal.

Claiming the Subject

To recognize the intimate connection between all these uses of the notion of claim is to recognize that the expression—in the order of knowledge as well as in the order of politics and law—is always also a voice, one that wants to be heard and demands to be heard on an equal footing with other voices. And always a matter of skepticism, because this voice must constantly be reappropriated to regain a proximity to the world.

Claim would be the acceptance of the expression as identically inner (it expresses me) and outer (it exposes me). It is in this identity that the nature of subjectivity as reinvented by Wittgenstein is revealed: the subject is indeed the subject of language, but in the sense that he is the subject of (to) expression and claim. The subject, in Wittgenstein, exists as this claim, this voice—in and through language. That it is inseparably inner and outer means that it is obviously not a voice that assures me of my identity, my thoughts, or anything else (as soon as it is a voice, it is expression,

and escapes me). The subject then defines himself in this movement of reappropriation of her voice, also a way of approaching, *touching* reality.

Claiming is voicing. Our agreement (with others, with myself) is an agreement of voices: our *über*einstimmen, says Wittgenstein. The question of the universal voice is the question of the voice itself and its arrogation—an individual voice claiming to speak in the name of others. What is, then, the status of the philosophical voice? This question only receives a response in *A Pitch of Philosophy*. The philosopher speaks with ordinary words, and nothing says that others will accept these—though the philosopher claims to speak for all. By what right?

> —Who is to say whether a man speaks for all men?
> Why are we so bullied by such a question? Do we imagine that if it has a sound answer the answer must be obvious or immediate? But it is no easier to say who speaks for all men than it is to speak for all men. And why should that be easier than knowing whether a man speaks for me?[57]

Here we may think of one of the stakes of Austin's work: the method of ordinary language philosophy. It is difficult not to notice that there is an "unhappy" dimension, a dimension of failure in ordinary language philosophy, which is obsessed—at least in the case of Austin—with instances where language fails, is inadequate, inexpressive.

In *Must We Mean What We Say*, Cavell asked how to mean ("mean": which also means to think, signify) what I say? Cavell reverses radically the examination of "private language." The problem is not being able to express what I have "in me"—thinking or feeling something without being able to say it (a problem definitively dealt with by Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*: there is the ineffable, but it most certainly cannot be thought, nor can it in some way point outside language. The problem is the inverse: not being able "to be in what I say," to *mean what I say*. Here, Austin's teaching enters in again: to say, as Austin did in *How to Do Things With Words*, that language is also action does not mean I control language, as I do (certain of my) actions. This means above all that it is possible for me to not "mean what I say." I am more possessed by language than I possess it. This point, expressed in *A Pitch of Phi-*

57. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, xl.

losophy, makes explicit an intuition from *Must We Mean What We Say?* about the source of skepticism: an impossibility of speaking the world that comes not from any (imaginary) distancing of the world, but from the impossibility or refusal to *mean*.

The question of the secret and the private is transformed and becomes that of the fatality of meaning, or of my "condemnation" to signification. The problem is thus not meaninglessness or the impossibility of "making sense," but rather the fatality of expression. The tension between the singular and the common, between the "arrogance" and legitimacy of the philosophical claim is developed in Cavell at the political level. What underlies the question of the foundation of knowledge is the (political and not only epistemological) question of the foundation of *our* common use of language. For Cavell, the *claim to knowledge* is the mask of a prior claim: the claim to speak for others, and to accept that others speak in my name.

The philosophical appeal to what we say, and the search for our criteria on the basis of which we say what we say, are claims to community. And the claim to community is always a search for the basis upon which it can or has been established.[58]

Cavell transforms the juridical and epistemological questions raised by *claim* into the question of our shared criteria, our agreements *in* language.

> When I remarked that the philosophical search for our criteria is a search for community, I was in effect answering the second question I uncovered in the face of the claim to speak for "the group"—the question, namely, about how I could have been party to the establishing of criteria if I do not recognize that I have and do not know what they are.[59]

It is a question of my representativeness: where does this right or this claim to speak for others come to me from? This is the question that the philosophers of ordinary language, Austin and Wittgenstein ask according to Cavell. The meaning of claim is inseparable from the possibility of my losing my representativeness, or my belonging—of being reduced to silence.

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58. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 22.
59. Ibid, 22.

"For all Wittgenstein's claims about what we say, he is always at the same time aware that others may not agree, that a given person or group (a "tribe") might *not* share our criteria."[60] Thus, Cavell gives an analysis of Rousseau in terms of claim:

> What he *claims* to know is his relation to society, and to take as a philosophical datum the fact that men (that he) can speak for society and that society can speak for him, [that they reveal one another's most private thoughts.]

My society must be my expression. This is what theoreticians of democracy always hope, and this is the illusion Cavell denounced with regard to Rawls, for example: if others stifle my voice, claiming to speak for me, how have I consented?

> To speak for yourself means risking the rebuff—on some occasion, perhaps once for all—of those for whom you claimed to be speaking; and it means risking having to rebuff—on some occasion, perhaps once for all—those who claimed to be speaking for you.[61]

The agreement between humans, linguistic or political, precisely because it is *always a claim* is as fragile as it is deep. This essential fragility of political agreement, always threatened by skepticism, constitutes the linguistic sense of claim.

Political agreement is of the same nature as linguistic agreement, which Wittgenstein calls *Übereinstimmung*.[62] This agreement only exists insofar as it is claimed, demanded, invoked: my individual voice claims to be, *is*, a "universal voice.

Here, with the appeal to voice we encounter the first meaning of claim (*clamare*: to cry, to call). The concept of voice thus always turns out to be inherent to the technical concept of a claim. Claim is what a voice does when it bases itself on itself alone in order to establish an agreement: to base oneself on *I* in order to say what *we* say. This claim is what defines agreement, and community is thus by definition something claimed, not foundational. It is I—my voice—who claim community. Finding my voice consists not in finding agreement with *everyone*, but in staking a claim.

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60. Ibid., 18.
61. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 27.
62. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §241.

These are themes Cavell takes from Emerson and Thoreau: everyone is worth the same, and an individual voice claims generality: this is the principle of Emersonian *self-reliance*. (It is this possibility of a claim through the voice that makes it possible to extend the model of civil disobedience today.) Those they defend—Native Americans and slaves—do not have rights (they do not have a voice in their history, Cavell says). Instead of making claims in their place, and thus, keeping them in silence, Emerson and Thoreau prefer to claim the only rights that they can defend—their own: their right to have a government that speaks and acts in their name, that they recognize and to which they give their consent and voice. Thus the concept of democratic *conversation*: for a government to be legitimate, everyone must have, or find, his or her voice in it, be able to stake a claim The right to withdraw one's voice from society is based on Emersonian *self-reliance*. My private voice will be "the universal feeling, for what is most intimate always ends up becoming the most public." To ensure that my private voice always be public: this is the definition of a claim and the political translation of Wittgenstein's "critique" of private language.

In both moral agreements and political claims I am brought back to myself, to the search for my position and my voice. The question of democracy is indeed the question of voice. I must have a voice in my history, and recognize myself in what is said or shown by my society, and thus, in a way, give my voice to it, accepting that it speak in my name.

The radical critique of conformism is not simply a calling into question of consent to society. To the contrary, it defines the condition of *ordinary* democratic morality. Questions of justice and injustice do not only concern those who do not speak—those who, for structural reasons, cannot speak (who have been definitively "excluded" from the conversation of justice)—but also those who *could speak* yet run up against the inadequacy of speech as it is given to them. It is in this inadequacy and misunderstanding that the political subject is defined—not in a new foundation of the subject through his or her speech, but in the suffocation and claim of his or her own voice.

A speech *claims* a voice. The subject is not a foundation; it is eternally claimed, absent, *demanded*. What must be brought out is not only the subject's fragility or plurality or obscurity, but also essential passivity: the subject must *support* the voice,

The subjectivity of language is then the impossible adequacy between a speaker and his or her voice or voices. Here the terror of absolute inexpressiveness AND of absolute expressiveness, of total exposure, come together as two extreme states of voicelessness.

"I am led to stress the condition of the terror of absolute inexpressiveness, suffocation, which at the same time reveals itself as a terror of absolute expressiveness, unconditioned exposure; they are the extreme states of voicelessness."[63] This dissociation/dislocation of the voice is also at the heart of Cavell's autobiographical project, in *Little Did I Know* and it is a matter of claim.

> This second analyst and I eventually spent some time analyzing more or less informally my own writings. The simultaneous fear of inexpressiveness and of over-expressiveness is a recurrent topic in the material I had just decided to put aside as eluding completion by me, in its thesis form called *The Claim to Rationality*, in its revised and doubled form published as *The Claim of Reason*.[64]
>
> —Who is to say whether a man speaks for all men?[65]

This is why in defining, as Cavell does, ordinary language by *voice*—the voice of the I who speaks in the name of all others, in this arrogation of the voice that is the mark of all human expression—one does not reconstitute a new subject, subject of speech, nor makes physical voice the mark of the human. Cavell rejects the idea of a metaphysics of presence in the concept of voice or speech. I am no more present in my voice than in my other works, actions, or possessions, and the human voice, like ordinary language, is suffused with the skepticism of *The Claim of Reason*.

I am more possessed by language than I possess it. This point, expressed in *A Pitch of Philosophy*, makes explicit an intuition from *The Claim of Reason* about the source of skepticism: an impossibility of speaking the world that comes not from any

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63. Cavell, *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 43.
64. Cavell, *Little Did I Know: Excerpts from Memory* (CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 110.
65 Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, xl.

(imaginary) distancing of the world, but from the refusal to *mean*. Our (deliberate) distance from the world creates a fantasy: the fantasy of the private, of *inexpressiveness– which* becomes the very anxiety of the weight of expression.

The question of privacy is transformed and becomes that of the fatality of meaning, or of my "fatedness" to signification. The problem is thus not meaninglessness or the impossibility of "making sense", but rather the fatality of expression.

> The question, within the mood of the fantasy is: Why do we attach significance *to any* words and deeds, of others or of ourselves? [...] A fantasy of necessary inexpressiveness would solve a simultaneous set of metaphysical problems: it would relieve me of the responsibility for making myself known to others—as though if I were expressive that would mean continuously betraying my experiences, incessantly giving myself away; it would suggest that my responsibility for self-knowledge takes care of itself—as though the fact that others cannot know my (inner) life means that I cannot fail to.[66]

To understand that, as Wittgenstein said, *language is a lifeform* means accepting the naturalness of language, the fatality of signification. This is not easy to achieve. It is from here that skepticism in its various forms is born: the impossibility of accessing the world is a mask for my own refusal to bear signification, meaning, expression. From here, realism in its various form is born—my claim to know or theorize the real is a mask for my refusing agency, contact, proximity with things. To mean, or to know what one means, would be first and foremost to place the sentence, to quote Wittgenstein, back in its "country of origin," its "natural milieu"; to recover the naturalness of language. This was the task of the ordinary language philosopher; as Wittgenstein says, "to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use."[67] Cavell makes more precise in *A Pitch of Philosophy* what was sketched out at the end of *The Claim of Reason* concerning the essential passivity of the relation to the voice.

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66. Ibid.
67. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §116.

"It is in recognizing this abandonment to my words, as if to unfeasible epitaphs, presaging the leave-taking of death, that I know my voice, recognize my words (no different from yours) as mine."[68] To be thus abandoned to language is indeed the opposite of what the concept of speech (active, living, etc.) would seem to imply. I am as active (and also as passive) in my voice as in, for example, my breathing or my exhalation, and the question is then no longer being able to access language, the community of speakers, or one's voice (horizontal forms of life); it is being able to bear precisely "*the (inevitable) extension* of the voice, which will always escape me and will forever find its way back to me."[69]

And thus, what is unbearable is not the inexpressible or the impossibility of being expressive it is *expression* itself as life form, a life that is not mine anymore. The phantasm of the private disguises our fear of being public, "the terror of being expressive beyond our means," as a symmetrical fear of inexpressiveness.

A speech *claims* a voice. The subject is not a foundation; it is eternally claimed, absent, *demanded*. In redefining the subject through the subjectivity of language defined by voice, one situates the subject within naturalness (the voice as breath) and life: this is a subjectivity without subject. The subjectivity of language is then the impossible adequacy between a speaker and her voice or voices. Cavell's search for both inexpressiveness and absolute expressiveness as extreme states of voicelessness is a way to pursue this search for forms of human voice.

"I am led to stress the condition of the terror of absolute inexpressiveness, suffocation, which at the same time reveals itself as a terror of absolute expressiveness, unconditioned exposure; they are the extreme states of voicelessness."[70] This dissociation/dislocation of the voice and agent is at the heart of the different forms of expression in the human form of life.

> On film the actor is the subject of the camera, emphasizing that this actor could (have) become other characters (that is, emphasizing the potentiality in human existence, the self's journeying), as opposed to theater's emphasizing that this character could (will) accept other actors (that is, emphasizing the

68. See, Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy*, 126.
69. Ibid., 126.
70. Cavell, *Contesting Tears*, 43.

> fatedness in human existence, the self's finality or typicality at each step of the journey). In opera the relative emphasis of singer and role seems undecidable in these terms, indeed unimportant beside the fact of the new conception it introduces of the relation between voice and body, a relation in which not this character and this actor are embodied in each other but in which this voice is located in—one might say disembodied within—this figure, this double, this person, this persona, this singer, whose voice is essentially unaffected by the role.[71]

Such a dislocation of the voice is also at the heart of Cavell's autobiographical project, in *Little Did I Know*.

> This second analyst and I eventually spent some time analyzing more or less informally my own writings. The simultaneous fear of inexpressiveness and of over-expressiveness is a recurrent topic in the material I had just decided to put aside as eluding completion by me, in its thesis form called *The Claim to Rationality*, in its revised and doubled form published as *The Claim of Reason*.[72]

We may note the exploration of women's voices and expressiveness is the starting point of feminism.[73] (see *Feminist Investigations*).

Translation

One last word on translation.

Translating Cavell's work was always hard work, but this difficulty pointed to the specificity and importance of his philosophy to the contemporary world. Like Emerson, Thoreau, but unlike the majority of contemporary Anglophone philoso-

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71. See, Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy*, 137.
72. Cavell, *Little Did I Know*, 110.
73. See Nancy Bauer, Sarah Beckwith, Alice Crary, Sandra Laugier, Toril Moi, and Linda Zerilli, eds., *New Literary History* 46, no. 2, "Feminist Investigations and Other Essays" (2015).

phers, Cavell used English as a *language*, a philosophical tongue, rather than as an international, dominant, and transferable medium. This meant that his writing was based on terms that were "untranslatable" from English (that is, from "American"—the cover of the translation of *The Claim of Reason* says "translated from the American"), as I came to see when I revisited them for Barbara Cassin's *Dictionary of Untranslatables*. When Cassin undertook this dictionary project in the late 20th century the great philosophical languages, Greek and German, were well represented in it and not the English. What happened is that Cavell's words ("claim," "mean," "acknowledgement") instantiated English as opaque tongue, as a medium in which the transformations of philosophy were operated, in particular those forced by Wittgenstein's work.

When I started translating *The Claim of Reason*, I had the greatest difficulties, especially with the first sentence but also with the title. Claim is literally an untranslatable, *intraduisible* (and presented as such in an entry of the dictionary of untranslatables, also in its English version). Translating the title was a challenge and finally the choice to translate it "Voix de la raison" was a way to keep the idea of claim, of voice, but to add the plurality of voices – in order to picture political pluralism in its agonistic dimension and to discover it in the very form of the *Philosophical Investigations*.

4. Hegel and Cavell on Meaning and Sublation

ANDREW NORRIS

> Das Bekannte überhaupt ist darum, weil es *bekannt* ist, nicht *erkannt*.
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> HEGEL, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*

Hegel is not an author who plays a starring role in Cavell's work like that of Austin, Wittgenstein, or Emerson. Cavell mentions him rarely, and almost always in passing. This is hardly surprising. Given that Cavell draws as heavily as he does upon Kant, whom Hegel regularly attacks, and Kierkegaard, who regularly attacks Hegel, one might expect that Hegel's more important claims and ideas would be uncongenial to Cavell, and incompatible with the main lines of his work.[1] Moreover, Cavell's early and lasting embrace of Romanticism would seem to preclude the embrace of an author who lambasts the leading Jena Romantic Friedrich von Schlegel as the purveyor of a corrosive amoral subjectivism.[2] Appearances, however, can be deceiving, and in the essay that follows I demonstrate that there are good reasons to believe that Hegel has influenced Cavell considerably more than one might suppose.

As I have noted elsewhere, at least some of Cavell's references to Hegel indicate significant influence.[3] In 1965's "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," Cavell

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1. The presence of Kant is pervasive in Cavell's work, both early and late. Though less obvious, Kierkegaard's contribution to the genesis of Cavell's central ideas is also crucially important. For discussion of each, see, respectively, Paul Franks, "Cavell, Fichte, and Skepticism," in *Reading Cavell*, ed. Alice Crary and Sanford Shieh (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Andrew Norris, "On the First Person: Kierkegaard/Cavell," in *Understanding Cavell, Understanding Modernism* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2021).
2. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §140, 140A, and 140Z; cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, trans. T.M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 64. In my citations from Hegel's lecture material, I follow the common practice of labeling the remarks (*Anmerkerungen*) *A* and the additions (*Zusätze*) *Z*, following these distinctions as they are made in the Suhrkamp *Werke*.
3. I expand here upon suggestions initially made in Andrew Norris, *Becoming Who We Are: Politics and Practical Philosophy in the Work of Stanley Cavell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 70 and 246-7.

writes that he can find no better term than *Aufhebung* for Wittgenstein's mode of philosophical criticism, his "most original contribution [to] philosophy."[4] In 1983's "Emerson, Coleridge, Kant (Terms as Conditions)," Cavell proposes that when Emerson writes in "Fate," "Intellect annuls Fate. So far as a man thinks, he is free," Emerson's *annul* "alludes to the Hegelian term for upending antitheses (*aufheben*)": far from denying the reality of fate in our lives, Emerson claims it as the matter of thought, the matter that thought must transform (sublate) if the thinker is to achieve autonomy.[5] Most striking of all, in a much later piece Cavell writes that the source for his own signature phrase "the truth of skepticism" is "Hegel's use of 'the truth of x' where x is a concept he has just sublated, denied at one level but preserved at another."[6] Given, on the one hand, the central roles that negation and sublation (*Aufhebung*) play in Hegel's work and, on the other, the fundamental importance for Cavell of Wittgenstein's mode of philosophical criticism, Emerson's perfectionism, and the idea of the truth of skepticism, these are hardly insignificant admissions.

Moreover, there are points at which the continuities between the two extend into the details of their respective arguments. Cavell's account of the generic object in particular recalls defining moments of the initial "Sense-Certainty" chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*—a book Cavell includes in the list of perfectionist texts he

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4. Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 85.

