PHILOSOPHY AND 'THE LITERARY QUESTION':

WITTGENSTEIN, EMERSON, AND STRAUSS ON THE COMMUNITY OF KNOWING

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ABSTRACT

Philosophy and 'The Literary Question':

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Despite their differences, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Leo Strauss share two key philosophical commitments. They recognize that philosophy cannot establish or discover conceptual or linguistic structures to which one might appeal to justify what one says. And they agree that the task of philosophical writing is to convey a way of thinking set apart from that which seeks to establish conceptual or linguistic structures. Yet each knows that his writing, in the absence of a universal ground of appeal, will mostly fail to convey that way of thinking, and so will be, to that extent, esoteric. What differentiates them is their rendering of philosophy's inherent esotericism.

Wittgenstein's late interest in aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness grows out of his well-documented despair that his writing would fall before uncomprehending eyes. The correlation here rests on noticing, contra Stephen Mulhall, that Wittgenstein's aspect-seeing remarks are inspired by aesthetic matters, not least by the 'subjective universality' of aesthetic judgments. Indeed, Wittgenstein's appeals to grammatical criteria are rightly understood, not as appeals to rules in a game, but as cousin to the form of justification in

aesthetics. But then, as in aesthetic justification, there may be no reason for my inability to convey to another the connections I see.

Emerson, whose approach to writing is illuminated by being placed alongside parallel strategies in jazz and film, begins with the fact that he can write the way he does – relying on the transformative possibilities of words whose multiple meanings he has learned the way anyone does – and concludes that no one is precluded from finding in his writing a model for transforming thinking. Strauss begins with the fact that esoteric writing works the way it does – conveying the writer's true thoughts to some while withholding them from the majority – and concludes that such writing reveals a natural order of rank among readers. Yet nothing in the nature of writing philosophy as Strauss (or Emerson or Wittgenstein) understands it compels one to accept Strauss's conclusion in the end.

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PART 3. STRAUSS AND THE LITERARY QUESTION

Möge Gott dem Philosophen Einsicht geben in das, was vor allen Augen liege.
– Ludwig Wittgenstein, Culture and Value

Acknowledgments

Sections of the present work have been read to various audiences, whose responses have helped to shape its present form.

A version of Chapter 1, "Wittgenstein, Aspect-seeing, and Aesthetic Matters," was presented to the American Society for Aesthetics, Rocky Mountain Division in July, 1995. Portions and earlier versions of Chapter 3, "Emerson's 'Art' and Jazz Improvisation," were read at Harvard University as part of a seminar on moral perfectionism taught by Stanley Cavell, at the Universities of Calgary and South Carolina, at Le Moyne and Iona Colleges, and at The American Society for Aesthetics 1997 Annual Meeting. An abridged version, "Knowing as Instancing: Jazz Improvisation and Moral Perfectionism," will appear in a forthcoming special issue of The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, edited by Garry Hagberg, devoted to improvisation in the arts. An earlier draft of Chapter 4, "Moonstruck and Emersonian Representativeness," was also read at Harvard as part of a (different) Cavell seminar on moral perfectionism, and before the American Society for Aesthetics, Rocky Mountain Division in July, 1993. A shorter version, "Moonstruck, or How to Ruin Everything," can be found in Philosophy and Literature 19 (October 1995): 292-307. Lastly, a draft of Chapter 5, "Leo Strauss's

'Exoteric Teaching,'" was presented to the Lehigh Valley Philosophy Consortium in January, 1997. I am indebted to participants at these various settings for their encouraging and often helpful remarks.

Like anyone who has made his or her way through graduate school, I have been instructed in part by a cadre of graduate students whose conversations on various matters presented here – prompted sometimes by readings of earlier drafts of these pages, sometimes by readings of their own work on the same or related texts – have influenced my thought in ways I can no longer measure. Among these I number, first and foremost, Steven Affeldt; also Nancy Bauer, Paul Cohen, James Conant, Paul Franks, Jonathan Gilmore, and Michael Zilles. Further along in their careers, Timothy Gould, Susan Krantz, Alan Mittleman, and Naomi Scheman have raised challenges and offered encouragement to the work presented here. Several of my colleagues at Le Moyne College have read through some or all of these chapters and discussed the relevant texts with me in formal settings, reading groups, or hallway conversations. They include Donald Arentz, Thomas Brockelman, Robert Flower, Jennifer Glancy, and Michael Kagan.

Lydia Goehr, arriving at Columbia late in my graduate studies, was kind enough to read through much of this writing early in her first semester and guide me along the path to closure in all of the necessary ways and at all the right times. Arthur Danto's influence on these pages is greater than the absence of explicit mention of his substantial work will suggest. My thematic concern with "the literary question," in fact, can be traced to a challenge he once posed to me concerning Emerson's transformative prose:

whether it understands its inevitable miscarriage with this or that reader to be the result of the reader's failure or its own. It is safe to say that his pointed counsel concerning my own prose has shaped the look of this writing considerably – and always, I now can say, for the better. The influence on these pages of Stanley Cavell's philosophical life will be evident to anyone who has crossed paths with that life. The less attractive expression of influence – a mimicking of style – is by no means unique to me, but it took me perhaps longer than some to come to terms with it. Here especially, the counterweight of Danto's equally stylish prose and (again) pointed counsel served me well. Beyond ways in which the problem of intellectual influence is itself thematized in Chapter 4, my debt to Cavell's writing on Wittgenstein, Emerson, film, and music is great and remains outstanding. By turning in Chapter 5 to a thinker whose corpus and method lie at an angle to Cavell's own far-reaching interests, I hope, of course, to begin repaying this debt in the only way intellectual debts can be, or should be, repaid.

As the end of this project drew near, I began to think again of the closing scene in Moonstruck, where Loretta's relations and soon-to-be relations gather for one great toast "to the Family." If it is a cathartic moment, it is because it follows fast upon events that could only be described as the upheaval or near upheaval of that family and its relations. Writing a dissertation brings its own dangers to families, and it is good when in the end one can still propose a toast not only to them but, God willing, with them. Here I have been simply blessed. My parents, James and Velma Day, have watched me pursue graduate studies into middle age without raising doubts that would have likely confirmed my own. My children, Helen and Peter Day, have offered patience and distraction when

understanding (theirs and mine) may have given out. And The Rev. Katherine Lufkin Day, wife to an infidel, has been more faithful to the possibilities of this project than I could have managed on my own; and I could not have managed on my own. If a dedication, then, is more in order than a toast, let it be: to the Family.

List of Abbreviations

References to various works are indicated by abbreviated title in the body of the text. While these abbreviations are introduced with each first citation of a work, it seems wise to collect the abbreviations in one place, and arrange them alphabetically.

"AGA"	Strauss and Klein, "A Giving of Accounts"
BB	Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books
CJ	Kant, Critique of Judgment
CR	Cavell, The Claim of Reason
CV	Wittgenstein, Culture and Value
CW	Emerson, The Collected Works
"ET"	Strauss, "Exoteric Teaching"
"ET" (Green)	Green, prefatory note to "Exoteric Teaching"
"GG"	Mulhall, "The Givenness of Grammar"
LC	Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics
LSN	Lampert, Leo Strauss and Nietzsche
LW 1	Wittgenstein, Last Writings, vol. 1
"MD"	Cavell, "Music Discomposed"
OBITW	Mulhall, On Being in the World
"OFKW"	Strauss, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing"
"OPR"	Strauss, "On Plato's Republic"
"PAW"	Strauss, "Persecution and the Art of Writing"
PG	Wittgenstein, Philosophical Grammar
PI	Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations
PO	Wittgenstein, Philosophical Occasions
PS	Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit
RPP 2	Wittgenstein, Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. 2
SC	Mulhall, Stanley Cavell
"SWS"	Burnyeat, "Sphinx Without a Secret"
TLP	Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus
WH	Sudnow, Ways of the Hand
Z	Wittgenstein, Zettel

Introduction. The Literary Question

> One must postpone one's concern with the most serious questions (the philosophic questions) in order to become engrossed in the study of a merely literary question. Still, there is a connection between the literary question and the philosophic question. The literary question, the question of presentation, is concerned with a kind of communication. Communication may be a means for living together; in its highest form, communication is living together.... The literary question properly understood is the question of the relation between society and philosophy.
>
> – Leo Strauss, The City and Man

> The cheapness of man is every day's tragedy. It is as real a loss that others should be low, as that we should be low; for we must have society.
>
> – Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Uses of Great Men"

> A society in which the ruling class speaks a language which the serving class cannot learn. The upper class places great importance on the lower one never guessing what they feel. In this way they become unfathomable, mysterious.
>
> What kind of hiding is the speaking of a language that the other cannot understand?
>
> – Ludwig Wittgenstein, Last Writings, Volume II

A guiding claim in what follows is that the philosophical effort to ground human understanding in conceptual or linguistic structures, structures to which one might appeal to justify what one says, must fail; and that a question following from this failure is how

philosophy should be written in the absence of a universal ground of appeal. The first half of this claim rests on a reading that I offer of passages in the later Wittgenstein, particularly his remarks on aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness. But all three thinkers discussed in these pages – Wittgenstein, Emerson, and Strauss – agree that a task of the philosopher who writes is to consider, as a central part of his or her inquiry, the conditions under which philosophical writing is possible, or is able to convey what it attempts to convey. The present work shows that they also agree on another point, one which joins them in a tradition of thinking, despite some of their obvious differences in philosophical style, training, and subject matter. All three of them write philosophy in order to convey, not so much or only the conclusions of an inquiry, but the life of inquiry itself; their writing is meant to model a way of life.

They are thus linked to a tradition of conceiving the task of philosophy that has been identified in recent years by Pierre Hadot in his writing on "spiritual exercises,"[1] and by Stanley Cavell in his writing on "moral perfectionism."[2] Both of these identify many of the same, and to some extent obvious, members of this tradition: Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Montaigne, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche. Cavell's parsing of this tradition figures prominently below, particularly in my discussion of Emerson. Indeed, part of my interest in turning to Strauss's essays on "a forgotten kind of writing" was to see to what extent his historical-literary discoveries parallel or cross the interests of moral perfectionism, whose

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[1]Pierre Hadot, Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault, ed. Arnold I. Davidson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).

[2]Stanley Cavell, Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

chief figures in my experience of Cavell's teaching are Nietzsche, one of Strauss's authorial mentors, and Emerson, one of Nietzsche's. That Emerson is interested in conveying or projecting a way of life in his writing almost goes without saying, though what that life is, and how his writing promotes it, has been subject to misunderstanding and to various forms of distortion, both popular and scholarly. Wittgenstein has been treated more kindly, at least in recent years, by a range of writings on the moral urgency in his thought. These include Ray Monk's biography The Duty of Genius,[3] Richard Eldridge's Leading a Human Life,[4] and much of what Cavell has written on Wittgenstein, two relatively recent exemplars of which are his essays "Declining Decline"[5] and "Notes and Afterthoughts on the Opening of Wittgenstein's Investigations."[6]

I will identify as "the literary question," in a sense derived from the mottos above, the question of how a way of life, or a way of thinking, can be conveyed to a largely unknown audience. Thus the literary question is not a proper question to raise of all or even most philosophical writing. All philosophical writing, including the present work, is concerned with the task of conveying conclusions. But not all philosophical writing will

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[3]Ray Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius (New York: Free Press, 1990).

[4]Richard Eldridge, Leading a Human Life: Wittgenstein, Intentionality, and Romanticism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[5]Cavell, "Declining Decline: Wittgenstein as a Philosopher of Culture," in This New Yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein (Albuquerque, N.M.: Living Batch Press, 1989), 29-75.

[6]Cavell, "Notes and Afterthoughts on the Opening of Wittgenstein's Investigations," in Philosophical Passages: Wittgenstein, Emerson, Austin, Derrida, The Bucknell Lectures in Literary Theory, vol. 12 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 125-86.

be concerned with this task exclusively; and in any event, conclusions in philosophy will be conveyed in different ways, have different looks. I argue, however, that for these three philosophers who attempt to convey philosophy as a way of life or thinking – whether it is called "the life of the mind," or (with Wittgenstein) "what is possible before all new discoveries and inventions," or (in Emerson's phrase) "self-reliance" – both their task and their conception of language require that this cannot be accomplished by simply saying what is, even potentially, accessible to every person who can reason. In place of that essentially modern understanding of philosophy's aims and audience, they understand philosophical writing as writing for a community, not in the name of a universal reason. What differentiates them is their understanding of why this must be so: whether it is primarily because of the goal of philosophical writing, or because of the nature of creatures who speak, that such writing must be, to some extent, esoteric.

In Part 1 I show that Wittgenstein, despite his frequently raising the question of his own creativity and genius, understands philosophy's esotericism under the rubric not of human differences in mental capacity, but of the inevitable opaqueness of one human to another, a natural result of the conditions for our growing into language. Chapter 1 sets the groundwork for a reading of Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-seeing. I claim that, contrary to Stephen Mulhall's influential reading in his book-length study of these remarks, Wittgenstein's intent is not to reveal the nature, the at-homeness, of our ordinary relation to things in the world. Rather, the remarks on aspect-seeing continue and extend Wittgenstein's interest in how we grow into our ordinary, and ordinarily uninterested,

relation to our experience of the world. This leads me to weigh the importance of Wittgenstein's frequent and often pivotal remarks on what he calls "aesthetic matters."

In chapter 2 I follow this thought to consider the extent to which meaning and judgment in aesthetics figures in Wittgenstein's later conception of language, particularly his conception of how philosophy can justify the ordinary functioning of language. Here as in chapter 1, I show that the nature of Mulhall's misreading of Wittgenstein, which I characterize as an effort to mollify the natural anxiety or unease that can accompany our giving voice to the way we see or hear things, is anticipated by Wittgenstein's project. It is, I argue, Wittgenstein's experience of being misread in such ways that leads him not only to suppress his later work, but to turn in that work to the concept of aspect-seeing and the plausibility, and ambiguity, of the concept of aspect-blindness. The importance of aspect-dawning experiences proves to be that they are a condition of our growing into language, of our coming to speak the same language as our elders, to agree "in language" and "in judgments" and "in form of life." But they are also experiences which distinguish us, show language to depend on my part in voicing the connections I see and hear, and which I know others may fail to see and hear. That is the lesson that consideration of aesthetic judgment offers to one's reading of Wittgenstein's conception of grammar: his appeals to grammatical criteria are modeled by the form of justification in aesthetics. But then it is in the nature of language that there may be no reason why a speaker fails to convey to another the connections he or she may see or hear. Failure of this kind is not a problem for most regions of language beyond our attempts to convey our aesthetic or

religious experiences. Yet it does name the problem, or the condition, that Wittgenstein discovers in conveying his understanding of grammar, and his vision of philosophy.

With Emerson's prose, which I discuss in Part 2 in conjunction with the parallel strategies of two arts of improvisational possibility, jazz and film (about which more in a moment), the philosophical condition of conveying a way of thinking is precisely that which Wittgenstein expressed in questioning his own originality. It is the sense of despair that comes from being isolated or removed from an ideal of the self, an ideal that one identifies in and through others. At the end of my discussion of Wittgenstein, I describe this condition, in words of Cavell, as one of losing interest in one's experience. Like Wittgenstein, Emerson understands that the loss of interest in one's experience derives from a necessary condition of one's coming to speak – specifically, from the fact that the words I speak are mine and yet borrowed, that my growing into language inevitably means that I begin by speaking the words of others, and that I may come not to accept the part I play in expressing what my words say. But because this is true of everyone who talks, and so is true of each of Emerson's readers, then so long as it is the only condition to understanding what his writing can convey, there is nothing to prevent anyone from seeing its point, from recognizing in what sense it is true that (for example) in reading a text one reads oneself. There is a presumption of parity, one might say, in Emerson's understanding of human nature. For his writing to succeed in conveying a way of thinking, all he must know about human nature is that he represents it, that his extraordinary literary ability is, in the end, unexceptional.

I highlight two features of what Emerson conveys to the discerning reader, as it were two topics in moral perfectionism. In chapter 3, I offer a reading of Emerson's essay "Art" to show how it encourages the reader to check or alter her habitual responses to the world in favor of attending to her present experience. Because discussions of such matters cry out for the sort of clarification that a sufficiently delineated example can give, I take up Emerson's essay in conjunction with the course of training to improvise music, and of moving beyond one's training, that is carried out in the tradition of jazz. The ability to see that one is failing to attend in the right way to one's present experience is akin to the ability Aristotle assigns to perception in practical wisdom, and itself requires a kind of training or habituation. This training is pictured in the tradition of moral perfectionism as a reconception of one's doings. Consequently it involves as an element of the training, as I argue in opposing two scholarly interpretations of the interest in jazz, a reconception of "learning," or a reconception of what acquiring this perceptive ability requires of the learner. Chapter 4 then turns to the role that other persons – "teachers" broadly conceived – play in one's reconception of one's self. I develop a description of the evolution in one's relation to the teacher that I find suggested by Hegel's discussion of the slave's transformation to self-consciousness in "Lordship and Bondage," and by Emerson's description of one's vacillation of mood in one's relation to "heroes" (guides, mentors) in "Uses of Great Men." Again by way of illustration, and because some films know how to exploit the fact that stars on the screen can serve the role of teacher described in these pages, I frame the discussion of Emersonian representativeness with a

parallel reading of a Hollywood movie – the 1987 film Moonstruck – whose popularity and neglect rivals that of Emerson's Essays.

In offering these interpretations of what are generally regarded as a popular musical form and a popular film, I am not primarily meaning to echo Heraclitus's sentiment that here too there are gods (in the kitchen of art, so to speak). Art is not philosophy, nor do I think that the one can turn into the other inadvertently. Their pleasures are sometimes confused, but only because humans are sometimes confused. By aligning a discussion of the conditions under which philosophy can model a way of life with the philosophical interest of certain exemplary works of art, I do not think that I am confusing pleasures, certainly not at every point. Still, I take seriously throughout these pages the problem of philosophy's unease over its rivalry with art, as well as over its attachments to art in the forms of writing it sometimes adopts. It is part of my project over these first four chapters to suggest, by way of Wittgenstein, what philosophy in its conception of its ends (of knowledge, certainty, fixed meaning, universal agreement) has to gain from considering the meanings of "justification" in aesthetics and of "teaching" and "learning" in art. It is also part of my project to offer, by way of Emerson and the forms of art I discuss, the possibility that the thinking exemplified in certain superior instances of the performing arts offers an archetype of the thinking that is required for the life philosophy would model.