5. Cavell, "Emerson, Coleridge, Kant (Terms as Conditions)" in *In Quest of the Ordinary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 40. As Cavell notes, "the idea of limitation [...] is a principal expression of an intuition Emerson finds knotted in the concept of Fate" (Ibid., 38). Emerson, who later in "Fate" refers to Hegel by name, writes of limitation, "But Fate has its lord; limitation its limit." Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Fate," in *Nature and Selected Essays* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 373, 384. For Hegel on this thought, see G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 51: "Whatever is confined within the limits of a natural life by its own efforts go beyond its immediate existence; but it is driven to it by something else, and this uprooting entails its death. Consciousness, however, is [...] something that goes beyond limits, and since those limits are its own, it is something that goes beyond itself." Cavell's own version of this is to interpret the Kantian *a priori* boundary or *Grenze* between the phenomenal and the world "in-itself" as the expression of our self-repression—an interpretation that almost announces itself to be an interpretation or modification of Hegel's claim: we can repress our ability to set a limit to limitation only because we are in essence beings that go beyond limits. Cavell, "Emerson, Coleridge, Kant," 47. I return to this issue at the close of this essay.

6. Cavell, "Reply to Four Chapters," in *Wittgenstein and Skepticism*, ed. D. McManus (New York: Routledge, 2004), 289. Cavell may well be thinking of Hegel's definition of the universal in the "Sense-Certainty" chapter as translated by Baillie: "The Universal is therefore in point of fact the truth of sense-certainty, the true content of sense-experience." G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 152. (Miller has only, "it is in fact the universal that is the true [content] of sense-certainty." G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 60. This is particularly noteworthy as it is precisely here that Hegel discusses the failure of natural consciousness to say what it thinks it *means*. I discuss both the question of meaning and that of the choice of translation below.

supplies in lieu of a definition of Emersonian Perfectionism in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*.[7] Cavell argues that the traditional modern skeptic or epistemologist requires a particular kind of example for one of his central arguments to work. Descartes is exemplary here. "Let us," he writes in the Second Meditation, "begin by considering the most common things, those which we believe we understand most distinctly, namely, the bodies we touch and see. I am not speaking of bodies in general, for these general notions are usually more confused, but of one body in particular. Let us take, for example, this piece of wax."[8] The particularity of the ball of wax is necessary if the argument is to consider, distinctly and without confusion, the possibility of our knowledge of the objective world. But this body must not be distinguished in any essential way from other "bodies in particular" if the argument is to generalize to "bodies in general." It must be *generic*. As Cavell puts it,

> When those objects present themselves to the epistemologist, he is not taking one as opposed to another, interested in its features as peculiar to it and nothing else. He would rather, so to speak, have an unrecognizable *something* there if he could, an anything, a thatness. What comes to him is an island, a body surrounded by air, a tiny earth. What is at stake for him in the object is materiality as such, externality altogether.[9]

But no body in particular is "thatness" or "externality altogether" (in Kantian terms, externality *überhaupt*). Indeed, the essential feature of "thatness" and "externality altogether" is that they are not bodies in particular. The skeptic writes of a ball of wax, or of a tomato, or of a block of cheese, but he *means* something quite different. The concrete claim about the actual object serves as a cover that allows for the unstated introduction of a quite different claim—or so the skeptic hopes. But, in the words of the title of Cavell's first book, the skeptic too must mean what he says—with the result that he cannot say (or really mean) what he thinks he means.

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7. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 5.
8. René Descartes, *Discourse on the Method and the Meditations,* trans. F. E. Sutcliffe (New York: Penguin, 1968), 108.
9. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 53.

> The combination of the fact that in the epistemologist's context a concrete claim cannot be under scrutiny, together with the fact that one must be imagined as being under scrutiny, ought to explain why he imagines himself to be saying something when he is not, to have discovered something when he has not. Someone in these particular straits may be described as hallucinating what he or she means, or as having the illusion of meaning something.[10]

To appreciate the parallel between this argument and the first chapter of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, we should recall, first, that for Cavell skepticism is not a position that denies the possibility of objective knowledge, but "any view which takes the existence of the world to be a problem of knowledge";[11] and, second, that the truth of skepticism of which he writes is not the truth of the claims advanced by a skeptic such as Sextus or Hume. It is the fact that "our primary relation to the world is not one of knowing (understood as achieving certainty of it based upon the senses)," but rather one of acceptance and acknowledgment (or their refusal).[12] As its title announces, precisely such certainty is at stake in "Sense-Certainty: Or, the 'This' and 'Meaning.'" Here Hegel begins his study of the genesis of *das Erkennen* with an echo of Parmenides' oracular pronouncement on Being, "What can be thought is only the thought that it is."[13]

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10. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 221. This is only a sketch of Cavell's argument, which addresses only a particular kind of skeptical analysis and which rests upon an Austinian account of the conditions of intelligible utterance that space does not allow me to defend here. For further discussion, see Edward Witherspoon, "Houses, Flowers, and Frameworks: Cavell and Mulhall on the Moral of Skepticism," in *European Journal of Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (2002): 196-208 and the second chapter of Norris, *Becoming Who We Are*, 2017. Note the close similarity between the last sentence in this quote and Cavell's account of Rousseau's diagnosis of our sick politics: "we hallucinate the meaning of others to us (e.g., as equals) or have the illusion of meaning something to one another (e.g., as free fellow citizens)." Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 26. For Cavell, illusions of meaning in metaphysical discourse are echoed in our politics, the practical difficulties of which in turn sustain the metaphysical difficulties of the skeptic. Cf. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 90. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel makes a similar point, though in a rather different register, when he presents ancient skepticism as "the realization of that of which Stoicism is only the Notion, and is the actual experience of what freedom of thought is." Stoicism is the attempt to achieve a freedom in thought that in an imperial age is denied to the isolated political subject, the *person*. "Self-will is the freedom which [...] is still in bondage, while Stoicism is the freedom which always comes directly out of bondage. [...] As a universal form of the World-Spirit, Stoicism could only appear in a time of universal bondage and fear." Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Miller, 123 and 121; G.W.F. Hegel, *Werke, Theorie-Werkausgabe*, 20 vols., ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1970), 157; cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York: Dover, 1956), 316. As in Cavell, skepticism here arises in and *expresses* social alienation.
11. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 46.
12. Cavell, *The Senses of Walden, An Expanded Edition* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981), 106-7.
13. G. S. Kirk, and J. E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers: A Critical History with a Selection of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 277. I take Hegel's point here to be that, as different as

> The knowledge or knowing which is at the start or is immediately our object [*Gegenstand*] cannot be anything else but immediate knowledge itself, a knowledge of the immediate or of what simply *is*. Our approach to the object must also be *immediate* or *receptive* [*aufnehmend*]; we must alter nothing in the object as it presents itself.[14]

If natural consciousness, which understands itself to be immediate knowledge of what is immediately present, is to give voice to such knowledge, it must eschew the use of mediating categories and predicates that rest upon comparison between objects. But, it finds, this is not possible. Just as Cavell's skeptic means to speak of *thatness* when he speaks of the ball of wax, so the natural consciousness means to speak only of what is *this*, *here*. And, like Cavell's skeptic, the natural consciousness cannot say what it thinks it means when it says that it is certain that this particular thing *is* here and now. For every attempt to refer to exclusively to the particularity of the *this* that is *here* and *now* uses general or universal terms ("here," "now") that, as such, can refer to other particulars, and hence fail on their own to pick out this one that is here now. In Hegel's example, "now" can be night or day, and hence cannot be reduced to either. Consciousness' certainty of the *now* is always already mediated by the distinction between what now is (e.g., day) and what it is not (night). "Now" as a universal term includes this "dialectic" within itself.[15] As Hegel puts it, "A simple thing of

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Parmenides is from the modern philosophers Hegel also has in view (e.g., the British empiricists), he shares with them a commitment to the foundational role of the immediate or unmediated—be that role ontological or epistemological. On Hegel's account, rigid binary or dualistic oppositions such as that between the immediate and the mediated are both untenable and a major source of philosophical and practical confusion and unhappiness. For exhaustive discussion of this point, see Michael Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); for one of the most important examples of this argument, see the discussion of the finite and the infinite below. Cavell does not make these sorts of arguments, but, in his ordinary language philosophy, any expression of the immediate will necessarily take a mediated form—which, as in Hegel, does not mean that the expression of the immediate is *really* only an expression of the mediated.

14. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 58; Hegel, *Werke*, 82. It is helpful to recall that the title of the next chapter of the *Phenomenology* is "Die Wahrnemung": merely taking up (*auf-nehmen*) an immediate impression as that of an external reality is not the same thing as taking something to be true (*wahr-nehmen*) about an enduring object (*Ding*) that has various properties. (The translation of the passage above refers to the *object* of knowledge in a way that the German does not.) Hegel's first chapter aims to make possible the transition from the first to the second, which, as in Cavell's gloss above, is the truth of the first, if a truth that will in turn itself vanish (*verschwinden*) and be sublated. On *verschwinden* as a technical term in Hegel, see Andrew Norris, "The Disappearance of the French Revolution in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*," in *The Owl of Minerva: Journal of the Hegel Society of America* 44, nos. 1-2 (2012-13): 37-66.

15. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 64. Significantly, this is also true of the *I* that experiences the *this* that is *here* and *now*: "sense-certainty experiences this same dialectic acting upon itself. [...] I, *this* 'I,' see

this kind which is through negation, which is neither This nor That, a not-This, and is with equal indifference This as well as That—such a thing we call a universal."[16] A universal it is not something opposed to particular determinations, but something that includes them, but includes them as vanishing negations (as opposed to vanished, invisible, non-existent negations).[17] This, however, is not what the natural consciousness had in mind. As the subtitle of his chapter announces, Hegel frames this as consciousness' inability to say what it means: to speak as the natural consciousness does "is not to know what one is saying, to be unaware that one is saying the opposite of what one wants to say."[18] "We do not strictly say [*sprechen*] what in sense-certainty we *mean* to say [*wir … meinen*]. But language, as we see, is the more truthful; in it, we ourselves directly refute what we *mean* to say [*unsere Meinung*].[19]

One might wonder whether Cavell and Hegel differ here: for Cavell, the skeptic does not in fact mean what he thinks he means—he is under the illusion of meaning—while apparently for Hegel the natural consciousness means something perfectly intelligible, and only fails to express or speak it. But, if it that is so, why does that failure "contradict" (*widerlegen*) that meaning? There is no such contradiction between, say, the love that I feel for my daughter and my inability to fully express that love in words—indeed, my fumbling with my words may be the very best expression possible of that love. It would seem that in Hegel, too, we do not and can not always mean what we say. Cavell's closeness to Hegel on this point is even clearer in the Baillie translation than it is in the Miller from which I have been quoting. (As Cavell did not have strong German and the Miller translation did not appear until 1977, he almost certainly used Baillie's 1931 revision of his 1910 translation of the *Phenomenology*.[20]) "Language, however, as we see, is the more truthful; in it we ourselves refute directly and at once our own 'meaning'; and since language merely expresses *this* truth, it is

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the tree and assert that 'Here' is a tree; but another 'I' sees the house and maintains that 'Here' is not a tree but a house instead. Both truths have the same authentication, viz., the immediacy of seeing, and the certainty and assurance that both have about their knowing; but the one truth vanishes in the other." Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 61. As in Cavell, the subject is not a fixed essence—or, perhaps better, its essence is not to be fixed. Cf. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome*, 12: "'having' 'a' self is a process of moving to, and from, nexts."

16. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 60.
17. Ibid., 60-1.
18. Ibid., 65.
19. Ibid., 60; Hegel, *Werke*, 85.
20. One might think that, since *The Claim of Reason* came out in 1979, Cavell could very well have used the Miller. However, the claims regarding the generic object under consideration here date back to

not possible at all for us even to express in words any sensuous existence which we 'mean'."[21] Note the scare quotes Baillie has added around *meaning* and *mean*, neither of which are in the original German.[22] Note as well that the evidence of the greater truthfulness of *die Sprache* is, as in Cavell, *what we say*. If this is the Hegel Cavell read, the idea that the agent in question cannot really mean what she thinks she means is something he found there, if not only there.[23]

The deep resemblance between the two arguments is underscored when Hegel remarks that it is "astonishing" that "the dialectic of sense-certainty [...] is asserted as universal experience and put forward, too, as a philosophical proposition, even as the outcome of Skepticism."[24] The astonishment is that one would think that the movement of this dialectic terminated here in an epistemological claim, one that denies the possibility of objective knowledge. This would be to confuse "the pathway of *doubt* [*der Weg des Zweifels*], or more precisely [...] the way of despair [*Weg der Verzwei-*

Cavell's 1961 doctoral dissertation, *The Claim to Rationality: Knowledge and the Basis of Morality* (upon which most of the first 3/4s of *The Claim of Reason* is based). Cavell introduces the concept of the generic object in a critique of Austin's dismissal of skepticism on page 52 of *The Claim of Reason*. In the earlier version of this same material in his dissertation he refers to "the objects chosen as stalking-horses by the classical epistemologist" as "simple objects." But the analysis is the same: "It is no accident that that they [simple objects] are the examples the traditional philosopher has wished, has had, to work with. They are objects about which there is *no* problem of recognition or identification or description; ones about which the only 'problem' is not in knowing *what* they are, but in knowing whether we can know they exist, are real, are actually *there*." Stanley Cavell, *The Claim to Rationality: Knowledge and the Basis of Morality* (Doctoral Dissertation, Harvard University, 1961), 68-9; cf. 286: "the traditional epistemologist [...] is not free to pick just any object to focus upon as exemplifying knowledge: it *must* be a 'simple object.'" In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell explains the terminological change as being motivated by a desire to avoid a possible misunderstanding: "I have tried various titles for this summary of the functions of the epistemologist's object; at one time I called then 'simple objects,' at another 'basic objects.' The unsatisfactoriness of these titles used to seem to me to be their prejudicing of the contrast they set up with Austinian [specific] examples, and in particular their sounding like a class of objects. Now I attribute the unsatisfactoriness to their prejudicing of the object's very appearance or function, which is just what they are to be the titles for. The traditional title for them is 'material objects,' and the background of my wish to re-title them is my feeling that the 'material' in that context also bespeaks not a species of object (tomatoes or sticks as opposed, say, to shadows or flames) but the spirit in which the object is put into question." Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 53. A few pages before this, Cavell had written that he applies the term *skepticism* to any position which raises "the question of knowledge in a certain form, or spirit." Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 46.

21. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, 152.

22. In the German, the words are in italics, as are a dozen other words in the short paragraph, none of which are especially doubtful or suspicious. Note the contrast with the Miller: "But language, as we say, is the more truthful; in it we ourselves directly refute what we *mean* to say, and since the universal is the true [content] of sense-certainty and language expresses this true [content] alone, it is just not possible for us ever to say, or express in words, a sensuous being that we *mean*." Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 60, additions his.

23. In the so-called private language argument, Wittgenstein critically considers the possibility of the words of such a language referring to the speaker's "immediate [*unmittelbaren*] sensations," and apparently concludes that the conditions of successful reference could not be met. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 2001), §243.

24. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 64-5.

flung]" with an end point or terminus.[25] In Cavell's terms, the truth of skepticism is not the truth of the skeptic's claims, but a step on a journey towards a wider acknowledgment of the world. (On despair as an essential moment in this journey.)[26] In both, the false step is not marked as such by any external authority (that has superior knowledge of epistemology, or reality, or the rules of one's language), but by the internal contradiction it enacts in the one making it.[27] As Hegel puts it, "*widerlegen wir selbst unmittelbar unsere Meinung*." "Consciousness suffers this violence at its own hands."[28] In both Hegel and Cavell, it is this that accounts for the instability of the position, the fact that it points to a truth beyond itself.

The parallels between these two analyses are so pervasive and fundamental that it is impossible to believe that Cavell has not studied Hegel considerably more closely than his occasional references to him would suggest. This is not to deny either the enormous differences between a philosophy that centers on the truth of skepticism and one that culminates in Absolute Knowing, or the fact that Cavell insists his truth requires a personal engagement of a kind apparently quite foreign to Hegel.[29] But it does suggest, first, that Cavell may draw with profit from Hegel without becoming a card-carrying Hegelian, just as he draws over and over from Kant, without for all that becoming a doctrinaire Kantian; and, second, that at least some of the differences between Cavell and Hegel may be less stark than they initially appear. It is too often forgotten, to take another instance, that, far from insisting that a philosophical exposition will inevitably take the form of thesis/antithesis/synthesis, Hegel complains bitterly of the reduction of the triadic form to "a lifeless schema."[30] What is true of a moment in Hegel's Science is true of the whole: it is falsely understood if it is

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25. Ibid., 49; Hegel, *Werke*, 72; cf. 21/38-9. The language of *Zweifel* and *Vewzweiflung* is repeated at the close of "Sense-Certainty." Hegel, *Werke*, 91.
26. See Cavell, "Hope Against Hope," in *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
27. For Cavell, this contradiction is between the skeptic's desire to speak metaphysically and his own commitment (as one of *us*) to "what we say when." Cf. Cavell, "Must We Mean What We Say?" in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); and Cavell, "Austin at Criticism," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969); and ch. 1 of Norris, *Becoming Who We Are*, 2017.
28. Hegel, *Werke*, 85 and Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 60 and 51.
29. Though see Hegel's Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, where he insists that though "the truth concerning right, ethics, and the state is [...] as old as its exposition and promulgation in public laws and in public morality and religion [...] it needs [...] to be comprehended as well, so that the content which is already rational in itself may also gain a rational form." Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 11.
30. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 29.

reduced to a lifeless schema or formalism. As Hegel insists again and again, what it presents is the *experience* of consciousness, its life.[31] And the *Phenomenology*'s account of the unfolding of this life culminates—before turning to an account of the relationship between philosophy and religion—in an account of forgiveness and mutual recognition or acknowledgment (*gegenseitiges Anerkennen*), the need for which emerges out of the failures of Kantian morality.[32] Again, the echoes of Cavell—or Cavell's echoes of Hegel—could not be plainer.[33]

This raises interesting questions concerning the correct interpretation and placement of Cavell's Romanticism, which focuses, as Hegel does, on the issue of the *Ding an sich*.[34] Such questions, however, are difficult to answer, in part because it is not always clear that Cavell is aware of how close he and Hegel can be. At the close of "Emerson, Coleridge, Kant," an essay that identifies Romanticism with the project of inheriting and transforming Kant's problematic "solution" to skepticism and its reli-

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31. Ibid., 5, 10, 21, and 55. For *life* as the anticipation of *Geist* in Hegel's system, see "Fragment of a System" in G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. T.M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975). On the role of experience in Cavell, consider his description in *Pursuits of Happiness* of the need of at once "consulting one's experience and . . . subjecting it to examination." For Cavell, this requires "momentarily *stopping*, turning yourself away from whatever your preoccupation and turning your experience away from its expected, habitual track, to find itself, its own track: coming to attention. The moral of this practice is to educate your experience sufficiently so that it is worthy of trust. The philosophical catch would then be that education cannot be achieved in advance of the trusting." This trust, he concludes, is "expressed as a willingness to find words for one's experience." Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness* (London: Harvard, 1981), 12. Doing so, as we have seen, is not always an obvious or easy task. Compare the *Phenomenology*'s insistence that "we" observe the experience (of repeated self-overcoming or sublation) of consciousness. Hegel *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 54.

32. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 407-8; Hegel, *Werke*, 492-493. In Part Three of *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell positions himself as a moral thinker by way of contrasts with the emotivism of Charles Stevenson, on the one hand, and the neo-Kantianism of John Rawls, on the other; and he pursues the latter contrast in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*.

33. Bristow points to a possibly deeper commonality when he argues that the distinctive feature of Hegel's *Phenomenology* and his "method" is his commitment to a "self-transformational" form of critical reflection that Bristow compares to a conversion process. William Bristow, *Hegel and the Transformation of Philosophical Critique* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 14. On the role of conversion in Cavell, see Chapter One of Norris, *Becoming Who We Are*. It is striking that Bristow describes his book as "beholden" in a "subterranean" fashion to Cavell's teaching at Harvard. Bristow, *Hegel*, vii.