With the discussion of Strauss in chapter 5, the argument moves into different territory. As I claim in examining his posthumously published essay "Exoteric Teaching," Strauss expresses the conviction, which he may share with Plato or Nietzsche

or both, that one's potential for finding the way of thinking that is modeled in some philosophical prose is tied to, and limited by, one's inalienable nature. Only a few, in short, are potential philosophers. Yet Strauss, too, sees the task of writing as one of educating his (better) reader's better nature indirectly. His concern with not only explicating but instantiating the procedures of esoteric writing reveals a kinship to Emerson and his technique, beyond their lineal connection by way of Nietzsche. Strauss also shares with ordinary language philosophy a concern to stress the role of the voice in language – by his asking of a text whether certain of its assertions could be conceived as spoken in earnest, in this context, with this tone, etc. – and thereby joins Wittgenstein in challenging philosophy's attempt to establish the fixed conditions of meaning. But there is a fundamental difference among these three thinkers in how each of them conceives the inevitable limit to the number of their discerning or sympathetic readers. Wittgenstein suggests a limit stemming from the necessary conditions of our growing into language, but he does not imagine that one can do more than note the occasional enigma that one person can be to another. Nor does Wittgenstein think, despite his remark that I offer as a motto above, that only the elite of a society can appear enigmatic to others. Emerson begins with the fact that he can write the way he does – setting the words on the page in motion through their multiple meanings, meanings that he acquired in the same way anyone does – and concludes that no one is precluded from catching his meaning, from finding in his words a similar transformative possibility in theirs. Strauss, on the other hand, begins with the fact that his and other secret writing works the way it does – conveying the writer's true thoughts to some while withholding those thoughts from the

majority of his readers – and concludes that such writing reveals a natural distinction among readers, a natural order of rank. It is the burden of my argument in the closing sections of Part 3 to show that nothing in the nature of writing philosophy as Strauss (or Emerson or Wittgenstein) understands it compels Strauss's conclusion.

PART 1. WITTGENSTEIN AND ASPECT-SEEING

Preliminary Remarks

In the opening pages of Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations one is asked to imagine a builder and assistant whose entire language consists of the four words "block," "pillar," "slab," and "beam."[1] The builder calls his words out, and the assistant brings the building stone he has been trained to pick out at each call. Wittgenstein's directive to picture this as "a complete primitive language" (PI, §2) or as "the whole language" of these builders (PI, §6) is not an easy one to follow. It has seemed natural to more than one reader to picture the builders, when looked at a certain way, as moving about sluggishly or halfwittedly, their "words" more like grunts than parts of speech.[2] From this perspective they appear to be not so much primitive figures as characters from myth or

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[1]Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, 3rd ed., trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1958), hereafter referred to as PI, followed by the remark number (e.g. §2) or, for citations from Part II of the Investigations, by the page number and a letter to indicate the cited passage's position on the page (e.g. 213f).

[2]See Rush Rhees, "Wittgenstein's Builders," Discussions of Wittgenstein (London: Routledge, 1970), 83; Warren Goldfarb, "I Want You to Bring Me a Slab: Remarks on the Opening Sections of the Philosophical Investigations," Synthese 56 (1983): 269-70; Cavell, "Declining Decline," 62-64; Cavell, "Notes and Afterthoughts," 145-47.

some related genre, like science fiction: imaginable less as early manifestations of the human than as projections of certain aspects of humanity into alien life forms.

When one turns to the opening page of the longest section (Section xi) of the second and last part of the Investigations, one might be struck by a drawing of a rectangular prism that bears a likeness to a building block or slab. Indeed, all of the illustrations in this section look like figures from an engineering or geometry manual – Wittgenstein asks the reader to imagine the rectangular prism occurring at several places in a textbook – or like primitive drawings, child-like drawings, of faces and animals. Some of these simple drawings have special, quasi-technical names (duck-rabbit, picture-face, double cross), as if they were less illustrations for a line of thought than the object of thought themselves – rather like works of art, except that here the thoughts engendered would have to be as basic or primitive (early, aboriginal, native) as the drawings are.

In other respects, though, we seem to have left the primitive or rudimentary behind with the first remark of Section xi, which is not a remark about a primitive language:

> Two uses of the word "see".
>
> The one: "What do you see there?" – "I see this" (and then a description, a drawing, a copy). The other: "I see a likeness between these two faces" – let the man I tell this to be seeing the faces as clearly as I do myself.
>
> The importance of this is the difference of category between the two 'objects' of sight. (PI, 193a)

Wittgenstein goes on to subsume the experience of seeing a likeness under the concept of seeing something as something, or seeing an aspect, which becomes the central topic of

Section xi. After twenty pages of examining its place among our concepts of seeing and thinking, he announces that a "question now arises":

> Could there be human beings lacking in the capacity to see something as something – and what would that be like? What sort of consequences would it have? – Would this defect be comparable to color-blindness or to not having absolute pitch? – We will call it "aspect-blindness" – and will next consider what might be meant by this. (PI, 213f)

Wittgenstein adds parenthetically that what he has in mind is specifically a "conceptual investigation." That is his preferred name in Part II for the general method of the Investigations that has come to be called, and that he tends to describe in Part I as, grammatical investigations (cf. PI, §90). But the ensuing discussion of aspect-blindness, which covers no more than a page, does not follow the pattern of other grammatical investigations in the Investigations. Indeed, Wittgenstein's interest here seems at times to outstrip what such an investigation can accomplish. When in other contexts he imagines human beings in some way different from us, such as the builders in PI, §2, he does not typically ask, as he does of the aspect-blind, whether there could be such people.[3] His prose reads as though he were writing his thoughts out on the spot: more than once he

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[3]One might object that the "could" in Wittgenstein's "Could there be human beings lacking in the capacity to see something as something" is a logical "could," and thus cannot possibly be meant "empirically" or as a question about matters of fact. The point is well taken, so long as it is not taken to mean that Wittgenstein's question has nothing to do with human beings, but is rather about, say, constraints on our use of language. For what if we do ask, "Could there, logically, be such people"? Can we say, without considering what it is to be a human being (what the concept "human being" means)? Then my question is: Why does Wittgenstein raise that question here, but not, for example, with the builders in §2? And in part my answer will be: Wittgenstein sees the aspect-blind, but not the builders, as a present, human possibility. For the moment, all I mean to insist upon is that this question ("Could there be human beings...") cannot be folded easily into the standard occasion for a Wittgensteinian grammatical investigation.

raises questions (will the aspect-blind be able to do such-and-such) that he does not, or says he will not, try to answer. And his conclusion to the discussion – "Aspect-blindness will be akin to the lack of a 'musical ear'" (PI, 214c) – is itself a simile, and so (grammatically) implies that he is able to say what it means, to find other words; but explanations are not forthcoming. There is, in short, no final word on which one can rest, at least none that offers the sort of revelatory turn of thought one finds elsewhere in the Investigations, for example in the epigrammatic remark near the end of Part II: "I can know what someone else is thinking, not what I am thinking. It is correct to say 'I know what you are thinking,' and wrong to say 'I know what I am thinking.' (A whole cloud of philosophy condensed into a drop of grammar)" (PI, 222b). With the concept of aspect-blindness Wittgenstein seems to want to create rather than dissipate a cloud of philosophy.

This has often struck me as the natural and obvious way to begin thinking about Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect-blindness in the Investigations. Yet most commentators on these pages not only begin without such doubts but read the discussion of aspect-blindness as conclusive of something. Then it is no surprise that they do not agree on what the discussion proves, nor agree on so much as what the discussion is about.[4] Is it about the strangeness, the less-than-humanness, of the aspect-blind, or about

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[4]Compare the discussions of aspect-blindness and meaning-blindness in Rush Rhees's preface to Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books (New York: Harper & Row, 1958), hereafter referred to as BB; Joachim Schulte, Experience and Expression: Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology, trans. Joachim Schulte (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), originally published as Erlebnis und Ausdruck: Wittgensteins Philosophie der Psychologie (München: Philosophia Verlag GmbH, 1987); Stephen

(continued...)

how the aspect-blind resemble human types we seem to know well? Is Wittgenstein intent primarily on explaining the experience of aspect-seeing, or is he more interested in the way we normally, unremarkably see things? Is his concern at bottom what, if anything, we are doing in seeing what a picture is a picture of, or what, if anything, we are doing in meaning the words that we say?

I will be guided in what follows by two questions, one about Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-blindness and one about how those remarks traditionally have been received: (1) Why is Wittgenstein unwilling or unable to say something conclusive about the aspect-blind? (2) Why do Wittgenstein's readers imagine that he is saying something conclusive when he is not? My guiding thought – which I claim is a growing thought in Wittgenstein's last writings – is that aspect-seeing, the capacity to be struck by a change in aspect, underlies the possibility of (acquiring) human language, and yet also does aspect-blindness – not as it is suffered continually by the aspect-blind, but as it is experienced endemically by us. We would not speak as we do, nor have the interests that we do, if we did not both see and fail to see, hear and fail to hear, aspects of the world that others fail to see and see, fail to hear and hear. Thus Wittgenstein's question "Could there be human beings lacking in the capacity to see something as something – and what would that be like?" is meant to suggest an ambiguous possibility: we can neither fully imagine it nor ourselves fail to be imagined, pictured, by it. The difficulty is then to

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[4](...continued)
Mulhall, On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects (London: Routledge, 1990); Paul Johnston, Wittgenstein: Rethinking the Inner (London: Routledge, 1993). Rhees is the only one among these for whom Wittgenstein's settled attitude towards the possibility of aspect-blindness remains in doubt.

recognize that this ambivalent response is what there is to recognize, and nothing more. Our ambivalence reveals neither an error nor a paradox, but our condition as creatures who converse.