34. In *Senses of Walden*, Cavell writes of *Walden*, "[e]pistemologically, its motive is the recovery of the object, in the form in which Kant left that problem and the German idealists and the Romantic poets picked it up, viz., a recovery of the thing-in-itself; in particular, of the relation between the subject of knowledge and its object." Cavell, *Senses of Walden*, 95; cf. 107. In 60A of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel speaks of Kant's "dualistic" conception of cognition, "restriction and defect are only determined as restriction and defect by *comparison* with the Idea that is *present*—the Idea of the universal, or something whole and perfect. It is only lack of consciousness, therefore, if we do not see that it is precisely the designation of something as finite or restricted that contains the *actual presence* of the Infinite, or Unrestricted, and that there can be no knowledge of limit unless the Unlimited is *on this side* within consciousness." Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).

ance upon the idea of the thing-in-itself,[35] Cavell notes that the Romantic critique of Kant can easily take the form of a retelling of the Book of Genesis's account of mankind's fall from grace, a fall from harmony into alienation. (Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man*—a work that greatly influences Hegel—would be exemplary here.) Cavell goes on to contrast his interpretation of this fall with that of Hegel, whom he suggests in passing is a kind of Romantic. Hegel, he says, sees the drama of Eden as one in which mankind comes to a form of knowledge that entails its alienation "from nature, from others, from itself," an alienation that renders "the task of human life [as that of] recovery, as of one's country, or health." Cavell writes that he finds himself "winding up somewhat differently." On his reading, the problem is not simply the acquisition of knowledge (and the reification and alienation that this entails) but the vulnerability of knowledge (its repression in skepticism, and with that the repression of our acknowledgement of the world within which we know things and people in it):

> The feature of the situation I emphasize is that its sense of exposure upon the birth of knowledge pertains not only to one's vulnerability to knowledge, to being known, to the trauma of separation, but as well to the vulnerability of knowledge itself, to the realization that Eden is not the world, but that one had been living as within a circle or behind a line; because when God "drove out the man" the man was not surprised that there was an elsewhere.[36]

Cavell's alternative interpretation is, however, strikingly Hegelian. Indeed, one wonders whether Cavell, who as we have seen eagerly appropriates the Hegelian idea of *Aufhebung*, knew that this idea is deployed first and foremost against the illusion that we are limited by any sort of circle or line. Hegel's most direct explication of the idea of sublation, "Remark: On the Expression '*To Sublate*,'" is placed immediately before the *Logic*'s discussion of Determinate Being.[37] In both the *Logic* and the *Encyclopedia* this discussion requires Hegel to discuss the relation between the finite and the

35. Cavell, "Emerson, Coleridge, Kant (Terms as Conditions)," in *In Quest of the Ordinary* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 29-31 and 44-5.
36. Cavell, *In Quest of the Ordinary*, 48-9.
37. Hegel, *Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1969), 106.

infinite and to distinguish between a bad or *schlechte* infinite and the true infinite, the *Grundbegriff* of his and any genuine philosophy.[38] Where the true infinite is the sublation of the finite (and the finite the sublation of it), the bad infinite can only repeat (and not sublate) the finite because of its reliance upon the very illusory limits around which Cavell's story of the Fall revolves.[39]

> A limit [*Grenze*] is set, it is exceeded, then there is another limit, and so on without end. So we have nothing here but a superficial alteration, which stays forever within the sphere of the finite. If we suppose that we can liberate ourselves from the finite by stepping out into that infinitude, this is in fact only a liberation through flight. And the person who flees is not yet free, for in fleeing, he is still determined by the very thing from which he is fleeing.[40]

It is because the true infinite is only a way of being finite—as Hegel says, is "at home with itself in its other"[41]–that Hegel can write in the *Philosophy of Right*, "The will which has being in and for itself is *truly infinite*, because its object [*Gegenstand*] is itself, and not something which it sees as *other* or as *limitation*"[42]. "*The free will . . . wills the free will*" in that the realization of freedom is its ultimate object.[43] This freedom is not something opposed to the particularities of intimate, social, legal, and political life, but is rather found in them, when the forms they take are appropriate to it and are freely chosen by it. Likewise, in his *Aesthetics*, Hegel argues that beauty, "the pure appearance of the Idea to sense," is incomprehensible to the Understanding because the Understanding insists on "regarding reality as something quite different from ideality, the sensuous as quite different from the Concept [and thus] steadily remains in the field of the finite, the one-sided, and the

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38. Ibid., 109; Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, §§89-93; and Hegel, *Werke*, 95A.
39. Just as "finitude *is* only as a transcending of itself," so true "infinity *is* only as a transcending of the finite; it therefore essentially contains its other and is [...] in its self the other of its self." Hegel 1969, 145-6.
40. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, 94Z. Cf. in note 4 above. In *Senses of Walden* Cavell similarly criticizes the attempt to achieve freedom through flight; cf. Norris, *Becoming Who We Are*, 159-160. On the relation of the *Grenze* to the *Ding an sich*, see Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill,1950), 350-60.
41. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, 94Z.
42. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §22.
43. Ibid., §27.

untrue."[44] Beauty, however, sublates the distinctions upon which such an approach rest:

> The beautiful [...] is in itself infinite and free. For even if there can be a question too of a particular content, and therefore, once more, of a restricted one, still this content must appear in its existence as a totality infinite in itself and as *freedom*, because the beautiful throughout is the Concept. And the Concept does not set itself against its objectivity by opposing to it a one-sided finitude and abstraction; on the contrary, it closes together with what confronts it and on the strength of this unity and perfection is infinite in itself. In the same way, the Concept ensouls the real existence which embodies it, and therefore is free and at home with itself in this objectivity.[45]

Beauty and human flourishing as they are found in our mundane world are both characterized by—both ensouled by—the self-sufficiency and absence of external determination that characterize the freedom of the infinite—the freedom, that is, to which we quite rightly aspire.

There is good reason to believe that Cavell was familiar with at least the latter claims regarding politics and beauty. Hegel reviews the claims about beauty in slightly different terms in the Introduction to the *Lectures*; see, e.g., 70f. Cavell likely read at least the latter, as he refers to page 78 (in an earlier edition, 185) in *The Claim of Reason*.[46] Cavell also cites the discussion of the individual will in the Addition to §124 of the *Philosophy of Right* in *The Claim of Reason*.[47] Even if we do not assume that Cavell read the book through to §124, and hence read the passages cited above, we can be fairly sure of his familiarity with the ideas canvassed in them, as 124A reviews

44. Hegel, *Hegel's Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 111.
45. Ibid., 111-2.
46. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 357.
47. Ibid., 467-8.

them.[48] All of this leads one to wonder why he does not acknowledge that Hegel shares what we might describe as his double-reading of the Fall, and, with it, his general understanding of the kind of problem Kant leaves us in his conception of the *Ding an sich*.[49] In both Cavell and Hegel, the two interpretations of the fall are interpretations or aspects of a single story, one that depicts the post-Kantian world as requiring a redemption that is at once spiritual and political. No doubt, part of Cavell's hesitance must concern Hegel's insistence on the systematic quality of his thought and its ability to address the totality both adequately and directly. But this has not deterred the many contemporary philosophers (Pippin, Wood, Pinkard, et. al.) who openly read Hegel quite selectively;[50] and it is not obvious why it would Cavell—particularly given that he is as influenced by Hegel as we have seen he is. On this point, however, one can only speculate.

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48. In the passage Cavell cites, Hegel writes, "The right of the subject's *particularity* to find satisfaction, or—to put it differently—the right of *subjective freedom*, is the pivotal and focal point in the difference between *antiquity* and the *modern* age. This right, in its infinity, is expressed in Christianity, and it has become the universal and actual principle of a new form of the world." Hegel continues, "Its more specific shapes include love, the romantic, [...] morality and conscience, [and] civil society and [...] moments of the political constitution. [...] Now this principle of particularity is admittedly a moment within an antithesis, and in the first instance at least, it is *just as much* identical with the universal as distinct from it. But abstract reflection fixes this moment in its difference from and opposition to the universal."

49. And it is a double reading. Note in this regard the "not only" in the block quote from Cavell above. What is the idea of philosophy "*returning* us to the [eventual] ordinary, a place we have never been" if it is not a vision of our *recovery* from an originary loss? Stanley Cavell, "Something out of the Ordinary" in *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2005), 9-10. In a response to pieces on his work in *Modern Theology*, Cavell refers to "the human as the unnatural animal, a phrase which suggests that the Fall is not an accident that befalls the human being or a culture, but an essential feature of the human, which is essentially improper or inauthentic. Stanley Cavell, "Responses" in *Modern Theology* 27 (2011): 522.

50. For a good brief account of what they abandon, see Rolf-Peter Horstmann, "Substance, Subject, and Infinity: A Case Study of the Role of Logic in Hegel's System" in *Hegel: New Directions*, ed. Katerina Deligiorgi (Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006). The basic point naturally extends to the many philosophers who simply take what they find most appealing from Hegel, such as Kierkegaard, Marx, and Sartre.

5. Some Notes on Philosophy and Redemption: Adorno and Cavell

MARTIN SHUSTER

In an earlier essay, I once drew a comparison between Theodor W. Adorno's remark that, "philosophy, which once appeared obsolete, sustains itself because the moment for its actualization has been lost,"[1] and Stanley Cavell's suggestion that Ludwig Wittgenstein's "*Investigations can* be seen as a philosophy of culture, one that relates itself to its time as a time in which the continuation of philosophy is at stake."[2] In this essay, I'd like to compare Adorno's remark to a different but related remark of Cavell's, namely his thought that "philosophy ends in a recovery from a terminable loss."[3] He pursues this thought in remarks on Emerson, noting that "philosophy begins in loss, in finding yourself at a loss, as Wittgenstein more or less says."[4] Many different traditions—Marxism, American transcendentalism, ordinary language philosophy, just to name a few—animate these thoughts. This is not the place to detail and tease out the ramifications and significances of each; instead, I want to take this very short essay merely to raise a different point of relation than I raised before (in a deep way, then, this essay—and especially its short length—may be seen as a sort of afterword to my earlier remarks).[5] Note that in the quote above, Cavell continues, claiming that, "Philosophy that does not so begin is so much talk" (in Emerson's pejorative sense).[6] Cavell continues, pointing out that, "loss is *as such* not to be overcome, it is interminable, for every new finding may incur a new loss."[7] Recovering from a

1. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1973), 16.
2. Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein* (Albuquerque: Living Batch Press, 1989), 72.
3. Ibid., 114.
4. Ibid.
5. Martin Shuster, "Education for the World: Adorno and Cavell," in *Dissonant Methods: Undoing Discipline in the Humanities Classroom*, ed. Ada Jaarsma and Kit Dobson (Alberta: University of Alberta Press, 2019).
6. Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America*, 114.
7. Ibid.

terminable loss, then, is one way to end philosophy; philosophy that doesn't end after that, but continues on, in Cavell's words, "before or beyond that" is also "talk" in the pejorative sense. What interests me, however, are not these options, but rather Cavell's idea of the relationship between philosophy and interminable loss.

To make a start here, take it that Adorno's point is something like what his colleague, Herbert Marcuse, suggests: that philosophy as an enterprise might become unnecessary to the extent that human freedom might come to be realized. Here's how Marcuse puts the point in 1937:

> But a social situation has come about in which the realization of reason no longer needs to be restricted to pure thought and will. If reason means shaping life according to men's free decision on the basis of their knowledge, then the demand for reason henceforth means the creation of a social organization in which individuals can collectively regulate their lives in accordance with their needs.[8]

With respect to the quote cited from Adorno above, then, the idea appears to be that perhaps at a certain moment, the rational organization of society was possible (we may call this a revolutionary moment or we may call it a political one, it seems to me equally [im]plausible either way, and in any case there may some overlap between the two: the idea, as the first generation of the Frankfurt School of critical theory often stressed, is that the possibility exists for society to be so organized that all human needs could be met, that "the material and intellectual attainments of mankind [sic] seem to allow the creation of a truly free world").[9] When Adorno suggests that philosophy once appeared obsolete, he is referencing such a moment; philosophy lives on, however, because such a moment has not come, it was missed—and yet, it continues (perhaps) to remain a possibility.[10]

There seems to be an interesting congruence between the kinds of loss invoked by both Cavell and the early Frankfurt School: for both philosophy begins in loss. For

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8. Herbert Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," in *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (London: MayFly Books, 2009), 104.
9. Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 4.
10. There's a lot more to say here, see Iain Macdonald, *What Would Be Different* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2020).

Cavell, this loss can take many forms, while for the early Frankfurt School, the loss is of a distinct kind: the loss of utopian possibilities. But the suggestion for these members of the Frankfurt School seems thereby to be that philosophy *can* come to an end were utopia to be achieved.[11] Adorno will thus claim that "a right condition would be freed from dialectics,"[12] while Marcuse stresses that, "with the realization of reason in [...] society, philosophy would disappear."[13] It is here, though, that a tension emerges. For the Frankfurt School, philosophy is oftentimes contracted to the boundaries of critical theory, a pursuit summarized at a very high altitude as aiming "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them,"[14] i.e., material suffering. For Cavell, on the other hand, "philosophy's virtue is responsiveness."[15] He continues noting that, "what makes it philosophy is not that its response will be total, but that it will be tireless, awake when others have all fallen asleep," and this is because, "*Any* word my elders have bequeathed to me as they moved obscurely about me toward the objects of their desires, may come to chagrin me."[16]

Emerging here is a tension that revolves around the—I would say likely quite peculiar sounding—question of whether philosophy would be necessary in the society that critical theory aims to usher in by means of its procedures (alternatively, we might summarize this future society as simply "the standpoint of redemption" as Adorno does in his famous claim that, "the only philosophy which can be responsibly practiced in the face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves from the standpoint of redemption").[17] On one hand, the question of whether philosophy would be necessary in such a (possible? future?) state, makes perfect sense—we can ask: is philosophy *just* critical theory in the sense Horkheimer

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11. See, e.g.: "A right condition would be freed from dialectics" (Adorno) and "with the realization of reason in such a society, philosophy would disappear." See respectively Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," 104; Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 11.
12. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 11.
13. Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," 104.
14. Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays* (New York: Seabury, 1972), 243.
15. Cavell, *This New yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein*, 74.
16. Ibid. Even in Cavell, there are tensions with this view that push it back towards views more like the Frankfurt School, as when, for example, Cavell notes in the same passage that, "We are all elders and all children, wanting a hearing, for our injustices, for our justices." (Ibid.). On this point, see the discussion of Cavell wanting to "have it both ways" in Espen Hammer, *Stanley Cavell: Skepticism, Subjectivity, and the Ordinary* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002), 166f.
17. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections of a Damaged Life* (London: Verso, 2005), §153. It is interesting that a different but related version of this question emerges even in the pragmatist work of Richard Rorty. See Martin Shuster, "Rorty and (the Politics of) Love," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 40, no. 1 (2019).

conceives of it, or does it have some sort of broader function related to the very powers and capacities of human language, an enterprise bound up with responding to —acknowledging—the sort of skepticism that all language can at any time engender?[18] On the other hand, questions about such a future state or existence appear to be sort of like asking about how many angels can fit onto the head of a pin, since any such question appears as "the utterly impossible thing," ultimately presupposing "a standpoint removed, even though by a hair's breadth, from the scope of existence."[19]

As a point of response, and one which is here by no means anything more than the most provisional step towards one, take stock of Marcuse's suggestion that, "without phantasy, all philosophical knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future, which is the only link between philosophy and the real history of mankind [sic]."[20] This line comes after a discussion of the importance of the imagination for philosophy, obvious, as Marcuse notes, already in Kant's prioritization of the imagination in the 1st Critique's account of synthetic activity and cognition.[21] What Marcuse suggests is that philosophy can further harness the imagination to accomplish exactly what Adorno suggests above—the contemplation of things from the standpoint of redemption. If it fails to do so, then philosophy becomes divorced from "the real history" of humankind (i.e., "so much talk" in the sense Cavell diagnoses in Emerson).[22] Would even possibility conceived in this way then disappear in a redeemed state?

Again, the question suggests a sort of scholasticism foreign to Cavell and the Frankfurt School. At the same time, there is something to it, and considering it, se-

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18. On this point, see especially the fourth part of Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). See also Cavell, "What Is the Scandal of Skepticism?," in *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005). I pursue this theme in detail in the last chapter of Martin Shuster, *How to Measure a World? A Philosophy of Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2021). And I note the theme of acknowledgment here exactly to reference Cavell's thoroughgoing engagement with this notion.

19. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, §153.

20. Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," 114.

21. Marcuse is referencing here the threefold synthesis, especially the synthesis of reproduction in imagination, as prioritized by Kant in the A Deduction of the 1st Critique. This line is also developed, e.g., in Martin Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Taft (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

22. See above and Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Modern Library, 2009), 325.

ems to me at least to suggest a possible sort of instrumentalism that has wound its way into critical theory despite Horkheimer's suspicions of instrumental reason,[23] namely that philosophy concerns itself only with *problems*. For example: is the fact that I am going to die only a problem because of unjust material conditions, or do these only exacerbate something that is fundamentally not understood *solely as* a "problem" (especially one we can solve)?

Emerging here is a problem as mammoth as the history and definition (histories and definitions?) of philosophy itself (themselves?). In conclusion, I can only note that to take seriously philosophy's ancient calling as learning how to die may be to understand that there is nothing "more human"[24] than to deny that such a project (learning how to die) *is* philosophy; if that's true, then this will remain the case regardless of material conditions, regardless of whether we live in a redeemed world. Or, perhaps, another way to make this point is in phenomenological terms: as long as we remain the sort of creatures that have a future (and also a past and a present), then we remain the sort of creatures that need philosophy to bridge the space between our temporal domains, regardless of the qualitative nature of those domains (i.e., whether they are redeemed or not). Or maybe not? Perhaps redemption changes the very nature and experience of time? (It seems to me figures as diverse as Walter Benjamin, Emmanuel Levinas, Henri Bergson, Franz Rosenweig, Jacob Taubes—just to name a few—emerge as significant constellation points from such a vantage point). To properly map this terrain would require far more work than I have available here and now, and the desirability of doing so is at least tempered by Adorno's suspicion that before us is potentially an impossible task (hence its scholastic appearance). I might conclude, then, by suggesting that everything hinges here on whether Simone Weil's claim, lodged in a different context, that "the future is made of the same stuff as the present,"[25] is an inflection of this broad phenomenological point or a rejection of it.

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23. Horkheimer, *Critique of Instrumental Reason* (London: Verso, 2013).
24. Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge. MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 96.
25. Simone Weil, "Some Thoughts on the Love of God," in *On Science, Necessity and the Love of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 148.

6. Cavell on Color

BYRON DAVIES

> Imagine a world alive with incomprehensible objects and shimmering with an endless variety of movement and innumerable gradations of color. Imagine a world before "the beginning was the word."
>
> STAN BRAKHAGE, *Metaphors on Vision*

One of the special challenges in approaching Stanley Cavell's writing on the arts is how to understand the relation between what are often read as theoretical generalities with Cavell's particular interpretations of individual works. The latter are not presented as mere applications of the former, while the former are clearly meant to be something more than mere generalizations from the latter. When it comes to Cavell's writings on film, we find a representative methodological statement in the Foreword to the 1979 enlarged edition of *The World Viewed*, where he asserts that "what constitutes an 'element' of the medium of film is not knowable prior" to discoveries by filmmaking and criticism itself.[1] He refers to this "reciprocity between element and significance" as "the cinematic circle."[2] But how are we to orient ourselves within the cinematic circle? What about those places in Cavell's own writing where theoretical generalities and individual readings seem divorced?

Let us consider the case of color in film. The thirteenth chapter of *The World Viewed*, "The World as a Whole: Color," appears to be a chapter especially characterized by theoretical generalities regarding what color means on film: Cavell speaks from his experience of "serious color films" as involving a "de-psychologizing or untheatricalizing of their subjects," something that is also supposed to account for the

1. Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, enlarged edn. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), xiii.
2. Ibid., xiii-xiv.

"feel of futurity,"[3] or the creation of a "world of an immediate future" in then-recent color films.[4] Such determinate commitments about general features of color film can be striking, even refreshing, over the course of reading *The World Viewed*. But what connections do they have with individual films? As George M. Wilson asked in his 1974 review of the book, regarding "two temporally proximate John Ford Westerns": "Does *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* (in color) de-psychologize and un-theatricalize its subjects more than *Fort Apache* (in black and white)?"[5]

Wilson does not take up Cavell's related claim about the futurity of "recent" color films, and his examples (from 1948-9) are not relevant to the connection Cavell wants to draw between those then-recent films and modernism. But in a vital new intervention, Daniel Morgan addresses the claim of futurity and its evident conflict with Cavell's claim earlier in the book that film communicates a "world past," much like still photography: or, we might add, Cavell's claim that the tense of filmic narration is past.[6] Morgan's proposal is that those earlier statements were a response to classical cinema, whereas the later statements—broached while addressing the-then recent emergence of color film as the medium's dominant mode—are responses to a modernist cinema characterized by radical openness and radical sensitivity to viewers' relations to individual films. He says, "[…] everything that Cavell says about the ontology of cinema in the first part of *The World Viewed* simply does not apply to the situation being described in the second part;"[7] and "The temporality of cinema is radically open—at least once we factor in the experience of the viewer's engagement with the film."[8]

We can agree that the book's second half is marked by a radical temporal openness and still ask what specific aesthetic features of color are meant to ground Cavell's observations about temporality (as well as de-psychologization and un-theatricalization) in the color chapter. Or should the lesson rather be that color only functions to open the medium up, beyond the more contained ontological conditions of

3. Ibid., 89.
4. Ibid., 82.
5. George M. Wilson, review of *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film*, by Stanley Cavell, *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 2 (1974): 240-244, 243, https://doi.org/10.2307/2184141.
6. Daniel Morgan, "Modernist Investigations: A Reading of *The World Viewed*," *Discourse* 42, nos. 1-2 (2020): 209-240, https://doi.org/10.13110/discourse.42.1-2.0209. See Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 23, 26.
7. Morgan, "Modernist Investigations," 231.
8. Ibid., 232.

the book's first half (where black-and-white film was the implicit paradigm)? In other words, is color even sustained as the topic of the book's thirteenth chapter (ostensibly about color)? That would seem to be the core question behind Wilson's insistence on comparisons between individual color vs. individual black-and-white films. After all, Cavell is immediately willing to attribute futurity to then-recent black-and-white films (Jean-Luc Godard's *Alphaville*, 1965) and pastness to then-recent color films (Roman Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby*, 1968).[9] If these are mere exceptions to generalities, we still need to know what sustains the generalities. And if the color chapter functions to dissolve the temporality of previous chapters, does it equally function to dissolve the issue of color as a substantial theoretical concern?

My aim here is to argue that Cavell's writing on color does not have that last consequence. It is a consequence that would amount, in the case of color, to the full embrace of one half of the cinematic circle (attention to the achievements of individual films) at the expense of the other half (articulation of those achievements' general significance for the medium itself). But in order to understand how Cavell's writing does not have that consequence, we have to recover the general aesthetic features of color that Cavell is depending on throughout the color chapter: including an association between color and abstraction, as opposed to black-and-white's association with line and figuration, as well as the specific kinds of harmonies (and relations among harmonies) that color's abstractions can facilitate. Though these features are only partially articulated by Cavell, bringing them out will help to make evident how they mediate the two sides of the cinematic circle: how they mediate the relations between Cavell's responses to individual films and his theoretical generalities about color.

What is at stake here is not just the question of the color chapter's contribution to the rest of *The World Viewed*, but also the question of whether any vision of medium specificity undergirds Cavell's writing on film. Some commentators have insisted that it is probably for the best that Cavell's ultimate focus be understood as less the medium itself than the "world." For example, in perhaps the most important such Cavellian reflections, Martin Shuster has stressed that "the concept of 'world,' more than the mechanical automatism of the camera of the fact of the screen, orients dis-

9. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 84.

cussions of film, including of its modernism."[10] He goes on to say that, "Of utmost importance to the survival and likely prosperity of film in its modernist phase is therefore not the productive automatisms that have emerged and will continue to emerge (say, the mechanical automatism of the camera, computer-generated imagery, 3D cameras, and so forth), but rather exactly the continued possibility of automatic *world* projection, with the stress in that phrase above all, but not thereby solely, on 'world'."[11] As I hope will emerge, though: Cavell thinks there is a non-arbitrary relation between a specific kind of "*world* projection" (the projection of a "world of an immediate future"—itself related to modernism) and a specific medium, namely color film. As long as there are such non-arbitrary relations, our attention to *medium* should be coeval with our attention to *world*.

It is even doubtful whether the specific relation that Cavell imagines between world-projection and color could be carried over, in anything like the same terms, to other familiar ways of screening color. On the one hand, Cavell clearly abjures from making relevant distinctions among color film stocks: his discussion moves rather freely between early films made using three-strip Technicolor and those made using later Technicolor processes, and he only mentions one film made using Eastmancolor (Godard's *La Chinoise* [1967]),[12] but without flagging that difference.[13] On the other hand, Cavell's responses to color film—grounding his understanding of the forms of abstraction, harmony, and unification that facilitate a specific sense of world-projection—tend to be obscured as we move further away from the category of celluloid projection, and the contrast with black-and-white that Cavell is making within that category. (Similar issues of historical context and medium specificity arise for André Bazin's and Roland Barthes's observations on color photography and its supposed appearance of artificiality.)[14]

For example, as we touch on analog color television (especially analog television contemporary with the writing of *The World Viewed*), color becomes less relevant

10. Martin Shuster, *The New Television: The Aesthetics and Politics of a Genre* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 41.
11. Ibid.
12. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 101.
13. Cavell's chapter on color never mentions films made using Agfacolor or its variants. Neither does Cavell mention tinting or toning. (More on that below.)
14. André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?* Vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967/2005), 12. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 81.

as an ontological constituent of the object viewed, and more relevant as a contingent attribute of the viewing or monitoring apparatus. (Color television signals can be picked up by analog black-and-white receivers.) And if we read *The World Viewed* retrospectively in light of digital video, we find that all constituent parts of the digital image resolve into ontologically equivalent information, eviscerating the distinctions between color and black-and-white—or at least their basis in the constitution of the cinematic image—that Cavell appears to depend upon. (As D. N. Rodowick points out, "Where analog video registers light values and records them as analogous changes in voltage values, digital video samples light values and encodes them as symbolic notations of color.")[15]

Orienting ourselves in the cinematic circle, when it comes to color, requires recalling at least this much about the medium itself, including its historical conditions. It is only in thus situating what Cavell says about the relations between individual films and his general theoretical statements about color that those relations will appear non-arbitrary, and hence as projectable into new contexts—including contexts of new media.

1. A Story about Figuration and Abstraction

We should begin by adumbrating Cavell's most basic, general claims about color in film. He opens the chapter by calling color a "major property of film which can serve to declare its recording of a total world."[16] But it soon becomes clear that the "total world" he thinks color is suited to declaring is not the physical world captured automatically by the photographic mechanism, but in fact a world somehow unified by the filmic work itself. Thus, after recognizing, in order to set aside, the issue of color as "packaging" or marketing—which he associates with *Gone with the Wind* (1939)—he then mentions three other 1930s-40s Technicolor features (*The Wizard of Oz* [1939],

15. D. N. Rodowick, *The Virtual Life of Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 135. Even a strong case for the relevance of the color design of three-strip Technicolor to contemporary digital color design would have to presuppose these ontological differences: see Scott Higgins, *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow: Color Design in the 1930s* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 213-224.
16. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 80.

The Adventures of Robin Hood [1938], and *Henry V* [1946]) in relation to the discovery that "color can serve to unify the projected world in another way than by direct reliance upon, or implication toward, the spatial-temporal consistency of the real world."[17] In addition to the worlds of *make-believe* projected in *The Wizard of Oz*, etc., Cavell will develop across the chapter the idea that color-based world-unification is especially suitable for projecting worlds of the "immediate future" (*Red Desert* [*Il deserto rosso*, 1964], *Fahrenheit 451* [1966], *Petulia* [1968], *Bullitt* [1968]) and worlds of "private fantasy" (*Vertigo* [1958], *Rosemary's Baby*).[18]

These passages suggest that a paradigm of black-and-white photography was implicitly in operation when, earlier in the book, Cavell had said that, "A painting *is* a world; a photograph is *of* the world."[19] Thus, much like painting, color film makes available kinds of world-unification (and hence world-creation or world-projection) that are not otherwise available in those forms of photography and cinematography (paradigmatically, black-and-white) that are strictly "*of* the world," or that depend for their "worldliness" on continuity with the physical world. Earlier in the book Cavell had also marked the difference between painting and photography by saying, "You can always ask, of an area photographed, what lies adjacent to that area," a question that "generally makes no sense in painting."[20] Thus, world-unification is presumably characterized by its specific way of yielding questions about some world that have no "answers in reality."[21] But we still need a positive account of such unification and its connection to color.

Cavell's associations between film color and unification, via some relation to painting—as well as his association between monochrome and spatial-temporal consistency with reality—are not unusual. For example, Bazin accounted for Henri-Georges Clouzot's procedure in *The Picasso Mystery* (*Le mystère Picasso*, 1956) of filming Picasso's painting practice in color and the surrounding world in black-and-white by saying that Clouzot leads us to accept "as a natural reality that the real world is in

17. Ibid., 81. All of these films from the 1930s-40s that Cavell mentions used the three-strip Technicolor process, and all were supervised by the same color consultant, Natalie Kalmus (though Kalmus's name does not appear in the credits of *Henry V*).
18. Ibid., 82, 84, 89.
19. Ibid., 24.
20. Ibid., 23-24. See also Richard Moran, "Stanley Cavell on Recognition, Betrayal, and the Photographic Field of Expression," in *The Philosophical Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 88-100, 98.
21. Ibid., 24.

black-and-white, 'excepting for painting.' The chemical permanence of the positive color film gives the whole its necessary and substantial unity."[22] A natural response to these passages by Cavell and Bazin is to imagine that they are specifically thinking of the unification afforded by color harmonies. And I do think that something like that appeal to harmonies is important for understanding Cavell, especially what he says about the unifications allowing film to communicate worlds of private fantasy (a point I will return to shortly). At the same time, the appeal to harmonies does not get us very far in understanding why there should be any special relation between color and world-unification. After all, black-and-white can allow for geometric harmonies, which can in turn facilitate such ideologically distinct forms of unification and world-projection (across still photography and cinematography) as the works of Tina Modotti, Alain Resnais, Fritz Lang, Busby Berkeley, and Leni Riefenstahl. What, then, is the relevant difference between color harmonies and (figurative) geometric harmonies?

A more promising approach can be derived from writing by Brian Price on the wider significance in western culture of the distinction between color and monochrome for framing the difference between abstraction and figuration. Price traces debates about color's liquidity and its ability to bleed "across line" to the Italian Renaissance and the access that sixteenth century Venetian painters like Titian had to thicker paints.[23] Until that time, color "was typically considered to be mere supplement to drawing, to the faithful reproduction of forms in the hands of the master draughtsman. The mimetic accuracy of drawing had been consistently privileged over the decorative charm of color."[24] Thus, western aesthetic debates about color have been shaped by anxieties about its powers for abstraction and formlessness versus the contained forms and lines proper to draftsmanship. The hypothesis for understanding Cavell would then be that it is exactly thanks to these aspects—formlessness, the possibility of bleeding over line—that color harmonies allow for special possibilities of world-unification or world-projection (beyond those available to formal or geometric harmonies).

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22. Bert Cardullo, "A Bergsonian Film: *The Picasso Mystery* by André Bazin," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 35, no. 2 (Summer 2001), 1-9, 6-7, https://doi.org/10.2307/3333668. Reprinted in *Color, the Film Reader*, eds. Angela Dalle Vache and Brian Price (London: Routledge, 2006), 57-62, 60.
23. Brian Price, "Color, the Formless, and Cinematic Eros," in *Color, the Film Reader*, 76-87, 78.
24. Ibid.

Indeed, Cavell appears to associate classical cinema with a kind of figuration and modernist cinema with a kind of abstraction. Earlier in *The World Viewed* his model for classical cinema and its types (the "Military Man," the "Woman," the "Dandy") was "The Painter of Modern Life," Charles Baudelaire's 1863 essay on the journalistic draftsmanship of the Dutch-born French artist Constantin Guys.[25] It is possible to miss the extent to which Cavell continues recurring to an idea of draftsmanship in his understanding of classical cinema, especially since upon gathering Baudelaire's responses to Guys, he had said that Baudelaire "is not describing anything a draftsman showed him; he is having a prophetic hallucination"—namely, of cinema.[26] But there the departure from literal draftsmanship specifically had to do with Baudelaire's descriptions of film-like movement, as inspired by Guys's drawings. Despite attributing to Baudelaire that prophetic vision, Cavell's writing on "The Painter of Modern Life" remained framed by categories of figuration.

Nor should we let the fact that many of Guys's drawings were watercolors discount the relevance of Baudelaire and Guys to Cavell's understanding of classical, black-and-white cinema and its reliance on dramatic types. We should indeed recognize that Baudelaire's attention to Guys's use of color places his essay very far from the "chromophobic" tradition of reducing color to mere decoration that Price (following Jacqueline Lichtenstein and David Batchelor) discusses.[27] But Cavell never mentions color in his discussion of Baudelaire.[28] It is as though, for Cavell's Baudelaire, colors were ultimately subordinate to figuration, line, and distinctions of type.

In any case the connection between draftsmanship and dramatic types is sustained when, in the color chapter, Cavell offers sweeping historical considerations that also serve to explain how he, along with other filmgoers, had come to see black-and-white as more realistic than color. For much of western history, "Black and white was the natural medium of visual drama":[29] a connection that makes further sense once we understand that Cavell is operating with a larger category of form or figurati-

25. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 41-60.
26. Ibid., 44.
27. Price, "Color, the Formless, and Cinematic Eros," 79-80. Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age*, trans. Emily McVarish (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). David Batchelor, *Chromophobia* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000).
28. A minor exception proves the rule. In his chapter on how post-classical films have moved beyond the myths he has connected to Baudelaire's types, Cavell mentions their "dreamier color." Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 61.
29. Ibid., 89.

on that includes not only black-and-white's possibilities for defined lines but also the defined lines of draftsmanship, which have supposedly suited the defined types or distinctions constituting a dramatic (or as he sometimes put it, "theatrical") conception of history or reality. This is the very conception of history or reality articulated in Baudelaire's response to Guys's draftsmanship and later captured in black-and white-film. Our "conviction" in figuration (in that wide sense) depends on its suitability in capturing those dramatic explanations.

Thus, for Cavell, losing faith in those types or distinctions—or dramatic explanations—is also to lose faith in that kind of figuration. Moreover, the introduction of color in film "masked" the kind of figuration he had associated with dramatic types: that is, color "masked the black and white axis of brilliance, and the drama of characters and contexts supported by it, along which our comprehensibility and event were secured. Movies in color seemed unrealistic because they were undramatic."[30] When Cavell discusses the supposed "de-psychologizing" and "un-theatricalizing" effects of color, he is therefore describing a kind of abstraction that is opposed to the the wide category of figuration that had been the traditional aesthetic basis for those dramatic categories and distinctions—which themselves had traditionally been used in making sense of reality and history, including human psychology.

Here Cavell appears to depend on not only a particular idea of figuration (one that connects draftsmanship with black-and-white), but also a particular idea of color's suitability to abstraction (much like what Price would later discuss). But it is also an idea of color likely grounded in Cavell's experience of color on celluloid, and above all Technicolor. The three-strip Technicolor process used until the 1950s had an international reputation for results that were, as Dudley Andrew puts it, "purer than reality, needing strong artificial light, aggressive."[31] These expectations of color in Hollywood films were maintained even as Technicolor moved away from the three-strip process and adapted its transfer process to other stocks. In a 1957 review of Ni-

30. Ibid., 91.
31. Dudley Andrew, "The Post-War Struggle for Colour," *Cinema Journal* 18, no. 2 (1979): 41-52, 46, https://doi.org/10.2307/1225441. Reprinted in *Color, the Film Reader*, 40-49, 44. Despite three-strip Technicolor's reputation for assertive color, we should recognize that it was in fact used to explore a wide range of styles and aesthetic models. See especially Higgins, *Harnessing the Technicolor Rainbow*. Of course in approaching Cavell we are trying to understand his memory of three-trip Technicolor films in 1971: the experience he is speaking from would not likely have incorporated the 1930s debates about Technicolor that Higgins dissects.

cholas Ray's post-three-strip Technicolor *Hot Blood* (1956), Godard praised "the deliberate and systematic use of the gaudiest colors to be seen in the cinema."[32] That is, there remained an association between Technicolor and a conception of color as calling attention to itself (as something beyond figuration), or as promising "nothing beyond itself" (as Eli Friedlander puts it in a compelling Cavell-inspired analysis of color in the post-three-strip Technicolor *Vertigo*).[33] Cavell is thus at once speaking from a general sense of color's possibilities for abstraction and a specific moment in the medium's material history. If there is a special connection between abstraction and "world-projection," then we cannot ignore the specific mediums that have historically yielded special possibilities for abstraction.

Though it is a constant theme in *The World Viewed*, Cavell is not very clear about exactly what historical conditions have led to a general loss of faith in figuration. At the end of his sweeping considerations about the connection between a dramatic conception of reality and black-and-white, Cavell says, "When dramatic explanations cease to be our natural mode of understanding one another's behavior [...] black and white ceases to be the mode in which our lives are convincingly portrayed."[34] Nevertheless, this is the place where Cavell most explicitly relates those considerations to a loss of faith in figuration, especially as it has manifested itself in modernism in the plastic arts: "Painting and sculpture found ways to cede human portrayal in favor of the unappeasable human wish for presentness and beauty."[35] This thread will be picked up in the book's fifteenth chapter, "Excursus: Some Modernist Painting," where some loss of faith in figuration makes abstraction not just an option for painters, but an absolute necessity.[36] But before then, in the color chapter, we already see Cavell relate those issues of abstraction to color in film. Here again, in the case of film, abstraction is not simply one artistic option, but *the* way of convincingly going on in the medium. Abstraction in film is necessitated by a modernist loss of faith in figuration.