I will be describing this condition in terms that differ from what is generally taken to be Wittgenstein's mature view, expressed famously in two consecutive remarks that seem to turn a page, or close a chapter, in Part I of the Investigations:

> "So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true and what is false?" –It is what human beings say that is true and false; and they agree in the language they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in form of life.
>
> If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments. (PI, §241-2)

I will not be denying, nor do I read Wittgenstein as ever wanting to deny, that if language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement in 'judgments' and (also?) in 'form of life.' But I will be emphasizing, as I read Wittgenstein to be emphasizing in his last writings, the extent to which human beings must fail to agree in 'judgments' and in 'form of life' if they converse in anything we are to call a human language. If what that says can be made clear, then we might agree that the task for a philosophical text which accepts the extent of our disagreements or misattunements will be different, to say the least, from philosophical texts (such as those of Kant or Hegel, or of Russell or Quine or Davidson) which are written from the conviction, however acquired, that philosophy is like science – specifically, that its claims, however abstruse, are all in some sense available to all, open to anyone who sustains the effort of thought. So for example one will not, from a conviction which opposes the one just described, imagine that one's

audience is potentially unlimited or universal. But what does the size of one's audience, or the image one carries of its potential size, matter? It will matter, for example, in what one takes to be the goal of philosophical writing, which comes close to saying that it matters to one's understanding of the activity of philosophy.

In this regard, consider Wittgenstein's remarking famously, "If one tried to advance theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to debate them, because everyone would agree to them" (PI, §128). I do not find in this remark the thought that whatever can be discovered philosophically is available potentially to everyone (only not, perhaps, as a thesis),[5] and that philosophy's work is to make it available by laying our common linguistic practices before us in a "perspicuous representation" (PI, §122), augmented by the right sort of training, examples, etc. That is, while I see that §128 overlaps with the thought, which one finds as well in §126 and §129, that philosophy can supply only what all of us, in some sense, already know (but which we fail to notice, or perhaps wish to deny), I do not read Wittgenstein to be implying that 'what all of us already know' is something that all of us can (come to) see. (Consider the one-sentence

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[5]The words in parentheses summarize a main element of Stanley Cavell's gloss on PI, §128 in The Claim of Reason (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 33, hereafter referred to as CR. The interpretation that I am responding to here is not Cavell's. But I should mention that there is a difference in emphasis between Cavell's and my reading of Wittgenstein on this point. For although Cavell says more than once that Wittgenstein's motive in the Investigations is as much a perception of our lack of attunement as our pervasive attunement in our words, the context of his gloss on PI, §128 suggests that he means not so much the lack of attunement between humans as between philosophers and "the words of ordinary human beings" (Ibid., 32), which is as much as to say, the philosopher's lack of attunement with himself. I will be suggesting, however, that Wittgenstein's concern in his last writings is with other, though still grammatical, causes for the philosopher's being out of tune with others.

prayer that Wittgenstein wrote in 1947: "God grant the philosopher insight into what lies in front of everyone's eyes."[6] The direct object is not "me," but neither is it "everyone.") On the other hand, what everyone would agree to is not worth so much as saying; and if it is not worth saying then it cannot be (meaningfully) said – not, at least, by creatures like us. We will come to see that philosophical 'theses', i.e. claims made in the name of philosophy which everyone would agree to, are possible only in a world in which everyone is aspect-blind.

[6]Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, ed. G.H. von Wright, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980; reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 63f, hereafter referred to as CV.

Chapter 1. Wittgenstein, Aspect-seeing, and Aesthetic Matters

> I may find scientific questions interesting, but they never really grip me. Only conceptual and aesthetic questions do that.
>
> The queer resemblance between a philosophical investigation ... and an aesthetic one. (E.g. what is bad about this garment, how it should be, etc.)
>
> – Ludwig Wittgenstein, Culture and Value

My approach to examining Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-seeing will be to offer an exposition and a critique of the most sustained reading of Wittgenstein's aspect-seeing material to date, Stephen Mulhall's On Being in the World.[7] The virtues of Mulhall's study are not hidden ones; he manages to sort out, with care and intelligence, most of the quasi-technical concepts one finds in these pages of the Investigations and in relevant sections of Wittgenstein's notebooks – concepts such as "picture-object," "continuous seeing," "regarding-as," and of course "aspect-blindness." But the sorting seems to be driven by a line of thinking that leads Mulhall to misread certain remarks, to see them as making a distinction that they quite literally and unremarkably do not make. The effect, and seemingly the intent, of Mulhall's misreading is to underemphasize the

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[7]See footnote 4 for full citation; hereafter referred to as OBITW.

importance to Wittgenstein's thinking of the experience of aspect-seeing, to unexceptionalize that experience. The counter to Mulhall's claim, namely that Wittgenstein's interest in the experience of being struck by an aspect is not bounded by his concern with ordinary seeing and ordinary speech, is developed in this and the following chapter. I can characterize my disagreement with Mulhall as follows. For him, Wittgenstein introduces the notion of aspect-seeing because of what it can reveal about how we ordinarily see things, and what it reveals is that ordinary seeing is a continuous or spontaneous seeing of the furniture of the world rather than something we construct out of percepts or sense-data. While I recognize that criticism of sense-data as a Wittgensteinian one, I find that Wittgenstein's interest in Section xi, and indeed throughout his last writings, develops more fully and explicitly an interest present in the opening of the Investigations, an interest in how we grow into our concepts (how we grow into language), or in how we ever come to say that we see just this furniture; and that this turns out to rest on our capacity to be struck by something like aspects of the world, aspects which then become for us the (ordinary) furniture of the world.

I ought to say why I choose to approach Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness by looking first to Stephen Mulhall's rendering of those remarks. There are two reasons. The first, not very novel reason is to acknowledge someone who has thought carefully about a stretch of text that draws my interest, with the hope that in addressing Mulhall's work I am understood to be commending it even as I criticize it. The second reason, no more original than the first but perhaps less typical in Wittgensteinian exegesis, is that there is philosophical interest to be found in the

misreading, in the fact or possibility of it. Sometimes such an interest lies in what the misreading reveals about the misreader and, insofar as it is more than merely biographical, about us and our condition. I am thinking of those French approaches to literary exegesis that draw their inspiration ultimately from Freud. At other times the interest will lie in how the misreading is anticipated by the text, so that what is revealed is as much the original text as our or some reader's relation to it. Here one may think of the various methods that Leo Strauss rediscovers in the writings of Spinoza or Maimonides or Plato for hiding the author's true intentions to all but the most discerning reader;[8] but one may think as well of any writer for whom the relation of the reader to the written text is acutely problematic, and so think, in addition to these, of Emerson or Thoreau or Nietzsche.[9] It is this latter interest that I find in Wittgenstein's text and in Mulhall's particular misreading of the remarks on aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness. Mulhall's book exemplifies something Wittgenstein is anxious about when he fears that his later writings will be misunderstood by the majority of his readers, something that prompts Wittgenstein's systematic interest in the concepts of aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness themselves.

But before examining how Mulhall has misread Wittgenstein in a way that Wittgenstein anticipates, I need first to set out Mulhall's reading in some detail. Consequently, I offer in section 1.1 an exposition of Mulhall's argument. In section 1.2, I suggest that the philosophical commitments Mulhall identifies as Wittgenstein's own are

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[8]See below, chapter 5.

[9]See below, chapters 3 and 4.

in fact commitments Wittgenstein either minimizes or opposes at the textual locations Mulhall cites. This thought will be developed further in the next chapter (in section 2.3), where I argue that Wittgenstein's philosophical interest in much of his later writing is in fact the grammatical conditions for the kind of misreading of philosophical writing which Mulhall's reading of Wittgenstein's writing instantiates. But to get to that point I must first show how Wittgenstein's concern with aspect-seeing forms a bridge between his continuing interest in questions of meaning and understanding on the one hand, and his equally continuing interest in expressions of aesthetic experience on the other. That element of the argument is introduced in section 1.3, and is one I continue to follow in the opening sections of chapter 2.

1.1 Mulhall on Wittgenstein on Aspect-seeing

Stephen Mulhall wants to show that Wittgenstein's concern in introducing the topic of aspect-seeing goes beyond an interest in defeating a picture of sense perception that has typically captivated some philosophers, philosophers we might label sense-data theorists. But he does not think that Wittgenstein has no interest in making that picture less attractive to us, and he devotes the opening sections of his book to sketching that picture and arguing on Wittgenstein's behalf against it. The picture that Mulhall takes Wittgenstein to be undermining is, in brief, the following (OBITW, 8): perception begins with objects in the world causing or generating copies "in" us; the copy is like a picture except that it is private, an inner object or "materialization" available to the perceiver's inner eye alone; the copy is a copy of the object's material properties – chiefly its color

and shape, though initially Mulhall includes its "organization" among these – from which the perceiver may then interpret certain other features of it, that for example a face in a picture is friendly or familiar, smiling or sneering.[10] In that sense these descriptions identify only indirectly what is seen: When I say that my daughter smiled at me across the schoolyard, I am giving an indirect description of what I "really" saw.