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32. Jean-Luc Godard, "Nothing but Cinema," in *Cahiers du Cinéma, The 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 116-117.
33. Eli Friedlander, "Being-in-(Techni)Color," in *Vertigo*, ed. Katalin Makkai (London: Routledge), 174-193.
34. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 94.
35. Ibid.
36. In his 1965 essay "A Matter of Meaning It" Cavell had already signaled the importance of color's abstracting powers for modernism. Discussing some uses of color shared by Anthony Caro's sculptures and modernist painting, he says, "It is almost as though color helps de-materialize its supporting object. [... The] color is simply *there*, as the canvas is." Cavell, "A Matter of Meaning It," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969/2015), 213-37, 217.

The difference from painting and sculpture is that Cavell thinks what he calls "movies" cannot cede figuration altogether, at least (presumably) without becoming a different medium. (This place in his argumentation is particularly open to dispute, especially from the angle of avant-garde cinema.)[37] In any case, so long as movies need to move toward abstraction while retaining human figures, color is available to facilitate that breakthrough: "Movies in color cede our recently natural (dramatic) grasp of these figures, not by denying so much as by neutralizing our connection with the world so filmed."[38]

Thus, despite some lacunae in these considerations, Cavell has made somewhat clearer the relation between color and futurity. Projecting a world of the future is not merely one possible use of color film, any more than abstraction is merely another option for painters in modernist conditions. Neither is it merely a natural tendency of color film. Rather, "it is only logical to project [de-psychologized, un-theatricalized human figures] as inhabiting the future"[39] because by the time of *The World Viewed* cinema had had forced on it the modernist question of how to continue in the medium without relying on the traditional kinds of figuration that had previously placed the medium closer to draftsmanship (according to Cavell's reading of Baudelaire).

No filmmaker in modernist conditions can simply abjure from the question of how to project a future world.[40] This makes color's abstracting, world-unifying possibilities a vital resource for modernist filmmakers.

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37. Ibid. Cavell does leave open some interesting possibilities, including that movies can "fragment [human figuration], or can animate something else." Cavell is obviously moving rather quickly here between ceding figuration and ceding *human* figuration, as though on film they were somehow equivalent. For important considerations related to that latter thought, and discussing Cavell in connection with avant-garde films that indeed cede human figuration (but not figuration altogether), see Dave Burnham, "Turning to Nature: Cavell and Experimental Cinema," *Discourse* 42, nos. 102 (2020): 173-208, https://doi.org/10.13110/discourse.42.1-2.0173.
38. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 94.
39. Ibid.
40. Cavell certainly appears to muddle this point when he says that the "greatest [directors] will probably resist" futurity (ibid., 95). One possibility is that he is exempting the "greatest" directors from responsibilities to modernist conditions, which is somewhat in keeping with his complicated views on film and modernism. But it is also somewhat out of keeping with his praise on that same page of Antonioni for having "his own manner of projecting the future." More important is how Cavell qualifies his statement about the greatest directors: "for the future has replaced the past as the object of timely elegy." This is rather a specific way of relating to the future, one that treats the future as already settled or projected. It is this idea of a "false" futurity to which Cavell will later return in criticizing minimalist or literalist art for effecting a "nostalgia directed to the future" (ibid., 240, n. 42), and, as we will see, in his criticisms of Godard.

2. Fantasy and Futurity

But we still need to understand better why color's powers of world-unification are significantly different from those of black-and-white. Or more precisely: we need to understand better why color's capacities for abstraction make color film such an important touchstone for Cavell's conception of world-unification and world-projection. Another idea only partially articulated by Cavell is that, if color can bleed over line and move beyond figuration, it can also do so in multiple directions. That is, if we think there is a connection between color's world-unifications and its harmonies (as I mentioned above), it is surely relevant that color allows for gradations—continuities—between multiple harmonies. Walter Benjamin, discussing color's powers of abstraction in "A Child's View of Color," said that "Where color provides the contours, objects are not reduced to things but are constituted by an order consisting of an infinite range of nuances."[41] Eli Friedlander, likewise discussing color's abstractions and drawing on both Benjamin and Cavell, asks us to "Think of how colors can provide us with the occasion of experiencing a continuity of change that does not involve loss or destruction. Color combinations just form another color."[42] A geometric harmony in black-and-white can stand alone as a self-sufficient unity. But our conceptions of color spectrums allow us to project continuous color harmonies out of the ones that might be before us. Color can surpass self-sufficient unities just as it can surpass line and figuration.

These considerations are an important background for understanding Cavell's writing on color and private fantasy.[43] He raises this topic in connection with *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, 1920):

> *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* serves another manner of creating an artificially unified environment. But it competes with reality by *opposing* it—as its sub-

41. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, 1: 1913-1926*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 50.
42. It should be recognized that Friedlander does not frame his views in terms of color "harmonies," since he objects to an overly close analogy between color and musical harmonies, something he associates with Isaac Newton. But I think that interpreting Cavell on color is best pursued by understanding a connection between harmonies and world-unification while keeping in mind Friedlander's warnings about using music as our model.
43. Friedlander is of course well aware of this since his views emerge in a discussion of *Vertigo* that is influenced by Cavell's writing on that film and private fantasy.

> jects do, as Germany did—with images that compose a conventional expression of madness, not by filtering reality through a normal stage of fantasy. Its feeling of constriction, of imagination confined to the shapes of theater, is a function of its existence in black and white, a point to which I will return.[44]

Particularly with his reference to "Germany," Cavell is likely alluding to Siegfried Kracauer's well-known argument in his 1947 book *From Caligari to Hitler* regarding the reactionary effects of Robert Wiene's separating the artificial, theatrical world of *Caligari*'s framed story from the supposedly more natural world of its framing story.[45] Thus, part of Cavell's innovation on Kracauer is to propose that *Caligari*'s treatment of fantasy as world-separating madness is somehow determined by its being in black-and-white, as though black-and-white limited filmic expressions of fantasy.[46] (I will later return to Cavell's relation to Kracauer as it bears on color.)

Although Cavell is here preparing for his discussion of black-and-white's connection to dramatic types (which I sketched in the previous section), his point about the connection between black-and-white and theatrical artificiality is somewhat different. He is here referring to how the expression of a world of private fantasy in black-and-white will tend to result in a separated world: inviting comparison with the sepa-

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44. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 82.
45. Though Cavell never explicitly cites Kracauer's book, the relevant discussion of *Caligari* was excerpted in one source that *The World Viewed* cites: *Film: An Anthology*, ed. Daniel Talbot (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1959). Discussions of Kracauer's argument also appear in two other sources cited in *The World Viewed*: Paul Rotha, *The Film Till Now: A Survey of World Cinema* (London: Spring Books, 1967), 94-95, and Robert Warshow, *The Immediate Experience* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), xxxix. Cavell's conception of *Caligari* likely diverges from Kracauer's in one significant respect: while Cavell emphasizes the film's separation between worlds as a mark of madness, Kracauer's critique ultimately depends on how the artificial world of the framed story bleeds into the supposedly natural world of the framing story at the film's conclusion, thus evoking Germany's "general retreat into a shell." See Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, ed. Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947/2004), 67, 71, 75. For a recent Cavell-inspired treatment of the framing device in *Caligari*, see David LaRocca, "Weimar Cognitive Theory: Modernist Narrativity and the Metaphysics of Frame Stories (After *Caligari* and Kracauer)," in *The Fictional Minds of Modernism: Narrative Cognition from Henry James to Christopher Isherwood*, ed. Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso (New York: Bloomsbury, 2020).
46. An interesting question is how much Cavell's considerations would be affected by recognizing that the first prints of *Caligari* were individually tinted and toned in various colors, a fact likely unavailable to him in 1971. See Peter Monaghan, "Reproducing Film Colors, and Their Significances," *Moving Image Archive News*, March 17, 2016, http://www.movingimagearchivenews.org/reproducing-film-colors-and-their-significances/. For a wide-ranging analysis of such applied-coloring techniques in early film that also develops many of the same considerations about color and abstraction that I am arguing underlie Cavell's writing, see Joshua Yumibe, *Moving Color: Early Film, Mass Culture, Modernism* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013).

rated world of the theatrical stage, these forms of self-imposition or self-division are best suited to representing madness on film.[47] (The psychotic, as Cavell elsewhere puts it, is someone who "distorts his entire grammar.")[48] The unavailability of a wide range of unified world-relations—i.e. color's wide range of continuities between harmonies—limits the worlds of fantasy expressed in black-and-white to relatively contained worlds.

For Cavell, the contrast between this consequence for fantasy in black-and-white film is with the worlds of private fantasy explored in such color films as *Vertigo* and *Rosemary's Baby*. In these films, we see the possibility of taking advantage of color's "infinite range of nuances" (as Benjamin put it) in order communicate a range of inter-world relations that are not necessarily abrupt or violent: or, when they are abrupt or violent, they need not suggest psychosis or absolute separation. (Regarding different treatments of fantasy in *Vertigo*, Cavell says, "Each of these ways of handling fantasy has its psychotic leanings, but neither of them need tip over.")[49] Showing the distinctive way in which color allows one to "move from one world into another" is Cavell's aim in connecting, on the one hand, the famous moment in *Vertigo* of Scottie opening the storage room door onto the Podesta Baldocchi Flower Shop with, on the other hand, *Rosemary's Baby*'s "showing the modernizing of one apartment in the Dakota building, then moving between its open chic and a darker elegance."[50] Color allows worlds to bleed into each other.[51]

The topic of *Rosemary's Baby* forces a return to and clarification of the relation between color and futurity, since Cavell calls it a film "firmly rooted in the imme-

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47. Indeed, there are at least three different kinds of invocations of "theater" in *The World Viewed*, having to do with: (1) dramatic types or categories, (2) the artificiality of the stage, and (3) an insufficient independence of the beholder or spectator. These are in addition to the many ontological observations on differences between film and theater throughout both *The World Viewed* and "More of *The World Viewed*."
48. Cavell, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 44-72, 69, n. 10.
49. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 85.
50. Ibid., 84.
51. Obviously somewhat different issues arise for the relations between the colorful world of Oz and the monochrome world of Kansas. Cavell seems to be aware of this problem (and of how to distinguish the self-enclosed world of Oz from that in *Caligari*). In "More of *The World Viewed*" he addresses what we might call the *commensurability* of the two worlds in *The Wizard of Oz*: that they tap "the same source of power, call it the human craving for reality, call it the craving for our fantasies and reality to complete or to project one another." Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 197. Here Cavell's considerations would probably be aided by recalling that the scenes of Kansas were originally in sepia rather than black-and-white (as he recalls them, likely thinking of later reissues or of television broadcasts).

diate past."[52] It is as though the film's supposed diffusiveness among worlds prevents it from having the unity needed for future world-projection. (He says that the "point" of the film's color, despite its being used to "establish a world of private fantasy [...] is not so much to unify a world as to juxtapose opposing moods and to symbolize mutually exclusive environments.")[53] But there are also reasons, which I will soon come to, for doubting that this is Cavell's final view of the film. In any case, framing these statements first requires connecting what I said earlier about modernism and abstraction to the black-and-white films Cavell discusses as projecting futurity: Godard's *Alphaville* and Antonioni's black-and-white trilogy with Monica Vitti (*L'Avventura* [1960], *La Notte* [1961], *L'Eclisse* [1962]). These films will also help us to understand how Cavell conceives the relation between general theoretical statements and exceptions when it comes to color.

Cavell's remarks on *Alphaville* are central to the themes I have been developing. After saying that the film "turns on the premise that the cities we now inhabit are the future," and yet this futurity in commuted in black-and-white, Cavell says:

> But in *Alphaville* the black and white are made to function like colors. Visually this is accomplished by confining the interiors largely to bright metallic and glass and plaster expanses or passageways, and the exteriors to scenes at night; dramatically it has to do with Godard's presentation of character—in particular with his ability, or disability, in de-psychologizing or un-theatricalizing the characters[54] [...]

Cavell's comment that in *Alphaville* "the black and white are made to function like colors" can at first seem mysterious or arbitrary. But it is significantly less so if we grasp that Cavell is grounding his experience of *Alphaville*'s blacks-and-whites in both their abstractions and in their being used to project a unified, future world. Those abstractions include the film's attention to surfaces, and thus to visuals that promise "nothing beyond" themselves (again to use Friedlander's phrase). (We can also mention in this connection the film's sharp shifts between extreme overexposure—

52. Ibid., 84.
53. Ibid.
54. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 84.

abstract whites—and extreme underexposure—abstract blacks.) Those abstractions also help to "mask" (as Cavell will put it later in the chapter) those dramatic types and explanations that he associates with figuration: an effect that he here again calls "de-psychologizing or un-theatricalizing." Moreover, the world of *Alphaville* is projected from the current one—even changes in language and expression are accounted for in the film—and in a way that requires enough of a unified world (especially unified by the film's abstract visual style) for there to be a question of world-projection. (In her famous essay on Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* [1968], which Cavell cites as an influence on *The World Viewed*, Annette Michelson compares the futurity of that film with that in *Alphaville*, saying that "both unflaggingly sustain a coherent visual style.")[55] Thus, monochrome can approach what Cavell says about color so long as it is used for abstraction and unified world-projection.

Something similar could be said about Cavell's understanding of Antonioni's black-and-white trilogy with Monica Vitti, though he does not go as far as to say that in those films "the black and white are made to function like colors." Nevertheless, there are two important respects in which Cavell seems to understand these films as preparing the way for the more obvious exploration of color and futurity that he mentions in connection with Antonioni's later color film *Red Desert*.[56] First, Antonioni relies on visual abstractions: alluding to a sequence in *La Notte*, Cavell mentions "the abstracted windshield wipers and the mechanical intermittence of passing light on the wet windows measuring the anxiety and the abstraction of the inhabitants from their capacity to feel."[57] His mention of "the sheen or finish of the frames" in Antonioni's films recalls his earlier remarks on abstract surfaces in *Alphaville*.[58] And these same passages—as well as Cavell's mention of Antonioni's treatment of psychological "absence"—show how Cavell understands these abstractions in Antonioni's visual style as "masking" figuration in the additional sense that he has identified as "de-psychologizing or un-theatricalizing."

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55. Annette Michelson, "Bodies in Space: Film as 'Carnal Knowledge'," *Artforum* 7, no. 6 (1969): 54-63, 61. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 13.
56. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 82.
57. Ibid., 96.
58. The idea that Antonioni's black-and-white approaches the abstractions of color receives a kind of support from Price's formulations. Here he is on Claire Denis's *Beau Travail* (1999), though he could just as well be describing *L'Avventura*: "the sea itself is a very telling abstraction. Liquidity is but another way of describing the bleeding of color across line. Moreover, the breakdown of formal harmony is motivated by erotic desire." Price, "Color, the Formless, and Cinematic Eros," 85.

Second, Cavell discusses Antonioni's films in terms of future world-projection, and in a way that helps clarify how he may have been understanding that notion. Thus, in discussing the Monica Vitti trilogy, Cavell says, "When love is altogether over, unable even to stir a fantasy of future redemption, then we have forgone the futurity of our future," a notion he explains by discussing the final shot of *L'Avventura*: "the woman puts her hand on the man's shoulder not because she forgives his betrayal, or even his inability to offer tears and beg forgiveness, but because she accepts that there is nothing to forgive, to forgo, no new place to be won on the other side of this moment."[59] The possibility raised by these passages is that the "futurity" projected by a unified world of abstractions might be better understood as the *question* of whether we can intelligibly project a future world from the present one. But the case of Antonioni shows that it is no shirking of the task of future-projection to raise that question and then sincerely answer it in the negative.[60]

That last suggestion raises the additional possibility that there is something equivocal about Cavell's account of color in *Rosemary's Baby*, and perhaps even something infelicitous by his own lights in his connecting that film to *pastness* as opposed to *futurity*. On the one hand, it seemed (as I mentioned above) that for Cavell the distinct worlds and spaces in that film are too diffuse to constitute a unified world for which the question of future world-projection might arise. On the other hand, it can now seem that Cavell understands *Rosemary's Baby* to raise that very question and yet (as in Antonioni) to answer it in the negative. Thus, in discussing the film's connection to the announcement of God's death in Nietzsche's *Gay Science*, Cavell says of Rosemary, "In the absence of God, it is up to her to create God. And what is thus created, in isolation, is not God."[61] That is, it is only against the background of a coherent question about whether God will survive or be reborn that the proposal of God's

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59. Ibid., 96.
60. Cavell marks a further set of issues when he says that "In Bergman's harsh black and white mysteries, the future began a long time ago. The melodrama consists not in watching to see whether death will be victorious, but whether we will arrive to ourselves in time to remove its sting." Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 95. He is presumably referring here to *The Seventh Seal* (*Det sjunde inseglet*, 1957) and its suggestion that apocalypses have already taken place in the past. What sets this sense of *pastness* apart from that of other black-and-white film is that it depends on something beyond "spatial temporal consistency" with reality and instead on world-unifications that might ground something like world-*retro-projection*. But it must be admitted that Cavell does not say enough about Bergman's visual style to connect those results to, say, an abstract use of black-and-white. The possibility nevertheless remains of reconstructing those views from what Cavell elsewhere says about abstraction.
61. Ibid., 88.

death makes any sense. By Cavell's lights this background requires a degree of world-unification (aided by color?) that he had earlier denied the film.

It is possible that what I have read as Cavell's equivocations about *Rosemary's Baby*, pastness, and world-unification reflect an uncertainty about how to approach futurity as a *question* that is not resolved until his treatment of Antonioni later in the chapter. The important point about *Rosemary's Baby* is this: despite what Cavell says about what the film's colors do *not* do, he has also given us the resources for understanding how its colors might nevertheless play a role in raising the same question about survival and futurity that he has throughout connected to color and its abstractions.

3. The Case of Godard

Cavell's discussion of Godard in the color chapter is of great importance for approaching the question of arbitrariness since Cavell's positive assessment of *Alphaville*, as we have seen, depends on that film's coming closer to the abstracting and future world-projecting powers of color, whereas his criticisms of color films by Godard like *La Chinoise* depend on his finding the opposite attributes in those films. But what else justifies these exceptions to Cavell's generalities? We find that Cavell approves of those Godard films that display a kind of Heideggerian "worldliness." This is already clear in his understanding of the importance of future world-projection (and the use of abstract surfaces in unifying a world) in *Alphaville*. Cavell also discusses the Belmondo figure in *Breathless* (*À bout de souffle*, 1960) as capable of turning spoken phrases into definitions of his world.[62]

In contrast, Cavell expresses his disapproval of other 1960s Godard films for being *de-worlded*:

> For Godard's characters (after *Breathless*) there is no longer any problem of ending or change. They *are* somewhere else, already in a future. Godard establishes this not by altering the psychology of his characters, nor through their

62. Ibid., 98.

> responses to their own inability to respond, but by depersonalizing them from the start.[63]

Notice that these terms allow for *Alphaville* to be an exception: Cavell is friendlier to a kind of depersonalization that is prepared for by projecting a future, depersonalized world from the present one. (Likewise with Cavell's positive reception of future-projecting depersonalization in Antonioni.)[64] This becomes clearer as Cavell sets up an opposition between the "masking" or "neutralizing" effects of abstracting visuals (including what supposedly allowed *Alphaville*'s black-and-white to approach the powers of color) with Godard's pursuit of depersonalization *tout court*:

> The neutralization of drama by means of color, or the creation of worlds of make-believe or of fantasy, is not merely useless to his effort but antithetical to it. He has no vision of another world his people may inhabit, his people are without fantasy (hence pastless and futureless, hence presentless)[65] [...].

Thus, this is a vision of depersonalized circumstances that have somehow already been manifested without doing the work of world-projection. It is a false futurity. The *question* of future world-projection that Cavell associated with Antonioni has, according him, not even been raised. Further below Cavell characterizes Godard's relation to his subjects in terms of an arbitrary "position."[66] This can be surprising, since by the time of *The World Viewed*'s publication in 1971 Godard was already underway in solidifying his Marxist and anti-imperialist position in his Dziga Vertov Group films (1968-72). It is not clear what Cavell knew of these films, particularly while writing *The World Viewed*. But they provide an interesting test of Cavell's terms: one might agree with Godard's Marxist and anti-imperialist position and yet worry that he has not prepared for their reception by a not-already convinced audience, or that the fu-

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63. Ibid., 96-97.
64. The difference between Godard and Antonioni that Cavell sketches is remarkably epitomized by Jonathan Rosenbaum's quotation of a 1964 interview by the former of the latter, occasioned by *Red Desert*. Godard says, "The drama is no longer psychological, but plastic..." to which Antonioni replies, "It's the same thing." See Rosenbaum, "A Cinema of Uncertainty," *Chicago Reader*, April 8, 1993, https://chicagoreader.com/film/a-cinema-of-uncertainty/.
65. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 97.
66. Ibid.

Figure 1: Screen grab from *La Chinoise* (1967).

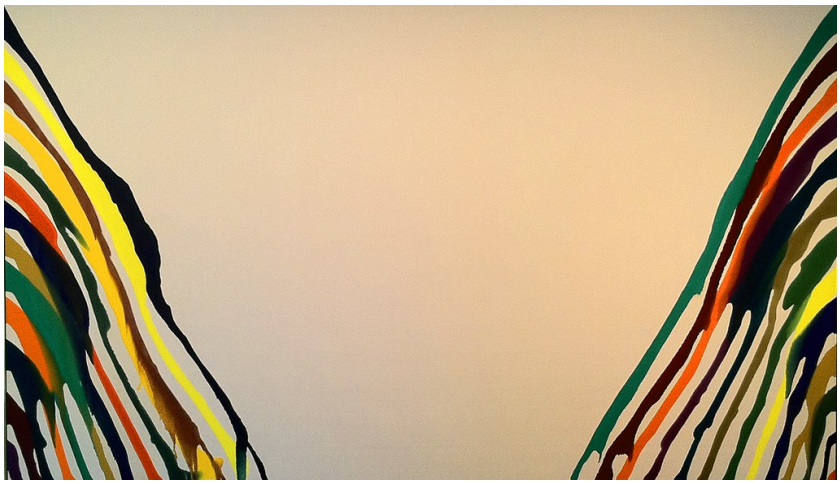

Figure 2: Morris Louis, *Beta Zeta* (1960-61). Source: Creative Commons. Photographer: Dmitriy Sakharov.

ture worlds they imagine cannot be seen in relation to our own.[67] Thus, the question of Godard's position's correctness is independent of the question of whether he has fulfilled what Cavell sketched as the responsibilities of world-projection in modernist filmmaking.

With his discussion of Godard's *La Chinoise* Cavell presents his last treatment of color in the color chapter: in that film "the color suggests make-believe and so pro-

67. A way of putting this point using terms internal to Marxism (which Cavell, as a non-Marxist philosopher, is not prepared to use) is to accuse Godard of "ultra-leftism."

vides the out that the whole thing is child's play."[68] We may want to ask about the line between the "out" Cavell mentions and a film more simply *about* child's play.[69] Nevertheless, Cavell's criticism of *La Chinoise* continues the idea that he has been developing all along: color's abstractions can help sustain modernist world-projection, but they cannot guarantee it. We might find in *La Chinoise*'s use of blocks of primary colors what Cavell later in the book describes, regarding Morris Louis's *Unfurled* series, as "the frankness that leaves individual colors not merely separate but separated."[70] But by Cavell's lights any such "frankness" in *La Chinoise* does not amount to world-projection (Figures 1 and 2). This is not the abandonment of the topic of color in favor of world-projection, but a concern by Cavell with which films fulfill color's natural potential for projecting a unified world.

These considerations are continued and extended in those discussions of Godard's 1960s color films by Cavell that follow *The World Viewed*. Importantly, they play a role in what appears to be his special receptiveness to *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (*Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*, 1967).[71] *Two or Three Things* also uses blocks of primary colors, and it seems that in this case the harmonies they constitute are in the service of serious questions about world-projection.[72] In this film, we have a detailed attention to how its projected world of commodified persons came to be realized: including, as in *Alphaville*, an attention to the importance of changes in language. Moreover, the question of future-projection is explicitly raised in Godard's voiceover in the café scene that Cavell discusses at the end of his 1978 essay "What Becomes of Things on Film?"[73] (In that scene Godard's voice describes circumstances in which "the future is more present than the present," though that

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68. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 101.
69. This is roughly how Jacques Rancière understands the film. See his "The Red of *La Chinoise*: Godard's Politics," in *Film Fables (Talking Images)*, trans. Emiliano Battista (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2006), 143-53.
70. Cavell, *The World Viewed*, 111.
71. We also know that Cavell played a vital role in a seminar at Harvard taught by Alfred Guzzetti on that film in 1971-72, as well as in encouraging Guzzetti's resulting publication, *Two or Three Things I Know about Her: Analysis of a Film by Godard* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981). See Guzzetti's memory of Cavell in Scott MacDonald, "My Troubled Relationship with Stanley Cavell: In Pursuit of a Truly Cinematic Conversation," in *The Thought of Stanley Cavell and Cinema*, ed. David LaRocca, 107-120, 120n13.
72. These color blocks and harmonies are examined in Edward Branigan, "The Articulation of Color in a Filmic System: *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle*," in *Color, the Film Reader*, 170-82.
73. Cavell, "What Becomes of Things on Film?," in *Themes Out of School* (San Francisco, CA: North Point Press, 1984), 173-83, 182-83.

idea's resonances are not limited to that scene.) And as late as a 2002 discussion of the visuals and music in that same film ("babbling one- or two-word signs, done with big letters in primary colors"), Cavell foregrounds the question of future world-projection: the question of *Two or Three Things* is whether there is "hope for us in learning how to go on, or [whether] there is not."[74]

In other words, the terms of Cavell's later receptiveness to *Two or Three Things* were already in place with his earlier treatment of color. This is not a variable or arbitrary treatment of different color and black-and-white films, but rather a treatment rooted in a specific idea of celluloid color's potential for abstractions, harmonies, and future world-projection.

4. Conclusion: Color after *The World Viewed*

If I am right about how Cavell employed a connection between color and abstraction in *The World Viewed*, we can also understand his interest in filmic explorations of color's abstractions in later writing, like his 1979 remarks on Bergman's use of fades to complete red in *Cries and Whispers* (*Viskningar och rop*, 1972). It is no accident that this use of red—one of the most astonishing, extended explorations of the abstracting possibilities of a single color hue in narrative film—also elicits some of Cavell's most interesting synoptic reflections on film's powers of preservation. Having already suggested, via a clear allusion to Freud's essay "Medusa's Head," that the self-castration carried out by Karin (Ingrid Thulin) is meant to evoke the figure of Medusa, Cavell says:

> And since Bergman's screen in this film fades to red at the close of its sequences, we may take Bergman to be declaring his film screen to a version or container of the severed head of Gorgon, to contain that kind of assault upon us. But what would be his attitude to this possibility? We are quite certain that we are not turned to stone, are we not? If we are not stone, and if the power of the

74. Cavell, "Crossing Paths," in *Cavell on Film*, ed. William Rothman (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2005), 361-74, 373.

> film image is nevertheless what I say it is, then the screen we see it on is a version of the shield of Perseus. Then a film director, like Perseus flying through the air, looking down upon the earth, has in his hands the power to put halls of people to instant death, or to preserve them.[75]

This passage is yet another place, besides his remarks on *Caligari* in *The World Viewed*, in which Cavell is likely alluding to a famous idea of Siegfried Kracauer's: this time to Kracauer's proposal in his 1960 book *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* that the film screen is a version of the protective shield that Athena gave to Perseus, since we depend on it "for the reflection of happenings which would petrify us were we to encounter them in real life."[76] Nevertheless, Cavell's use of this image is somewhat different from Kracauer's. Rather than emphasize the screen's power to mirror reality—and thus give us some protective distance from it—Cavell instead emphasizes the relation between director and audience ("halls of people"), which is another way of raising the question of what world they share. Moreover, the idea that filmmaking can be used to bring about either death or preservation is already familiar to us from *The World Viewed*'s emphasis on world-projection: the question ineluctably facing modernist filmmakers of whether they can project a future world or not. Thus, "preservation" on Cavell's understanding is not a matter of mirroring a world but instead of projecting a world, a task for which he finds abstracting uses of color (like Bergman's) to be a crucial resource. It is also a task that, in that same essay, Cavell finds taken up by the return to full color at the end of Makavejev's *Sweet Movie* (1974).[77]

The stakes of Cavell's difference from Kracauer are made a little clearer by some remarks on Kracauer's analogy by Gilberto Perez in his 2000 book *The Material Ghost* (remarks which do not mention Cavell). Opposing both Kracauer's conception of the screen as mirror and Lacanian formulations of that idea, Perez instead emphasizes how the screen's images are constructions: "Their picture of reality may

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75. Cavell, "On Makavejev on Bergman," in *Themes Out of School*, 106-140, 136. See also Sigmund Freud, "Medusa's Head," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XVIII, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 273-74.
76. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1960), 305-6.
77. Cavell, "On Makavejev on Bergman," 132-133. See also Cavell, "What Photography Calls Thinking," in *Cavell on Film*, 115-133, 123.

be convincing, but in the way fiction is convincing: we respond to the picture not as we would to reality but as we respond to the constructs of representation."[78] But as we know from Cavell's discussion of Godard, a "construction" can bypass the exigencies of projecting a future world. These are the exigencies that the abstracting powers of color are supposed to be especially suited to fulfilling. Thus, any conception of film that depended on a dichotomy between *mirroring* and *constructing* would miss the very problematic that made color and its abstracting powers an important issue for Cavell.

Neither mirroring nor constructing but *projecting* a world (from the one that we can presently share or affirm): that is the distinctive vision of film that Cavell could only have articulated through his specific experience of color.[79]

78. Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 17.

79. Thanks to María José Alcaraz León, Josh Kortbein, and Dan Morgan for conversations about this material, as well as to students in my fall 2021 aesthetics class at the Universidad del Claustro de Sor Juana for pertinent conversations.

7. Philosophy of Mind Becomes Aesthetics: Cavell and Dialectics

MOSES ESTRADA-ALVAREZ

> Philosophy concerns those necessities we cannot, being human, fail to know. Except that nothing is more human than to deny them.
>
> CAVELL, *Must We Meant What We Say?*

That human (op)positions, contradiction and conflict, permeate our world is obvious; however, if, we (human beings) share a conceptual scheme, common to us all, how then we can agree and disagree, accept and reject, admit or repress, recognize and misrecognize so much in our worlds—between others and ourselves—is not obvious, or needs to be recounted. Notwithstanding, we want to reconsider our shared conceptual scheme—the necessities apart from which we cannot say what we ordinarily say, or even do. To be sure, the (op)positions result from these necessities. It is that sort of necessity, so to say, *logic*, or "what is common to us all," that "we" want to describe, figure out or find out in ordinary language. To acknowledge a Cavellian insinuation: the necessities, being human, we must affirm and deny at once (i.e. the sense I sketch out from the epigraph above). In this essay, I claim that *that* is a dialectic inherent in ordinary language (in human forms of life).

If we reflect upon, stop to recollect and recognize, what is, and, how it is that we ever agree or disagree about what we ordinarily say, should say about anything, e.g. how we can say that is "human" or "inhuman" or "monstrous"; as it were, whether there *is* a criterion of humanity, we then realize how hard it is to begin at the beginning. If we were to acknowledge that the oppositions, the differences in schemes of concepts, in the real world are necessities, and contingencies (or conventionalities), we then acknowledge the unacknowledged other (how there are, or could be, different conceptual

schemes, categories or criteria, at all). The oppositions, or call it, antitheses or antagonisms, are the means by which the world, others, or ourselves (even the human) can alter. That is change. I shall further suggest that these oppositions (necessities) are "a production of dialectic," which result from speaking "outside language games," as it were, needing a suturing of the splits.[1] The need is to bring ourselves back into language—the human nature itself—and natural forms of life. The problem is that going outside language, or forms of life, is a rejection of the human, but nothing could be more human.

Since, there have been different conceptions of dialectics, I begin by broaching dialectics (the view I advance); next I explain three themes, or formulations, from "Aesthetic Problems in Modern Philosophy" to illuminate *The Claim of Reason's* parenthetical remark, "Thus may the philosophy of mind become aesthetics," in order to better understand how we (the human being) can, and do, change.[2] In the "Preface to Updated Edition" of *Must We Mean What We Say?*, Cavell register's three formulations, or descriptions, that recur in his thoughts, that he recognizes as his manner, i.e. he says, "to introduce a remark in guise (calling attention to itself) means to mark an intuition I find guiding, or whose obscurity or incompleteness is meant to be undisguised, intended to remind myself in public, that I find significance here that I have not earned, to which accordingly I know I owe return."[3] Hence, what follows is an attempt, a return to un-disguise the guise of Cavell's remarks, as it were, to remember philosophy's leading us away from only to bring us back into human language and life.

Cavell's Wittgenstein: Philosophizing as "A Criticism of Itself"

I want to further say somethings about the space in which, and how Cavell's Wittgenstein philosophizes, and why it is not merely dialogical (but relentlessly dialecti-

1. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 224.
2. Ibid., 357.
3. Cavell, *Must We Meant What We Say?*, xxiv.

cal).[4] To be sure, philosophy is not other than conversation, but because it is, it necessarily involves different interlocutor's, or speakers, thus there are differences of perspective, experience, about what we should say. Hence, I call it, *dialectics*.[5] That's the starting point. Now, in "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," Cavell exemplifies that philosophizing is: "a process of bringing ourselves back into our natural forms of life, putting our souls back into our bodies, [like describing] the accommodation of the new music as one of naturalizing ourselves to a new form of life, a new world."[6] The examples are that of having lost ourselves then finding a way back home —a return to our nature, life, body, or appreciating new music. Unquestionably, these are dialectical. But the question is why a return to Hegel? And further, why would one ever go outside oneself, one's natural form of life, in the first place? What would, or could, be the motive?

To be sure, the "way philosophical problems end" in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is close to Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. For this reason, Cavell makes it explicit, "I can think of no closer title for it [Wittgenstein's mode of criticism], in an established philosophical vocabulary, than Hegel's use of the term *Aufhebung*," the suggested translation of the term is "to sublate," he continues, "It seems to me to capture the sense of satisfaction in our representation of rival positions," as it were, "canceling" each other out. In this kind of philosophical criticism, however, Cavell claims "it is pointless for one side to refute the other" because "its cause and topic is the self getting in its own way."[7] So, the (op)positions, antithesis, or antagonisms are within ourselves.[8]

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4. That is why, Wittgenstein says (I doubt Cavell knew this saying), "The dialectical method is very sound and a way in which we do work. But it should not try to find, from two propositions, a. and b. a further more complex proposition, as Broad's description implied. [The end…] should be to find out where the ambiguities in our language are," Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge 1932-1935: From the Notes of Alice Ambrose and Margaret Macdonald*, ed. Alice Ambrose (Oxford: Basil Blackwell), 74. See Alexander Berg, "Identity in Difference—Wittgenstein's Hegel," in *Wittgenstein and Hegel: Reevaluation of Difference* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 356-359, study of the extent of Wittgenstein's understanding of Broad's Hegelian lectures.
5. Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London: Version, 2010), 11, recommends Hegel's "dialectical thinking" for progress in everyday language and life (including philosophy of science).
6. Cavell, *Must We Meant What We Say?*, 78.
7. Ibid., 79.
8. Hegel remarks, "This dialectical movement which consciousness practices in its own self (as well as in its knowing and in its object), insofar as, for consciousness, the new, true object arises out of this movement, is properly what is called experience," *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §86. Stephen Houlgate explains Hegel's argument to be understood in this manner, "I cannot revert to that initial conception of the object, however, because in the alteration of my knowledge that has *already taken place* the object itself has been altered in my eyes the object has proven

Indeed, Wittgenstein's aim is dialectical resolution. It is crucial not only to return to Hegel, but Fichte, who registers that the dialectic is not a mere thesis-antithesis-synthesis method, but rather concern the double negation, a negation of negation (I explain this in the third formulation, "nothing more human than to deny them"). Is it right that Wittgenstein's dialogues have to do with "the self getting in its own way"?[9] I think so. In *The Claim of Reason,* Cavell's Wittgenstein, represents a relentless self-questioning, reproducing antitheses and antagonisms. What Cavell rightly calls, "a criticism of itself."[10] To better understand this negation of negation, take Wittgenstein's aphorism: "What is your aim in philosophy?—To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle."[11] Hence, apparently suggesting a redundancy, "Why did it get into the bottle in the first place?" (first negation)—"Well, to learn to get out of course" (second negation).

The dialectic inherent in *The Claim of Reason,* emerges in distinguishing between Wittgensteinian/everyday criteria, which I claim in the end is cancelled out. First, to repeat Cavell's Wittgenstein offers Hegel's *Aufhebung,* a sort of resolution, for philosophy's end.[12] Second, Cavell's Wittgenstein summons or calls for a Wittgensteinian/everyday criteria distinction, which results in the sublation of itself. Therefore, Cavell parenthetically registers, "the bulk of Wittgenstein's rhetoric in manipulating the term "criterion" is just the rhetoric of the ordinary word."[13] Again, offering further description of Wittgensteinian criteria, Cavell recounts, "this turns out to be just the ordinary rhetorical structure of the ordinary word 'criterion'."[14] To remember Wittgenstein's dialogues in *Philosophical Investigations* have the form of,

> When philosophers use a word—"knowledge," "being," "object," "I," "proposition/sentence," "name"—and try to grasp the essence of the thing, one must

not just to be X, but to be Y." See Stephen Houlgate, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: A Readers Guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 19.
9. Cavell, *Must We Meant What We Say?*, 79.
10. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 3.
11. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* 4th edn. (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell), §309. But why did it get into the bottle in the first place? (Well then, what is it like to be a fly?) So the analogy breaks down. But I am tempted to say, the fly was curious, wanted to see the inside of the bottle, was looking for food, got lost, accidently, and so on. In going inside and outside of the bottle, the fly learned it was free to go in-and-out of it. It was not just a matter of knowing it, but rather how to do it. Or, it does so, just because.
12. Cavell, *Must We Meant What We Say?*, 79.
13. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 7.
14. Ibid., 8.

> always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language in which it is at home?[15]

The dialogues have this movement from what philosopher's say we should say to what ordinarily we say we say. So, we can insert into the question the word "criterion" —for the terms in which we say what we say—about its use in ordinary language. Further to the point, Wittgenstein's slogan is, "What we do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use."[16] This is what we want to do with the term "criterion," ultimately, to bring it home.