There is little doubt that this picture of how we see (and the parallel picture of how we hear) has the look of a candidate for the sort of dismantling that Wittgenstein carries out in Part I of the Investigations, where he considers, for example, philosophical and fanciful models for how we learn a first language, how we point to the color of something, how we name something, how and when we follow a rule, how we know what a game is, what it is to be guided by something, or to understand something, intend something, remember something, expect something, mean something.... And there are passages in Part II's discussion of aspect-seeing that seem to name the temptation to such a picture of perception (see PI, 193g, 196b-g, 199g). And yet Wittgenstein had already shown certain features of this picture of perception to be unattractive in Part I, well before the discussion of aspect-seeing in Part II. I have in mind such features of this picture of perception as its neglect of the ease with which our eye passes over certain configurations as opposed to others – the words in a book, for example (PI, §168) – and especially its

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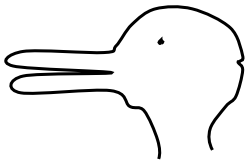
[10]At first Mulhall says that according to this picture of perception "it makes sense to say that we see a round face in a puzzle-picture, for example, but it would be nonsensical to say that we see its friendly smile" (OBITW, 8; cf. PI, 199g). But soon thereafter he represents the competing theory of vision as one which claims that seeing what a picture is a picture of (e.g. a round face) is already an act of interpretation or inference (cf. OBITW, 20).

reliance on the problematic notion of a private or inner visual object (see PI, §§272-80, 398-401). If an erroneous picture of perception is still at stake for Wittgenstein when he turns, in Part II, to the "hugely many interrelated phenomena and possible concepts" (PI, 199d) associated with aspect-seeing – phenomena he also calls seeing-as, or noticing an aspect or a change of aspect, or more vividly, the dawning or flashing of an aspect – then we might reasonably anticipate that these phenomena and concepts are meant to provide us with some new and illuminating contribution to understanding and dismantling the sense-data theorist's picture of perception.



The insight that aspect-seeing affords into the fallacy of this picture comes, on Mulhall's reading, from its presenting a paradox, one that seems to motivate the picture of an inner object of perception and yet cannot be resolved by that picture. The paradox that surrounds aspect-dawning experiences arises from the sense, when a new aspect dawns, that nothing has changed (at least, that the object has not) and yet everything has changed: we say of the duck-rabbit, for example, "Before it was a duck, but now it's a rabbit!" If we are asked whether we mean that the lines of the figure have altered, we say No; that reply is definitive of the experience of an aspect dawning. But then we are led to wonder why our expression of the change of aspect takes the form of what is, ordinarily, the report of a change in some thing.

What has changed, then, if not the lines of the figure? The question tempts us to postulate an inner copy or materialization of the figure and assert that that has changed (OBITW, 9). And here we discover that the inner object picture of perception fails us, not, now, because it is problematic or incoherent but because it cannot accomplish what we ask of it. If we say that our form of words ("Now it's a rabbit!") expresses a change in our visual impression conceived as an inner object, then we should be able to specify the visual change, to represent it visually. But if we try to represent the new visual impression of the duck-rabbit when it has changed for us into a rabbit, then either we simply copy the duck-rabbit (for what other configuration does the inner eye see?) or we insist that what the inner eye sees cannot be shown (PI, 196b-e). Either way we fail to show how postulating a change in an inner object explains rather than merely restates the paradox marked by the characteristic expression of aspect-seeing experiences.

Since we cannot make sense in the context of aspect-seeing of a change in our inner visual impression, we might be inclined to say that "Now it's a rabbit!" must be an indirect description of what we "really" (continue to) see; it marks a change in our interpretation (OBITW, 10). But calling a description "indirect" makes sense only when one can say what would count as a direct description, and we know of no other way to express the visual experience of seeing the rabbit aspect dawn (PI, 193g). If I want to tell you about a conventional drawing, I could convey what I see by making a copy of it – that is, by reproducing its shape and color – or by showing it to you, and then I might mention besides that it resembles (or that I am interpreting it as) a rabbit, as if adding something to an already complete description. But my saying "Now it's a rabbit!" (when that aspect of

the duck-rabbit dawns on me) is not something optional that I add to a description of what I see. For even if I show you or make you an exact copy of what I see, I still feel the need to say that it is a rabbit I see, or to point to some rabbits or to pictures of rabbits. "Now it's a rabbit!" in the context of aspect-seeing is not a report of an interpretation but an expression that is forced from me, like a cry when I am hurt. It is how I express my surprise at seeing a (representation of a) rabbit where before I had seen none (PI, 196f-197b).

Having outlined on Wittgenstein's behalf the inadequacy of the interpretative model of perception, as he now begins to call it, Mulhall spells out what he takes to be Wittgenstein's solution to the paradox. The solution is effected by recognizing a parallel between (1) our felt need of expressing what dawns as if it were a new object (e.g. a rabbit) and (2) our unexceptional descriptions of what we see in looking at an unambiguous picture (e.g. an ordinary picture of a rabbit). What the parallel reminds us is that our descriptions of ordinary pictures, akin to our exclamations on seeing an aspect of an ambiguous picture dawn, do not behave as if they were interpretations of what we "really" see. In both instances, Mulhall says, the descriptions come "immediately and spontaneously" (OBITW, 18), even when the pictures are purely schematic, a few ink lines on paper. That our response is so direct to so little drawing is the philosophically compelling feature of what Wittgenstein labels picture-objects:

For instance

> would be a 'picture-face.'
>
> In some respects I stand towards it as I do towards a human face. I can study its expression, can react to it as to the expression of the human face. A child can talk to picture-men or picture-animals, can treat them as it treats dolls. (PI, 194c)

Even when I am before such a bare drawing, I cannot help but see a face; and that, according to Mulhall, is the key to the solution of the paradox. For if all I have ever seen, looking at the duck-rabbit, is a duck, then we should expect that I would treat it, as I treat a picture-duck, something like a duck; I say, for instance, "It has a long bill." If suddenly I then see the rabbit aspect of the duck-rabbit for the first time, it should not be surprising that I express the experience as if I had seen a (picture-) duck change into a (picture-) rabbit (OBITW, 30). Before then, it had always been a (picture-) duck for me, not a color-shape arrangement about which it felt like an option to see it as a duck – though now I see that this picture (i.e. of the duck-rabbit) presents me with exactly two options or two ways of seeing it. The dissolution of the paradox helps show me that my relation to a picture-duck is in some apparently quite natural ways more like my relation to a duck than like my relation to a picture-rabbit.

At this point in his exposition Mulhall adds, "One could go further: if someone is incapable of such experiences of aspect-dawning, one has grounds for doubting that his general attitude to pictures is one of continuous aspect perception" (OBITW, 30). The phrase "continuous aspect perception" names that "immediate and spontaneous" relation we have to picture-objects (or for that matter, to pictures) that we were just reminded of. Mulhall's claim seems compelling. Indeed, what other fact or condition of the human

might our experiences of aspect-dawning depend on beyond the way we ordinarily see, and our characteristic ways of describing what we see? Insofar as this is a question about conceptual or logical conditions and not causal or psychological ones, the answer would seem to be, No other fact about us matters. And because Mulhall accepts that answer, he proceeds to determine without further ado the conceptual consequences of aspect-blindness:

> The concept of aspect-blindness is characterized by the lack of any verbal or non-verbal behaviour which might manifest any sense that a paradox lies at the heart of a change of aspects....
>
> If we assume, then, that someone cannot experience a change of aspect – that he cannot, for example, see the schematic cube three-dimensionally first one way then another – then it follows that he could not continuously see the schematic drawing of a cube as a cube, i.e. could not stand to the picture of a three-dimensional object as he does to the three-dimensional object.... (OBITW, 31)

Wittgenstein suggests, and Mulhall repeats, that the aspect-blind can recognize that a given drawing shows (or that it is a picture of) a cube. But recognizing a schematic cube as a cube (or "merely knowing" it, a concept we will turn to shortly) is not the same as seeing it as a cube. Then what sort of ability does the aspect-blind have? How should we picture his recognizing what a schematic drawing is a drawing of? (This is what has become of Wittgenstein's initial question about the aspect-blind, "what would [aspect-blindness] be like?") Mulhall's answer is, rather neatly, that the best model for how the aspect-blind would "see" just is the model offered by the sense-data theorist for how we see, a model which Mulhall had identified as Wittgenstein's "general target in this stretch of Section xi" of the Investigations (OBITW, 8): "aspect-blindness involves interpreting what is directly seen, reading the relevant information off the figure or picture as if it

were a blueprint, knowing what a given symbol is supposed to represent rather than seeing it in that way" (OBITW, 32). The identification becomes more explicit as Mulhall's book progresses: roughly a hundred pages further on we read, "The interpretative model of perception (i.e. aspect-blindness) was, for example, characterized by..." (OBITW, 148).

In summary, Mulhall believes that Wittgenstein's first if not final interest in Section xi is to defeat the sense-data theorist's model of perception – a model whose consequences are themselves modeled in the conceptual implications of aspect-blindness. In place of the sense-data theory, Wittgenstein offers not a rival theory so much as a description of our concept of seeing, one which brings out that human seeing is an immediate and spontaneous seeing, what Mulhall calls continuous aspect perception.[11] Wittgenstein is interested in the experience of aspect-dawning only to the extent that it helps reveal how we ordinarily see, by presenting us with a paradox that only a right understanding of our concept of seeing as continuous aspect perception can put to rest. Thus, although it is a "controversial" claim that runs "contrary to appearances," "Wittgenstein's primary concern in this area is not the concept of aspect-dawning but rather that of continuous aspect perception (or 'regarding-as', as Wittgenstein sometimes labels it)" (OBITW, 123).

1.2 Seeing and Merely Knowing

[11]For Mulhall, "continuous aspect perception" names what in Wittgenstein's text is named "regarding-as" (PI, 205g), what Mulhall also calls "everyday visual perception" (OBITW, 135). I will often say simply "ordinary seeing."

I am going to argue that Mulhall's so-called controversial claim is not correct, since (1) the distinction Mulhall draws, and that Wittgenstein himself draws early in the remarks of Section xi, between (as Wittgenstein puts it) "the 'continuous seeing' of an aspect and the 'dawning' of an aspect" (PI, 194b) becomes problematic roughly at the point where Wittgenstein introduces the phrase "regarding-as"; and because (2) insofar as there remains a distinction to notice between the concepts of aspect-dawning and continuous aspect perception, it is aspect-dawning which still troubles and fascinates Wittgenstein, even after the initial paradox that Mulhall draws our attention to has been dissolved. Or perhaps I should say that what continues to trouble and fascinate Wittgenstein is why we are drawn to the distinction despite its indistinctness, despite its marking at times a difference of no more than the slightest alteration in our attention, whose expression will be at times no more than the slightest gasp, an almost imperceptible start.

But before I begin to specify where I think Mulhall goes wrong, let me offer two observations about the form of his argument as I have presented it. First, Mulhall (and not, or not obviously, Wittgenstein) has managed to develop a line of thought about aspect-seeing that concludes with a consideration of aspect-blindness as a kind of natural antithesis to how we ordinarily see, which is purportedly the main theme of the aspect-seeing material. He does not consider the aspect-blindness remarks in close detail – as they develop, for example, with what I described earlier as their hesitancy and inconclusiveness. Nor is he particularly concerned that they occur in the text later than the other remarks cited in his argument. Indeed, one of his objectives is to integrate

remarks that Wittgenstein leaves standing apart, or in rather different surroundings. This may not be a bad thing – unless the surroundings of these remarks (what Wittgenstein also calls their circumstances or context) matter here. (I think they do; we will look specifically at those surroundings in section 2.5.) A second observation pertaining to the form of Mulhall's argument is this: Mulhall is happy to identify or correlate certain quasi-technical concepts, particularly those of Wittgenstein's own invention, that Wittgenstein does not himself identify or correlate. We have noted already Mulhall's identification of "the interpretative model of perception" (not Wittgenstein's phrase) with aspect-blindness. In a moment we will have reason to examine his further identification of these with "merely knowing," and his equating "continuous aspect perception" with the "seeing" that Wittgenstein sets in opposition to "merely knowing." The ease with which Mulhall straightens out these instances of Wittgenstein's terminology and the corresponding regions of his thinking can leave one wondering why it seemed so difficult for Wittgenstein to do the same.[12] Why would it have been philosophically crippling for Wittgenstein to make these connections, state these identities, up front? Naturally, any exegesis of a difficult series of Wittgenstein's remarks need not itself be enigmatic any more than it need take the form of a series of remarks; Mulhall's work of clarification is not pointless so long as it is right. But any such exegesis ought to provide an account of

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[12]I have in mind Wittgenstein's guiding remarks to his reader in the Preface to the Investigations:

> After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into ... a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination. (PI, v)

why the line of thought it claims to represent should have expressed itself this way – e.g. the way we find in Section xi of the Investigations.[13] If one thinks that Wittgenstein's terminology is redundant and to some extent ignorable, one ought to say why; and if one imagines that Wittgenstein has failed to make certain essential connections explicit in his writing, one ought to entertain at least the possibility that he did not wish to make them.

Central to Mulhall's thinking in his emphasizing continuous aspect perception over aspect-dawning is his interpretation of the contrast Wittgenstein on six occasions makes between seeing and merely knowing.[14] Wittgenstein introduces this contrast by means of a question;[15] his contrast between seeing and merely knowing is in fact not so much asserted as considered, weighed. The question here as elsewhere in the Investigations is why or in what contexts we reach for one expression rather than another – in this case, why or in what contexts we say that someone sees rather than merely knows, or that one person sees what another merely knows. It is noteworthy that Mulhall does not begin with the first instance of this question, where Wittgenstein considers our

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[13]As it happens, the last words that Wittgenstein made public in his lifetime were also his only public explanation for why he withheld his later work: "That which is retarding the publication of my work [is] the difficulty of presenting it in a clear and coherent form." (Wittgenstein, "To the Editor of 'Mind,'" Philosophical Occasions: 1912-1951, ed. James Klagge and Alfred Nordmann [Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1993], 157, hereafter referred to as PO.) It is at least not obvious that this is or ought to be Wittgenstein's difficulty alone.

[14]See PI, 201e, 202e, 203b (two instances), 204h, 205d.

[15]"What is the expression of my not merely understanding the picture in this way, for instance, (knowing what it is supposed to be), but seeing it in this way?" (PI, 201e).

saying that we "see the sphere floating in the air" in a picture (PI, 201e), but turns rather to Wittgenstein's fourth example:

> I see that an animal in a picture is transfixed by an arrow. It has struck it in the throat and sticks out at the back of the neck. Let the picture be a silhouette. – Do you see the arrow – or do you merely know that these two bits are supposed to represent part of an arrow? (PI, 203b)

In an earlier, similar passage Wittgenstein asks, "But how is it possible to see an object according to an interpretation" – say, these two segments as (parts of) an arrow? And he notes that "The question represents it as a queer fact" (PI, 200e; cf. OBITW, 17). Seltsam (queer, strange, odd, peculiar) is how Wittgenstein had characterized in Part I the similar phenomenon of "Hearing a word in a particular sense" (PI, §534), a phenomenon that reappears in Part II in Wittgenstein's remarks on "experiencing the meaning of a word" (PI, 214d and following). These latter two characterizations of phenomena look to be describing aspect-dawning experiences, insofar as they suggest or imply alternatives that some object or sign might not be seen or heard or experienced as, but could (suddenly) be. But by choosing to focus on the example with the arrow, Mulhall is able to argue that no alternative in fact presents itself to us in those cases of seeing with which Wittgenstein is concerned. "The crucial distinction between seeing and knowing," Mulhall claims, is brought out by recognizing or making the conceptual discovery that

> someone who sees the animal as transfixed by an arrow would give this type of description immediately, as an instantaneous reaction to a momentary view of the drawing; nor would he have regarded his response as being one among several possible interpretations of what he had seen.... Someone [on the other hand] who knows rather than sees the arrow would not see it at once as an arrow, he would not be unhesitating in his recourse to the relevant description; he would rather need to read the drawing like a blueprint, inferring certain things from its particular properties of colour and spatial arrangement.... (OBITW, 18)

The references to "reading" and "inferring" in the last sentence suggest that, on Mulhall's view, what we have in the concept of "merely knowing" is merely another label for the set of reactions and responses that were said to characterize someone whose behavior is described by the interpretative model of perception, someone who to that extent is like the aspect-blind (OBITW, 19; cf. 32). But is that what Wittgenstein's use of "merely knowing" is meant to pick out? I think not.

I have noted that Mulhall illustrates the contrast between seeing and merely knowing by drawing not from Wittgenstein's first example but from his fourth, the imagined figure of an animal transfixed by an arrow. The first example, on the other hand – our saying of a picture that we "see the sphere floating in the air" – is identified fairly blatantly as an experience of being struck by an aspect:

> What is the expression of my not merely understanding the picture in this way, for instance, (knowing what it is supposed to be), but seeing it in this way? – It is expressed by: "The sphere seems to float," "You see it floating," or again, in a special tone of voice, "It floats!" (PI, 201e)

Indeed, when Mulhall himself cites this example it is not in the context of continuous aspect perception but as an instance of the applicability of the concept of aspect-dawning to pictures (OBITW, 22). Apparently, "seeing an aspect dawn" clarifies the sense of "seeing" at play here in Wittgenstein's first example. Then what does Wittgenstein mean to distinguish from merely knowing: continuous aspect perception or aspect-dawning?

The choice presented by this question, a choice forced on us by Mulhall's emphasis on continuous aspect perception, turns out to be a false one. The difference between "the 'continuous seeing' of an aspect and the 'dawning' of an aspect" (PI, 194b) is

not at issue for Wittgenstein in this region of the Investigations. In fact Wittgenstein (or more accurately, the protagonist of the text) must remind himself of this difference, and does so only after the contrast between seeing (as he simply calls it) and merely knowing has run its course. Only then does Wittgenstein, both in his notebooks[16] and in the corresponding pages of the Investigations, feel compelled to introduce the notion of regarding-as:

> If you see the drawing as such-and-such an animal, what I expect from you will be pretty different from what I expect when you merely know what it is meant to be.
>
> Perhaps the following expression would have been better: we regard the photograph, the picture on our wall, as the object itself (the man, landscape, and so on) depicted there. (PI, 205d-e)

Grant that Mulhall is right to associate "regarding-as" (PI, 205g) with what Wittgenstein had earlier called "the 'continuous seeing' of an aspect" (PI, 194b).[17] Even so,

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[16]In the notebooks there is a moment in which Wittgenstein catches himself confusing the two: he remarks with evident alarm that he has been using the language of seeing something as something while his examples have progressed or slipped towards cases of continuous seeing of an aspect. See Wittgenstein, Last Writings, Volume I: Preliminary Studies for Part II of "Philosophical Investigations", ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982; reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), §§673-76, hereafter referred to as LW 1.

[17]This is generous; in truth, Mulhall's way of registering the difficulties that the introduction of regarding-as presents for his interpretation is to read it differently as his exegesis progresses. After explaining that it is the "element of thought which characterizes the experience of aspect-dawning" (OBITW, 22), and recognizing that it is precisely the absence of thought or concern, the "taking for granted the identity of what he perceives" in someone's identifying objects in a picture that prompts Wittgenstein to introduce the concept of "regarding-as," Mulhall says, "the notion of regarding-as ... to judge by the context of its introduction, is simply another label for continuous aspect perception" (OBITW, 23; cf. 27, 123). At a transitional stage, Mulhall calls regarding-as

(continued...)