Additionally, Cavell registers that Part Four of *The Claim of Reason*, consciously or self-consciously, philosophizes "within the means of a tradition of philosophy that has thought to sidestep Fichte and Hegel [...] and speaking for myself, finds no help in Heidegger's *Mitsein* (being with others)."[17] In interpretations of Cavell within the space of the so called Analytic/Continental split, his thoughts are usually returned to Austin and Wittgenstein, or, Heidegger and Levinas; but rarely to Fichte and Hegel; I am inclined to say, this calls for bringing the human animal back into philosophy. Even as, philosophy in the English-speaking world, has for some time maintained a split between the Analytic and the Continental (or Post-Kantian) traditions, what could Cavell's rediscovery, and say, return to Fichte and Hegel, amount to? What philosophical, political or aesthetic ramifications arise?

Finally, dialectics takes to heart, putting into practice, a mutual questioning between ourselves and the other, namely, modern culture(s). I appropriate Austin's invitation to "linguistic phenomenology," which is the practice of imagining "a situation *slightly* differently," to "discipline our wretched imaginations," about "what we should say": only to find that "sometimes we do ultimately disagree" or "sometimes we allow a usage, though appalling, yet actual" or use "two different descriptions," but we want to find "*why* we disagree—you choose to classify in one way, I in another." But I most embrace Austin's remark, "a genuine loose or eccentric talker is a rare specimen to be prized."[18] Like Wittgenstein, Austin is fully dialectical. This

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15. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §116.
16. Ibid.
17. Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2006), 149.
18. J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 182, 184.

kind of self-understanding goes back-and-forth between the other and ourselves, and fundamentally, it is a questioning, in Cavell's words, of culture's criteria, and our words and life:

> Then I may feel that my foregone conclusions were never conclusions / had arrived at, but were merely imbibed by me, merely conventional. I may blunt that realization through hypocrisy or cynicism or bullying. But I may take the occasion to throw myself back upon my culture, and ask why we do what we do, judge as we judge, how we have arrived at these crossroads. What is the natural ground of our conventions, to what are they in service? It is inconvenient to question a convention; that makes it unserviceable, it no longer allows me to proceed as a matter of course; the paths of action, the paths of words, are blocked. "To imagine a language means to imagine a form of life" (cf. §19). In philosophizing, I have to bring my own language and life into imagination. What I require is a convening of my culture's criteria, in order to confront them with my words and life as I pursue them and as I may imagine them; and at the same time to confront my words and life as I pursue them with the life my culture's words may imagine for me: to confront the culture with itself, along the lines in which it meets in me.
>
> This seems to me a task that warrants the name of philosophy.[19]

Hence, I read Cavell's text to imply that, if the task of philosophy is a confrontation between our culture's criteria and our words and life, to confront culture with itself; then I must ask just what are these criteria and words, these lives, which meet in me; what are they for, what do they do? Why do I (or we) feel they are necessities? What I show, therefore, in the next three Cavellian themes is that dialectic is inherent in ordinary language, its criteria, and how they reveal mutual recognition (or acknowledgement) and misrecognition between others and ourselves. So, to begin at the beginning.

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19. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 125.

Undoing the Psychologizing of Psychology

In Cavell's "Aesthetic Problems," the first formulation, or description of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*' concern with ordinary language—what we say when—is a suggestion about the significance of our response to the sense in which we accept or agree in—or even why we disagree about—our saying, claiming, judging, deciding: "it attempts to undo the psychologizing of psychology, to show the necessity controlling our application of psychological and behavioral categories; even, one could say, show the necessities in human action and passion themselves."[20] To be clear, Cavell's Wittgenstein appears to work in the philosophy of mind, attempting to think about what "grammar" does, how and what it reveals about knowing other minds and knowing one's own mind. But is that what Wittgensteinian grammar are for?

It is significant that in the above essay, what is in question in Cavell's conversation with Wittgenstein concerns knowing other minds or knowing our own mind. But that significance is not because the concern is to know whether we know (the *existence* of) other minds or our own mind, but how we know (the *identification* of) what knowing anything is. To be more precise, the conversations are attempts at finding out or figuring out differences between aesthetic judgment and a philosophical claim, i.e. the ways of identifying by discrimination, upon which we agree or disagree about what we say we should say, e.g. what we say we know. But what how do we describe that, what do we call these considerations, this sort of conversation? There is a temptation by some to call it, *psychology* because it is obviously not logic; but to others (Cavell included), the temptation is to call it *logic* because it is obviously not psychology (though he does not "really think it is either of those"). Those wanting to call these differences logical, Cavell thinks are, "responding to a sense of necessity we feel in them, together with a sense that necessity is, partly, a matter of the ways a judgment is supported, the ways in which conviction in it is produced."[21] Whatever the differences in judgments about anything, their importance is they are the terms the in which, or, the means by which we identify something or someone, recognize

20. Cavell, *Must We Meant What We Say?*, 84-85.
21. Ibid., 87.

(or misrecognize) things. What are some examples of the support for our judgments, and why are they necessary: "it is by virtue of these recurrent patterns of support that a remark will count as—will be—aesthetic, or a mere matter of taste, or a moral, propagandistic, religious, magical, scientific, philosophical."[22] These differences are necessary, just because apart from them we cannot say what we should say—what *counts as* a remark—for short, we could not decide or judge or determine anything without them.

Although, Cavell is arguing for the significance of Wittgensteinian grammar, and he takes up the problem here; however, the idea of Wittgensteinian criteria is not brought up until "Knowing and Acknowledging" and developed until *The Claim of Reason*. It is not fully clear what these are. What are they for? What can they not do

What Wittgensteinian criteria are not: Those who defend and attack Wittgenstein, have taken Wittgensteinian criteria to be "the means by which the existence of something is established with certainty."[23] Cavell calls this the, Malcolm-Albritton view, which responds to skepticism by refuting, or "showing it to be false." But Cavell's view is that "criteria cannot do this and [...] are not meant to [...] On the contrary, the fate of criteria, or their limitation, reveals [...] the truth of skepticism."[24] First, Wittgensteinian criteria and grammar do *not* establish the existence of anything. Second, Cavell's Wittgenstein does *not* refute skepticism. What is shown is rather the truth of skepticism. But what that is, I return to below.

Now, in Cavell's view I have mentioned there is a distinction between Wittgensteinian criteria and everyday criteria. But how are they distinct? While not precisely the same idea the former is dependent upon the latter. Next, the idea of Wittgensteinian criteria, is characterized in several remarks, "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is";[25] "Essence is expressed by grammar";[26] "An 'inner process' stands in need of outward criteria."[27] What is crucial about Wittgensteinian criteria, to answer a previous question, they are "necessary before the identification or knowledge of an object,"[28] without which we cannot distinguish anything. Sometimes Witt-

22. Ibid.
23. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 6.
24. Ibid., 7.
25. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §373.
26. Ibid., §371.
27. Ibid., §580.
28. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 17.

genstein calls them "conventions; sometimes rules."[29] I shall try to explain this. In reconsidering ostensive definition, in a Wittgensteinian case, for describing the grammar, namely, the use or meaning of a word by pointing to an object, saying what it is called, or named, what is necessary for that sort of definition is: "One has already to know (or be able to do) something before one can ask what something is called. But what does one have to know?"[30] In the Wittgensteinian case, asking my one-year-old daughter, for the first time—"What is your name?"—she responds to my surprise, rightly—"Izel" pointing to herself—but then, and what I am surprised by, she must know grammar, i.e. what a name is, or what *calling*, or *pointing* to is for, and prior to our questions-and-answers (and, there are the cases of her learning concepts—number or color or sound or tase or shape or size, and so on); I asked my two-year-old son —"Who are you?"—he responds—"Levi is Levi!"—does he already have a whole descriptive metaphysic? But where did that identity with itself, or call it tautology, come from?

I want to describe the idea of everyday criteria a little more: Cavell offers seven elements that function in them: (1) Source of authority; (2) Authority's mode of acceptance; (3) Epistemic goal; (4) Candidate object or phenomenon; (5) Status concept; (6) Epistemic means (specification of criteria); (7) Degree of satisfaction (standards or tests for applying (6)). Since, Wittgensteinian criteria are based on our everyday criteria, but not quite the same, Cavell explains three disanalogies between them. In the first disanalogy, in Wittgensteinian cases of (6) Epistemic means, or the application of criteria, do not appeal to (7) Degree of satisfaction or the application of standards. These cases are somehow Cavell notes "non-standard." (CR: 13). Here, Espen Hammer explains, "criteria allow one to determine whether an object is of a specific kind, the application of standards tells the *degree* to which that object satisfies those criteria."[31] In deciding whether that is a good, or great, cup of coffee, the critic, or judge of a barista competition needs criteria (epistemic means) to determine their kind of drink—espresso, macchiato, cortado, cappuccino, and so on; but the judge also needs to decide the degree (standards) to which the drink is made, refined, or

29. Ibid., 30.
30. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §30.
31. Espen Hammer, *Stanley Cavell: Skepticism, Subjectivity, and the Ordinary* (Cambridge: Polity Books, 2002), 33.

perfected; and the overall experience, as well as, presentation of the drink, provided for the coffee consumer. But in Wittgensteinian criteria "standards play no role."[32] In the second disanalogy, that concern (4) Candidate object, or phenomenon, and (5) Status concept, these go together in everyday criteria, but do not in Wittgensteinian cases. So, Cavell states, "Wittgenstein's candidates for judgment are not of this kind; they neither raise nor permit an obvious question of evaluation or competitive status."[33] In short, Hammer comments that Wittgensteinian criteria differ from everyday criteria, in that evaluation and evidence in the former as opposed to the latter "with regard to these objects make no sense."[34] The third disanalogy, concerns the (1) Source of authority in Wittgensteinian and everyday criteria. The problem is that while the source of authority may vary in everyday criteria; "Wittgenstein's source of authority never varies." Cavell argues "It is, for [Wittgenstein], always we who "establish" the criteria under investigation."[35] In short, the description of criteria turns out to be a description of ourselves (here we may begin to feel the threat of skepticism). This brings us, naturally, to the following section.

Ordinary Language Philosophy Is About Whatever Ordinary Language Is About

In "Aesthetic Problems," the second formulation, in the subtitle above, is preceded by Cavell's saying, "that the philosophy of ordinary language is not about language, anyway not in any sense in which it is not also about the world."[36] Briefly, ordinary language is about the ordinary world. So that what we philosophize about is the ordinary. As Cavell earlier, registered, this conception of philosophy allows us to reason about anything within our experience, anything about which we are interested. The *Uberhaupt* concern, I am suggesting, is the sense in which we say what we should say, i.e., the criteria, or logic (necessity) of ordinary language. To repeat, for Wittgensteinian criteria there is a single source of authority, namely, "the speaker of a language, the

32. Ibid., 33.
33. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 14.
34. Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 34.
35. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 18.
36. Cavell, *Must We Meant What We Say?*, 89.

human group as such."[37] This then entails naturally the possibility, even necessity, of differences in language, and differences in differences, between human groups; but maybe that entailment is not obvious; further I may be wrong, but the obvious question is: Doesn't that entail the undoing of *the criterion of the human* as such?

In *Philosophical Investigations* §241, as I read Wittgenstein's description of the concept, or criteria of judgment, in exemplifying the eliciting of our grammar; it is always already a matter of describing the terms in which or with which we accept or agree about anything. Wittgenstein's interlocutor asks, "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" Wittgenstein replies, "What is true or false is what human beings say; and it is in their language that human beings agree. This is agreement not in opinions, but rather in form of life." To elucidate Stephen Mulhall states, "the agreement about which Wittgenstein is talking (his term *uberinstimmung*) is agreement in something rather than agreement to something, he is interested in the fact that human beings agree in definition and judgments."[38] That means we accept or reject conceptual schemes. Moreover, Mulhall explains, the Wittgensteinian criterion presupposes "that ordinary language is shared and pervasively systematic [...] drawing upon a background of agreements."[39] In surveying our criteria we find the necessity of (or need for) our agreements in definitions and judgments—in human forms of life—so Cavell says: "There are two general or background claims about what we say which Wittgenstein summarizes with the idea of grammar: that [ordinary] language is shared, that the forms I relay upon in making sense are human forms, that they impose human limits upon me, that when I say what we "can" and "cannot" say I am indeed voicing necessities which others recognize, i.e., obey (consciously or not); and that our uses of language are pervasively, almost unimaginably, systematic."[40]

Again, Cavell explains, that Wittgenstein's eliciting of our criteria, "call[s] to consciousness the astonishing fact of the astonishing extent to which we do agree in judgment [...] to show therefore that our judgments are public, that is, shared."[41] So that is what Wittgensteinian criteria *do*, namely, reveal how we agree in judgments.

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37. Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 35.
38. Stephen Mulhall, *Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 81.
39. Ibid., 81.
40. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 29.
41. Ibid., 31.

In answer also to the question of what motivates this philosophizing, and what makes it astonishing:

> [there is the appearance that] the extent of agreement is so intimate and pervasive; that we communicate in language as rapidly and completely as we do; and that since we cannot assume that the words we are given have their meaning by nature, we are led to assume they take it from convention; and yet no current idea of "convention" could seem to do the work that words do — there would have to be, we could say, too many conventions in play, one for each shade of each word in each context.[42]

The even more astonishing remark is, "We cannot have agreed beforehand to all that would be necessary."[43] Without agreements in the terms of conversations, or conventions, we could never have, hold, or get on with it (Wittgenstein's "That's why 'Following a rule' is practice").[44] But that is what we want out of philosophy, namely, a priori necessity, the order prior to our language (as if, to think a rule were to follow it, as if, to follow it privately).[45]

What Wittgensteinian criteria do not do, I am persuaded, in the case of someone or other's being in pain, is to establish the *existence* of something with certainty. Wittgensteinian criteria give us the *identity* of something with certainty (I said this in the previous section):

> Criteria are "criteria for something's being so," not in the sense that they tell us of a thing's existence, but of something like its identity, not of its *being* so, but of its being *so*. Criteria do not determine the certainty of statements, but the application of the concepts employed in statements.[46]

Hence, criteria do not determine or decide whether anything is, but what anything is —like human conventions, or rules for playing a language-game. But doesn't this, ne-

42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §202.
45. Ibid.
46. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 45.

cessarily, mean that I can or cannot deny our criteria? In order to say what we say, I cannot deny our criteria, however, to say what we should say, I can deny them. I really want to say: *I* must.

On the truth of skepticism: What Cavell means by Wittgenstein's response to skepticism is "that the skeptic's denial of our criteria is a denial to which criteria must be open."[47] But how, and why is that an opening of criteria? Cavell explains, "If the fact that we share, or have established, criteria is the condition under which we can think and communicate in language," and this is the unease about our agreeing not merely in definitions but rather in judgments, "then skepticism is a natural possibility of that condition; it reveals most perfectly the standing threat to thought and communication, that they are only human, nothing more than natural to us."[48] As I understand Wittgensteinian criteria, and Cavell's view, it is their shared purpose or aim to get the reader to grasp our shared nature—our shared criteria and conventions—the conventionality of the "human"—the undoing of the criterion of humanity. I will say more about the natural and denial of the human below.

Moreover, Cavell thinks, "the philosopher appealing to everyday language turns to the reader not to convince him without proof but to get him to prove something test something, against himself."[49] Here the impersonal becomes personal. "He is saying; Look and find out whether you can see what I see, wish to say what I wish to say," what this is explaining is, "all the philosopher, this kind of philosopher, can do is to express, as fully as he can, his world, and attract our undivided attention to our own."[50] That's also why expression, or acknowledgement, as acceptance or admission, even confession is crucial to knowing, or better put, understanding ourselves and others.

In *The Claim of Reason,* Cavell reformulates his remarks about what Wittgensteinian criteria, or grammar, can do—what we must say, or do. Again, Wittgensteinian criteria do not yield "certainty about existence" but rather "tell how things count for us," e.g. what we take to be something, something as something, how we say or do anything.[51] For this reason, Cavell records in some remarks about ordinary language philosophy:

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47. Ibid., 47.
48. Ibid.
49. Cavell, *Must We Meant What We Say?*, 89.
50. Ibid.
51. Hammer, *Stanley Cavell*, 42.

> [Appeals] to what we say, and the search for our criteria on the basis of which we say what we say, are claims to community. And the claim to community is always a search for the basis upon which it can or has been established. I have nothing more to go on than my conviction, my sense that I make sense. It may prove to be the case that I am wrong, that my conviction isolates me, from all others, from myself. That will not be the same as a discovery that I am dogmatic or egomaniacal. The wish and search for community are the wish and search for reason.
>
> And philosophy can be the fruit, or work in the root, of either. (I associate what I just now called the "breaking up of the sense of necessity" with what in "The Avoidance of Love" I call the "breaking up of our sense of the ordinary"; e.g., p. 316, p. 350.)[52]

The following remark I take to suggest how we accept the terms in which we judge, decide, namely, our criteria; (suggesting to me Wittgenstein's questions about how we "follow a rule"; do I interpret them, think them, or just grasp it?),

> But this is not the way things are. It is a very poorly kept secret that men and their societies are not perfect. In that case, in all actual cases, it is ungrammatical (not to say politically devious) to answer the question "Why ought I to obey?" in terms of the general advantages of citizenship. What the question in fact means therefore is, "Given the specific inequalities and lacks of freedom and absence of fraternity in the society to which I have consented, do these outweigh the "disadvantages" of withdrawing my consent?". This is the question the theorists of the social contract teach us to ask, and the beginning of an answer is to discover whom I am in community with, and what it is to which I am obedient.[53]

Thus, ordinary language philosophy like the search for oneself, one's voice, is a search for community—our shared words and criteria—likewise the search for community is

52. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 20.
53. Ibid., 23-24.

a finding of oneself—one's own words. But it requires that philosophizing my claims and words, or its claims and words that I lose myself to the community—likewise that the community be lost to me. That is the question and answer at once: about why I ought to accept or reject reasons for and against, believe there are criteria of judgment, "patterns of support and justification," or "follow a rule" to play language-games. The task of philosophy is not just to see that and why we agree, but why we disagree about these. As though, we cannot claim a community until we have first questioned ourselves, our claims, and the communities' claims, or criteria—as though, we cannot really acknowledge it until we do so; as though, we take so much for granted,

> It follows from including "speaking for others and being spoken for by others" as part of the content of political consent, that mere withdrawal from the community (exile inner or outer) is not, grammatically, the withdrawal of consent from it. Since the granting of consent entails acknowledgment of others, the withdrawal of consent entails the same acknowledgment: I have to say both "It is not mine any longer" (I am no longer responsible for it, it no longer speaks for me) and "It is no longer ours" (not what we bargained for, we no longer recognize the principle of consent in it, the original "we" is no longer bound together by consent but only by force, so it no longer exists). Dissent is not the undoing of consent but a dispute about its content, a dispute within it over whether a present arrangement is faithful to it. The alternative to speaking for yourself politically is not: speaking for yourself privately. (Because "privately" here can only either be repeating the "for myself," in which case it means roughly, "I'm doing the talking"; or else it implies that you do not know that you speak for others, which does not deny the condition of speaking for others.) The alternative is having nothing (political) to say.[54]

I must say, however, that Cavell does not say "disconsent" (a term which is perhaps not common), but rather "dissent," which is still within the community itself. The possibility of lack of consent, or the withdrawal of consent, is not withdrawal from the community. Someone's (a person's) dis-consent would be to exit, to attempt to go

54. Ibid., 27-28.

outside, to cancel the community, the polis altogether, as it were, to have "nothing (politically) to say," in public (One thinks of Heidegger's, Wittgenstein's, or Thoreau's withdrawal to nature). That means the communities' lack of acknowledgement; I am no longer spoken for; the canceling of the "we." It is only those who have dissented, those interrogating themselves, who take for instance "The Declaration of Independence" (1776), asking: Is the declaration, "it becomes necessary for one People to dissolve the Political Bands" not a withdrawal of consent, the possibility of consent; what is meant by "Laws of Nature" or "Nature's God"; but what are "the Opinions of Mankind" anyway; or "their Creator," who's is that, the indigenous people's of the America(s); are "unalienable Rights" that of "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness," what does that look like, what do these mean. Those having withdrawn consent, to dis-consent, trying to go outside, to make sense, to say nothing, as it were, have found it is not possible (radical privacy); not to say, impossible; or found it necessary to (the need to) return. That is what I take Wittgenstein's private language argument reveals about ourselves. There is a sense in which, our going outside ordinary language, or the ordinary world, is not possible, i.e. that we cannot make sense apart from what we say we say, in public. That does not exclude, or prevent, that change is possible (that language and world alter), and so, a necessity. This is the meaning I make out of Austin's prescription that "it is necessary first to be careful with, but also to be brutal with, to torture, to fake and to override, ordinary language."[55] For that we need to disconsent, or question, or to be questioned, e.g. new language games, new forms of life (I think of Kuhn's paradigm shifts).[56] But is the condition of reimagining a community, the "withdrawal of consent"?