Wittgenstein's motive for introducing the term "regarding-as" is not to stress the nature of continuous aspect perception, but to set it aside, so that he might restate the need for distinguishing a different use of "seeing," one which is at home in the context of our life with pictures, for example, and which marks the experience of the dawning of an aspect:

> The question is whether yet another concept, related to [regarding-as], is also of importance to us: that, namely, of a seeing-as which only takes place while I am actually concerning myself with the picture as the object depicted.
>
> > I might say: a picture does not always live for me while I am seeing it. "Her picture smiles down on me from the wall." It need not always do so, whenever my glance lights on it. (PI, 205g-h)

In brief: Wittgenstein reiterates, or recasts, the difference between "the 'continuous seeing' of an aspect and the 'dawning' of an aspect" only after, and very likely because, his discussion of a seeing that contrasts with merely knowing has come to cloud that difference. If one chooses nevertheless to insist on the former difference (as Mulhall does), and then asks (as Mulhall does not) which of the two uses of the word 'see' (cf. PI, 193a) is being contrasted with merely knowing, the best answer would be, "Both, or

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[17](...continued)
"a mode of aspect perception," because experiences of the dawning of an aspect can make us aware that "we are already regarding [something] as a particular kind of object" (OBITW, 134). And later, returning to Wittgenstein's suggesting that "Perhaps the following expression would have been better: we regard the photograph ... as the object itself ... depicted there," Mulhall glosses this remark by saying: "Although – as I argued earlier [at what I just identified as Mulhall's transitional stage?] – this remark is intended to characterize continuous aspect perception as well as aspect-dawning, it remains the case that the experience of an aspect of a picture dawning on us is a very clear example of the general relationship Wittgenstein has in mind" (OBITW, 181-2; my emphasis). I find that the only way to explain this last instance of Mulhall's shifting conception of "regarding-as" is to recognize it as a failure to distinguish between seeing what is depicted in a picture if we see it at all (regarding-as) and concerning oneself with the picture as the object depicted (seeing-as) (PI, 205g) – precisely the distinction that prompts Wittgenstein to introduce the term "regarding-as" at this juncture.

neither." But if the seeing that contrasts with merely knowing is not simply ordinary seeing, then it is presumptuous to say that "merely knowing" names a rival understanding of our ordinary concept of seeing or a rival theory of perception, as Mulhall contends. There is no reason to think that Wittgenstein's use of "merely knowing" is meant to be any more technical, or any more circumscribed by a particular model of perception, than his use of "seeing" is. The impact of that recognition is to cast doubt on Mulhall's assertion that Wittgenstein's interest in aspect-dawning rests on his wish to refute the interpretative model of perception. And that, in turn, raises doubts about Mulhall's identification of that model of perception with aspect-blindness.

What is at stake for Wittgenstein when he asks whether our looking at a picture is a case of seeing or of merely knowing? To give a negative answer: he is not asking which expression we would use in such contexts. When Wittgenstein imagines a picture of a sphere floating in the air (PI, 201e) or of a galloping horse (PI, 202e) or of an arrow shot through an animal (PI, 203b) and asks, "Do you see ... or do you merely know ...?", his question is not: "Is this a context in which we say that we see the sphere floating (the horse galloping, the arrow piercing)?" That is just the sort of thing we say. Yet we know how such facts of our linguistic nature can lead to moments of what seems philosophical raving – "'But this isn't seeing!' — 'But this is seeing!'" – and we might be prepared for Wittgenstein's response to these voices: "–It must be possible to give both remarks a conceptual justification" (PI, 203c). To command a clear view of our use of the word "seeing" in these contexts, we must come to understand the specific skeptical doubt that

leads us to insist that someone does not "really" see the sphere floating (the horse galloping, the arrow piercing).

We have seen that Mulhall associates this skeptical doubt with the sense-data theorist's doubt about all of perception. The skeptic who is being addressed in this stretch of the Investigations argues that it would be more accurate to say that we merely know from the material properties of a picture that it is supposed to represent, say, an arrow. But notice that this skeptic's claim is not a claim specifically about how we (fail to) see pictures; and it is pictures that Wittgenstein is considering when he asks whether our looking is a case of seeing or merely knowing. It may be, as Mulhall believes, that pictures, and especially rudimentary pictures or picture-objects, offer the skeptic the best case for his claim that the object we say we see is really constructed out of (sometimes very simple) arrangements of color and shape (OBITW, 17). Yet although picture-objects play a role elsewhere in his discussion, Wittgenstein entertains the possibility that we merely know what we say we see only with respect to pictures, not picture-objects (or any other kind of object we say we see). So what kind of skeptic, or what skeptical side of ourselves, is the source of the doubt that we do not really see pictures?

We might approach this question by asking: Do we, always, really see pictures? It is suggestive that on occasion we say about someone before a picture something like, "He doesn't see the horse galloping [the ambiguity in her smile, the weight of the blue rectangle]" or "All he knows is (He merely knows?) that it's supposed to be a galloping horse [an ambiguous smile, a downward force]." Wittgenstein takes note of what we say when he asks, "For when should I call it a mere knowing, not seeing? –Perhaps when

someone treats the picture as a working drawing, reads it like a blueprint" (PI, 204h).[18] Is this helpful? For Mulhall, this remark all but fixes a technical term – "merely knowing" – in Wittgenstein's vocabulary. He finds the analogy to reading a blueprint to suggest a case in which one must interpret or make out what the picture represents before one can recognize what it shows. I do not say that this is wrong, but it is at best a partial rendering of Wittgenstein's remark. My disagreement with Mulhall can be brought out by considering why Wittgenstein thinks of blueprints here, or what the shift from pictures to blueprints might mean to Wittgenstein, a sometime architect.

Mulhall emphasizes Wittgenstein's saying that a blueprint is read (Wittgenstein underlines "reads" in his text), and he takes this to mean: something interpreted or made out rather than seen and described "immediately and spontaneously" (OBITW, 18). But this a curious rendering in a book whose overarching theme is the dimension of grace and mastery of ordinary human doings (cf. OBITW, 201). For consider that a practicing architect's reading of a blueprint, like a good musician's silent reading of a score, may be no less immediate and spontaneous an activity than obeying a street sign, or than reading itself. Mulhall acknowledges that such people are "conceivable" (OBITW, 27). But he misses Wittgenstein's point of comparison, which is not the (lack of) ease with which someone does something with a blueprint, but what it is we (typically) do with blueprints, how we (typically) treat them. That is, the importance of the analogy to reading a

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[18]I have altered Anscombe's translation of the first sentence, which in the German runs: "Wann würde ich's denn ein bloßes Wissen, kein Sehen, nennen?"

blueprint, as Wittgenstein reminds us, is that a blueprint is something one works from,[19] something ordinarily treated as a working drawing, something that naturally suggests a particular use. Of course we do on occasion choose to treat a blueprint differently – hang it on the wall, say – just as we do on occasion, as I take Wittgenstein to be reminding us, choose to treat a picture as a working drawing: we might use the sketch of a landscape as a map, or a composite sketch of a face to find a criminal suspect. (And of course we do not always choose the role that drawings or other objects play for us. If we sometimes hang texts but never theorems of mechanics on the wall [PI, 205c], it is not because we fail to appreciate how one is as good as the other.) But insofar as "merely knowing" is likened to our normal ways with blueprints, it identifies a seeing, or a not really seeing, that takes for granted what is seen, or takes no special notice of what is seen, or notices what is seen only in the sense of registering it – "reading" it, say like a reading-machine.[20] "Merely knowing" names a conceptual space that is marked off not by a kind of object (a

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[19]Compare Wittgenstein's clarification of the attitude of the aspect-blind toward pictures: "It might be the kind of attitude which we have toward a blueprint. For example, he would be able to work according to a pictorial representation." Wittgenstein, Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. 2, ed. G. H. von Wright and Heikki Nyman, trans. C. G. Luckhardt and M. A. E. Aue (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980; reprint, Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1988), §479, hereafter referred to as RPP 2. Compare also the following: "So (just) make a verbal picture, illustrate it as you choose – by drawing, comparisons, etc.! Thus you can – as it were – prepare a blueprint. — And now there remains the question how to work from it." Wittgenstein, Zettel, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), §275, hereafter referred to as Z. (My emphases throughout.)

[20]"A person ... may attend to what he reads, or again – as we might put it – function as a mere reading-machine: I mean, read aloud and correctly without attending to what he is reading; perhaps with his attention on something quite different...." (PI, §156)

particularly abstract or unfamiliar one, one that cannot be seen immediately or spontaneously) but by a way of treating objects, or by one role that objects might – that most objects typically do – perform in our lives (cf. PI, 205c). —We have been examining Mulhall's interest in contrasting merely knowing with ordinary seeing ("continuous aspect perception"). If I had to name the relation that Wittgenstein intended between these concepts, I would say not that merely knowing and our ordinary concept of seeing oppose one another, but that they are equivalent.

It will help to set out in a couple of tables the relation among the key concepts in (1) Mulhall's interpretation of the distinction between seeing and merely knowing, and (2) an alternative interpretation. In addition to "seeing" and "merely knowing," the concepts to consider are, in Wittgenstein's text, "the 'continuous seeing' of an aspect" and "the 'dawning' of an aspect" (both from PI, 194b), "regarding-as" and "seeing-as" (or more fully, "a seeing-as which only takes place while I am actually concerning myself with the picture as the object depicted") (both of these terms from PI, 205g), and "aspect-blindness" (PI, 213f). In addition to these, we have seen that Mulhall speaks of "continuous aspect perception" (e.g. OBITW, 20) and "the interpretative or inferential model of perception" (OBITW, 19). For Mulhall these concepts sort themselves out as follows. (The terms appearing in the same vertical column are said to be equivalent.)