Nothing More Human Than to Deny Them (viz. Necessities)

What I have called, the sublation of the Wittgenstienian/everyday criterion distinction, Cavell also suggests calling, "Philosophy and the Rejection of the Human."[57] I

55. J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 186.
56. See, Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 45, developing his idea based on Wittgenstein's language-games. In the "Introductory Essay" it is noted that Kuhn and Cavell dialogued about "paradigm shifts" (xxi).
57. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 207.

shall explain this more, because I want to show what Cavell's remark means: "the philosophy of mind become aesthetics."[58] When Wittgensteinian criteria are canceled, when we deny our criteria, what are the philosophical and aesthetic ramifications? Is that what we say is "inhuman" or "monstrous"? I glossed the political ramifications above, "to (politically) have nothing to say." I agree with Cavell, that "Wittgenstein's view" is that the philosophical gap between mind and world is opened, in our attempt to go outside language-games—like our alienation, or separateness, from culture's criteria or words or human forms of life. Moreover, Cavell registers,

> It seems to me that growing up (in modern culture? in capitalist culture? [I might add "postmodern culture," "hypermonder culture" as inversion or reversal, or "cancel culture"]) is learning that most of what is said is only more or less meant — as if words were stuffs of fabric and we saw no difference between shirts and sails and ribbons and rags. This could be because we have too little of something or too much, or because we are either slobs or saints. Driven by philosophy outside language-games, and in this way repudiating our criteria, is a different way to live.[59]

That is implying that "the gap originates in an attempt, or wish, to escape (to remain a "stranger" to, "alienated" from) those shared forms of life, to give up the responsibility of their maintenance," therefore, our response (as responsibility), is closing that gap. I take this to mean self-alienation, what Wittgenstein records: "The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher."[60] But then the philosopher must imagine citizenship inside a community—"to imagine a form of life."[61] That is why, Cavell claims, "the gap between mind and the world is closed, or the distortion between them straightened, in the appreciation and acceptance of particular human forms of life, human "convention."[62] But how does philosophizing itself do that?

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58. Ibid., 357.
59. Ibid., 189.
60. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: The University of California Press, 1967), §455.
61. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §19.
62. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 109.

The dialectic of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations,* begins by diagnosing "the motive to reject the human: nothing could be more human." As Cavell reads Wittgenstein, he traces "the mechanisms of this rejection in the ways in which, in investigating ourselves, we are led to speak "outside language games," consider expressions apart from, and in opposition to, the natural forms of life which give those expressions the force they have." In retracing that rejection, the end of the dialectic is putting "the human animal back into language and therewith back into philosophy."[63] Again, that is a philosophy in criticism of itself.

To be sure, Cavell offers particular examples containing this movement of rejection and return in particular, within Wittgensteinian grammar, in order to illuminate the function of everyday criteria, he had said, "criteria are specifications a given person or group sets up on the basis of which (by means of, in terms of which) to judge (assess, settle) whether something has a particular status or value."[64] I think Cavell is right that Wittgenstein takes up are our mutual agreements *in* definitions and judgments, apart from which we cannot say what we should say, namely—"the *saying* of something is essential to what is meant."[65] So criteria carry the conditions of itself? For this reason, Wittgenstein intimates, "that every sentence in our language [I insert "ordinary language" here] 'is in order as it is'."[66] But how do we ever arrive at these conditions, or conventions—even the human community itself—how can they all be fixed beforehand?

> The conventions we appeal to may be said to be "fixed," "adopted," "accepted," etc. by us; but this does not now mean that what we have fixed or adopted are (merely) the (conventional) *names* of things. The conventions which control the application of grammatical criteria are fixed not by customs or some particular concord or agreement which might, without disrupting the texture of our lives, be changed where convenience suggests a change.[67]

Then how are our criteria, language, or community, fixed at all?

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63. Ibid., 207.
64. Ibid., 9.
65. Ibid., 208.
66. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §98.
67. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 110.

We need to get clear about what can change, and what we cannot say, what we can do, and not; that means what is necessary, what is contingent in what we say when. Cavell claims, "They are, rather, fixed by the nature of human life itself, the human fix itself, by those [Wittgenstein says] 'very general facts of nature' which are 'unnoticed only because so obvious'."[68] In Cavell's Wittgenstein, I gather that the general facts of human nature, are exemplified in recognizing that intention needs action, that action needs movement, that movement entails consequences, perhaps unintended. Further, self-knowledge and knowledge of others is dependent "upon the way our minds are expressed (and distorted) in word and deed and passion; that actions and passions have histories."[69] This is exemplified, in the contemporary cultural protests and conflicts, between movements, or slogans, such as "Black lives matter" and "All lives matter" and "Blue lives matter"; each succeeding slogan is a distortion, or antagonism, in response to the previous expression by a human group, or community. I want to say, philosophy of mind begins to dissolve (but into what?) into aesthetics. Regarding distortions, or deformations, of our ordinary language, of our actions, Cavell recounts,

> That human beings on the whole do not respond in these ways is [what we cannot say, or do], therefore, seriously referred to as conventional; but now we are thinking of convention not as the arrangements a particular culture has found convenient, in terms of its history... for effecting the necessities of human existence, but as those forms of life which are normal to any group of creatures we call human, any group about which we will say, for example, that they have a past to which they respond...

What we may find astonishing is just how deep agreement, convention, goes in ordinary language. In terms of whatever is "human" still more astonishing, is that fact that difference (as disagreement or change) is rampant. I take that is why Wittgenstein suggests, "If you want to say that [other language games are...] therefore incomplete, ask yourself whether our own language is complete."[70] I am tempted to answer,

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68. Ibid., 110.
69. Ibid., 110.
70. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §18.

so to say, "Yes"—ordinary language is complete—and "No"—ordinary language is not complete. As a result, Cavell remarks,

> Here the array of "conventions" are not patterns of life which differentiate human beings from one another, but those exigencies of conduct and feeling which all humans share. Wittgenstein's discovery, or rediscovery, is of the depth of convention in human life; a discovery which insists not only on the conventionality of human society but, we could say, on the conventionality of human nature itself.[71]

In Cavell's Wittgenstein the differences in ordinary language—differences in differences—are intrinsic to human forms of life. They reveal rather than a homogeneous, human nature (or conceptual scheme), the heterogenous: we are not all the same, speak, live the same way, but share *this*—we are different, speak differently, *live* differently, even *die* differently—we might say, that is what is common to us all, or necessary (or the need in being human). Similarly, J. L. Austin's imagining different conceptual schemes, suggests that upon listening to "a story or two, and everybody will not merely agree that they are completely different, but even discover for himself what the difference is and what each means." Austin claims, "ordinary language is *not* the last word" and further, "it can everywhere be supplemented and improved upon and superseded," suggesting that we not forget, "it *is* the *first* word."[72]

But then how do we, can we speak to each other, speak at all? How do we understand the human? Read it? I take it, that is traditionally the repressed fear, behind the resistance or avoidance of fundamental differences in the conversation of humanity, about our schemes of concepts, or the refusal of divergent conceptual schemes among different human ways of being. But, perhaps this is Cavell's brilliance (akin to the Apostle Paul's "to be known and read by all" (*2 Corinthians* 3:2)), "The idea of the allegory of words is that human expressions, the human figure, to be grasped, must be read."[73] What does that mean? The answer is that "To know another mind is to interpret a physiognomy, and the message of this region of the *Investigations* is that

71. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 111.
72. J. L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 184-85.
73. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 356.

this is not a matter of "mere knowing." I have to read the physiognomy, and see the creature according to my reading, and treat it according to my seeing."[74] I, however, disagree with, find that the word "interpretation" is unhelpful here, since, *seeing as* is not equal to interpreting.[75] In other words, I prefer to put it, "don't think, but look!" (in Wittgenstein's prescription),[76] I have to respond, to be responded to; i.e. our responsibility in recognizing and misrecognizing each other; perhaps, our problems arise because we interpret each other rather than just accepting each other as other. In the following Cavell explains,

> [Wittgenstein said] The human body is the best picture of the human soul — not, I feel like adding, primarily because it represents the soul but because it expresses it. The body is the field of expression of the soul. The body is of the soul; it is the soul's; a human soul has a human body. (Is this incomprehensible? Is it easier to comprehend the idea that it is the body which has the soul? (Cf. §283.) It does seem more comprehensible (though of course no less figurative) to say that this "having" is done by me: it is I who have both a body and a soul, or mind.) An ancient picture takes the soul to be the possession of the body, its prisoner, condemned for life.[77]

For Wittgenstein's Wittgenstein (against Cavell's Wittgenstein) the philosophical problems, resulted from our interpretations, or identification by differentiation (equally, I think that "interpretation" is the problem in the rule following paradox that needs to be dropped).[78] There is the initial interpretation, namely, the souls going outside the body, a freedom from the human form, and nature itself. But then

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74. Ibid.
75 See, Stephen Mulhall, *On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.81, he criticizes Cavell's use of "interpretation." In *Philosophical Investigations,* 4th ed., (UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), part 2, §137, Wittgenstein claims: "If I saw the duck–rabbit as a rabbit, then I saw such-and-such shapes and colours (I reproduce them in detail)—and, in addition, I saw something like this: and here I point to a great variety of pictures of rabbits.—This shows the difference between the concepts. 'Seeing as . . .' is not part of perception. And therefore it is like seeing, and again not like seeing." But nowhere does Wittgenstein say, or insinuate, that seeing as is interpretation. Just reconsider §164, clearly Wittgenstein distinguishes these, seeing from seeing as, seeing as from interpretation.
76. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §66.
77. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 356-57.
78. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §201.

is the soul the possession of the body, or the body of the soul—"a ghost in a machine"?[79] Indeed, Cavell continues, considering another interpretation,

> Contrariwise, taking the body to be the possession of the soul, its slave, pictures the body as condemned to expression, to meaning. This seed of conviction flowers one way in Blake's poetry, another way in Nietzsche's Zarathustra. (In Blake's The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of Soul discernd by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age.") It is, I take it, this conviction, expressed by Wittgenstein as the body being a picture of the soul, that Hegel gives philosophical expression to in the following formulations: "[The] shape, with which the Idea as spiritual — as individually determined spirituality — invests itself when manifested as a temporal phenomenon, is the human form. [...] [The] human shape [is] the sole sensuous phenomenon that is appropriate to mind" (*Philosophy of Fine Art*, Introduction, pp. 185, 186). (Thus may the philosophy of mind become aesthetics.) How much you have to have accepted in order to accept this expression is an open question, not confined to the reading of, say, Hegel.[80]

As I *see* the soul/body distinction, or the human being (I am not here reading into Cavell, Wittgenstein, or even Hegel) phenomenon, the problem is just the dialectic inherent ordinary language, our words and life (that is what, as it were, what I read out of it, a temptation to their distinction, to interpret). I understand "Thus may the philosophy of mind become aesthetics" to express that depth of meaning, in what we say when, in human forms of life; *whether* we grasp our meanings; grasp each other (akin to the resolution of the rule following paradox, Wittgenstein intimates, "that there is a way of grasping a rule which is *not* an interpretation... is exhibited in what we call "following the rule" and "going against it."[81] I would say, that is acceptance of each other. Thus, I take *aesthetics* to mean not mere (theoretical) interpretation of X, but rather how I see X (Wittgenstein's prescription, "*look and see* whether there is

79. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 364.
80. Ibid., 357.
81. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §201.

anything common to all"),[82] and respond to X, how X responds to me, i.e. accepting the human experience of each other.

The problem of acknowledging ourselves' otherness, I see X (the "human") as Y (the "inhuman"), how I respond or refuse to respond, becomes the question of horror, Cavell put's it, "isn't it the case that not the human horrifies me, but the inhuman, the monstrous?"—since "only what is human can be inhuman."[83] But is the human the only candidate to be monstrous? Let's imagine a monster, say, draw it—but why is it a monster? "If something is monstrous," but "we do not believe that there are monsters" Cavell reasons, "then only the human is a candidate for the monstrous… If only humans feel horror…, then maybe it is a response specifically to being human."[84] Because what human beings can say, and often do (I am not just yet saying, what they are or become), is what is monstrous (what seems monstrous, so to say, that Nazis were humans beings). So, what is the criteria of the inhuman? "Horror is the title I am giving," Cavell suggests, "to the perception of the precariousness of human identity, to the perception that it may be lost or invaded, that we may be, or may become, something other than we are, or take ourselves for."[85] That is horror. As a result, the inhuman or monstrous is our being, and becoming, other than ourselves. But that is only human.

The acknowledgment of other souls, or minds, or our own mind, is understanding (is acceptance) toward bodies, their shapes, sizes, complexions, or human forms. The manner in which Cavell puts it, "If it makes sense to speak of seeing human beings as human beings, then it makes sense to imagine that a human being may lack the capacity to see human beings as human beings. It would make sense to ask whether someone may be soul-blind."[86] In reconsidering the master/slave relationship,[87] Cavell asks about what soul-blindness would be? What does the question get at? "In asking whether there is such a thing as soul-blindness," Cavell records, "I do not mean to insist that there are such things as souls, nor that anybody believes there are. But I do, I expect, mean to insist that we may sincerely and sanely not

82. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §66.
83. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 418.
84. Ibid.
85. Ibid., 419.
86. Ibid., 378.
87. Ibid., 373.

know whether we believe in such a thing, as we may not know whether we believe in God, or in idols." There is the further assumption that believes or disbelieves there are souls and "yet not know that there are human beings." But why? Because "that knowledge would require believing that there are embodied souls, something incarnate." As a result, Cavell grants, you may believe with Wittgenstein that the human body is the best picture of the human soul, but against him deny that anything is pictured. Hence, Cavell's intuition is that is wrongly put, since to disbelieve "there is such a thing as the human soul is not to know what the human body is, what it is of, heir to."[88] In this there is an implication or meaning I think; in my refusal to greet another (or the other to me); to offer a hand shake; to help; in my ignorance or turning my back to; avoidance or rejection in listening to what another's words mean; or are meant to express; in such gestures of refusal; I make the other's existence vanish; so making the other nothing, no-body ("I blank myself" i.e. self-avoidance, repression).

Moreover, human acceptance of each other, the other's words and life, of their culture's criteria, is human acknowledgement of somebody, that recognition which pictures the freedom of human expression, to meaning, everything, or nothing. The refusal to acknowledge each other, soul-blindness, is rejection of each and every, shape and shade of body, or form of human life—like the refusal that we have brains, or skulls and bones, or that we bleed when cut—it is further equally to fail to acknowledge the otherness of the other (like the ignorance of so-called "color blindness" toward another's ethnic complexion and cultural identity; even a critique of identity politics, I intimate interrogating about blindness toward ourselves), or our own otherness to ourselves; thus Cavell asks,

> But when [do we acknowledge or refuse to]? If there really was another, and the case failed me, still the other knows of his or her existence; he or she remains. But this knowledge has come to me too late. Because now the other remains as unacknowledged, that is, as denied. I have shut my eyes to this other. And this is now part of this other's knowledge. To acknowledge him now would be to know this. To deny him now would be to deny this, deny this denial of

88. Ibid., 399-400.

> him: to shut his eyes to me. Either way I implicate myself in his existence. There is the problem of the other.—The crucified human body is our best picture of the unacknowledged human soul.[89]

Nobody, or nothing, better pictures the human than the denial of itself (Cavell understand Nietzsche's "myth of the soul" against Hegel's, meaning "breaking all our interpretations of experience, breaking belief, breaking the self."[90] To refuse to acknowledge the human soul then is to crucify the human body. Thus, the other implicates otherness in my existence. I find in my words and life, that "I deny myself," in relation to my otherness to myself. I shut my eyes to myself. In implicating my non-existence: There is the problem of the self. The enigma is that *becoming* results from *being* and *non-being* (I take it between human life and death). That is the acknowledgement of the unacknowledged—like the possibility of Christianity, or its impossibility, is accepting Jesus hanging on the cross, the Crucified God. The difference in identity, both Hegel and Kierkegaard, recognizing the development of the self, is only through the cross.[91] Put differently, I take up Cavell's confession, "In the case of my knowing myself, such self-defeat would be doubly exquisite: I must disappear in order that the search for myself be successful."[92]

Closing

In drawing some conclusions, some concessions, or not fully accepting Cavell's Wittgenstein, instead a self-description, or differentiation from Wittgenstein's Wittgenstein: I reject philosophy's rejection of the human; I resist the gap between my mind and the world, or close it; I confront contemporary culture's criteria, its words and life, in taking up my words and life, or right to speak out load, or to silence; I reject Hegel's formulation of philosophy:

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89. Ibid., 430.
90. Ibid., 366.
91. See, Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §77, 808; Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness Unto Death* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 70.
92. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 352.

> Only one word more concerning the desire to teach the world what it ought to be. For such a purpose philosophy at least always comes too late. Philosophy, as the thought of the world, does not appear until reality has completed its formative process, and made itself ready. History thus corroborates the teaching of the conception that only in the maturity of reality does the ideal appear as counterpart to the real, apprehends the real world in its substance, and shapes it into an intellectual kingdom. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, one form of life has become old, and by means of grey it cannot be rejuvenated, but only known. The owl of Minerva, takes its flight only when the shades of night are gathering.[93]

To take honestly, or adopt passionately Wittgenstein's dialogues (even dialectic, *I* must break the real), there is only one more word about its teaching: philosophy is not too late; it is has not yet begun. Cavell registered he could understand the meaning in Hegel was "the last professor of philosophy";[94] I might say then that Wittgenstein was "the first professor of philosophy." Because forms of life become new, are rejuvenated, revived. Everyday. That contingency, necessity, is unacknowledged. It is not dusk, here and now, but dawning. I acknowledge the unacknowledged: "What has to be accepted, the given, is—one might say—forms of life."[95] The thing then to take notice of, primarily, and which is tantamount (difference by identity), that Wittgenstein did not say, "form of life." Hegel did. Los gallos cantan en las mañanas.

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93. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. S. W. Dyde (London: Goerge Bell and Sons, 1896), xxx.
94. Cavell, *Must We Meant What We Say?*, xxxvi.
95. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, part 2, §345.