Mulhall's model		
aspect-blindness	the 'continuous seeing' of an aspect	the 'dawning' of an aspect
	regarding-as	seeing-as
the interpretative model of perception	continuous aspect perception	
merely knowing	seeing	

An alternative interpretation of Wittgenstein's distinction between seeing and merely knowing is shown in the following:

Alternative model		
aspect-blindness	the 'continuous seeing' of an aspect	the 'dawning' of an aspect
	regarding-as	seeing-as
	merely knowing	seeing

While I prefer the latter model to the former, the guiding thought of my exegesis has been this: that any effort to corral Wittgenstein's writings on the concepts of seeing (both our ordinary concepts and Wittgenstein's invented concepts) is an effort that these writings resist for reasons that strike their author as internal to his project. In particular, we have seen that Wittgenstein shifts his understanding of the contrast between seeing and merely knowing through the course of the six instances (on PI, 201-5) in which he contrasts these concepts. One could indicate the direction of that shift by describing it as a movement within or between the models just presented, from the Alternative model to Mulhall's model. But that is not to say that Mulhall's model is, because the last, closer to the truth.

On the contrary: what prompts Wittgenstein to introduce the concept of regarding-as just is his recognition of this shift or slippage in his description. The slippage is not a blunder so much as a tool for clarification; it is telling of the concepts under discussion. And the effect of Wittgenstein's correcting the shift through the new, or newly-named, contrast between regarding-as and seeing-as is to draw the focus back onto a concept of seeing which is joined to thought – back, that is, to the experience of being struck by an aspect.

One could say that in sorting out Wittgenstein's contrast between seeing and merely knowing, Mulhall concentrates on the side of Wittgenstein's remarks that emphasizes what we might call our natural agreements in seeing, our saying in unison "a face" on being shown the figure

(PI, 204c). This leaves the impression that the statement "[H]e merely knows what the picture represents" (OBITW, 146) can make sense only if one is speaking, not of a human being, but of a robot or automaton (cf. OBITW, 149), as if "merely knowing" were being employed as a quasi-technical term rather than as a concept of our language. That leads one to overlook how the contrast between seeing and merely knowing can mark our no less natural differences in seeing, or our failures to agree in what we see.

1.3 The Aesthetic Dimension of Wittgenstein's Later Writings

The side of difference or disagreement that "seeing" highlights when it conveys a sense that contrasts with "merely knowing" is brought out by a close reader of Wittgenstein, Stanley Cavell. It is surprising, therefore, that Cavell does not name Wittgenstein nor mention his remarks on seeing and merely knowing anywhere in the essay that includes the following passage:

> What I know, when I've seen or heard something is, one may wish to say, not a matter of merely knowing it. But what more is it? Well, as the words say, it is a matter of seeing it. But one could also say that it is not a matter of merely seeing it. But what more is it? Perhaps "merely knowing" should be compared with "not really knowing": "You don't really know what it's like to be a Negro"; "You don't really know how your remark made her feel"; "You don't really know what I mean when I say that Schnabel's slow movements give the impression not of slowness but of infinite length." You merely say the words .[21]

The reproach in such remarks is warranted, one might think, when the one who is being addressed is not kept from seeing or hearing – which is not to say that seeing or hearing in these cases may not require some effort or practice, even talent. It is part of the grammar of the reproach "You don't really know" that the one being addressed must be in a position to see or hear: he is, say, looking at a picture that shows a sphere floating in the air or listening to a recording of Schnabel, as opposed to reading about it or being told about it. But he nonetheless merely knows what it is, or how it is supposed to be seen or heard or experienced: he is paraphrasing, with a self-important air, the description in the exhibit catalog, or is otherwise simply mouthing some words. It may be that he has to

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[21]Stanley Cavell, "Music Discomposed," in Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969; reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 192, hereafter referred to as "MD."

piece together the picture or sounds in order to identify it or describe it appropriately, to make (the conventional) sense of it. And that condition – some might imagine it as autism, though I think it is closer to autism's opposite[22] – would approximate Mulhall's reading of "merely knowing." But it could be that he simply doesn't know how to begin to attend to it, or refuses to attend to it, or has lost the patience to attend to it, or the desire to. The contrast I am drawing is between the claim or discovery that he cannot see the sphere floating – which makes "merely knowing" sound like a disability, or a way to compensate for one – and the more neutral claim or discovery that he does not see it – which goes only so far as to express a refusal to apply certain concepts of experience to him (cf. PI, 193d-e). The former names an incapacity to see, a species trait or a matter of physiology; the latter registers the familiar, human failure (refusal, lack of desire) to see here and now, whose cause may be a matter of talent or mood or temperament.[23] And this latter sense of "merely knowing" is familiar because "seeing" can have the sense of "seeing-as," can be understood as naming the experience of being struck by an aspect.

Cavell in the same essay goes on to suggest that how or what one knows "in seeing" could be expressed as "knowing by feeling, or in feeling"; and he explains that

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[22]My understanding of autism continues to be enriched by Temple Grandin's remarkable Thinking in Pictures: and Other Reports from My Life with Autism (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

[23]This distinction echos Wittgenstein's repeated emphasizing of the difference between philosophical explanation and his method of philosophical description or perspicuous representation. It might also be characterized as finding philosophical interest not in the hypothetical but in the psychological, as Wittgenstein words it in his "Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough." See below, section 2.1.

> "Knowing by feeling" is not like "knowing by touching"; that is, it is not a case of providing the basis for a claim to know. But one could say that feeling functions as a touchstone: the mark left on the stone is out of the sight of others, but the result is one of knowledge, or has the form of knowledge – it is directed to an object, the object has been tested, the result is one of conviction. ("MD," 192)

I am counting on the reader's being struck by this as a description of an experience characteristic of our encounters with art. Such encounters are Cavell's explicit topic, which is why he can characterize the form of knowledge peculiar to a seeing that contrasts with merely knowing in terms of a "conviction" about the object, so that an experience of it now functions as a "touchstone" for the observer. In contrast, no one would say that the change of aspect of the duck-rabbit serves him or her as a touchstone; when we make out the figure of a man in a natural rock formation or a cloud, we do not, even when it is quite uncanny, have the conviction that he is there. (We can no more be convinced that he is, than someone else can raise the doubt that he is. There is no disputing about fancy.) But is Wittgenstein, in his investigation of the grammar of "seeing" and of "merely knowing," concerned with our encounters with art? And how concerned is he?

The first question is the easier to answer. Immediately after the example of the galloping horse Wittgenstein asks, "What does anyone tell me by saying 'Now I see it as.....'? What consequences has this information? What can I do with it?" Following a tentative suggestion of an answer, he says quite suddenly yet casually:

> Here it occurs to me that in conversation on aesthetic matters we use the words: "You have to see it like this, this is how it is meant"; "When you see it like this, you see where it goes wrong"; "You have to hear this bar as an introduction"; "You must hear it in this key"; "You must phrase it like this" (which can refer to hearing as well as to playing). (PI, 202h)

There are, not surprisingly, more than a dozen allusions to and examples drawn from "aesthetic matters" in the pages on aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness. But one can choose, and Wittgenstein's readers have tended to choose, to read these as primarily illustrative rather than substantive. The casualness of Wittgenstein's "Here it occurs to me" might suggest that they are right. But the remark is casual in appearance only. Here is an earlier draft of the passage:

> If I ask myself of what use, of what interest that report is, I remember how often it is said in aesthetic observations: "You have to see it like this, this is how it is meant".... (LW 1, §632; the rest, but for one word, is identical to PI, 202h)

Apparently Wittgenstein's remark, which he characterizes in the version that appears in the Investigations as having just occurred to him, did not just occur to him there. Why does he cast the remark as if it had? But notice how that amounts to asking, Why does he recast the remark to say that something has just occurred to him, or dawned on him, as if he were seeing an aspect of his topic of aspect-seeing for the first time? Seen in that light, a reasonable answer would be: Wittgenstein makes this self-conscious reference to his topic to draw our attention to the remark, or turn our attention back to it. To discover this serves both to undermine the remark's casualness and to underscore the pertinence of aesthetic matters to the topic of seeing an aspect.

The depth of Wittgenstein's concern in his later writings, not least in his investigation of aspect-seeing and aspect-blindness, with what might be called aesthetic matters has yet to be fully measured, despite past efforts to "apply" the aspect-seeing

material to aesthetics that had their heyday in the 1950s and early 60s.[24] One place to begin to sound this concern and indicate its depth is with a remark that links Wittgenstein's involvement with music and his well-documented fear or conviction that his teaching would fall on deaf ears and before blind eyes. At the time he was at work on the remarks on aspect-seeing, Wittgenstein told his friend Maurice Drury, "It is impossible for me to say in my book one word about all that music has meant in my life. How then can I hope to be understood?"[25] There is a danger of making too much of this remark; but one should not be too impressed by that fact while ignoring the danger of making too little of it. For its tone of despair, to mention its most obvious feature, asks us to take it seriously, however in the end that is to be done.[26] I assume that a serious reading will not direct us to fasten on those remarks in Wittgenstein's later writings that

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[24]The exceptions that I know of, indeed that I have been guided by, are to be found in the work of Cavell and of Frank Cioffi. But if what I go on to say is clear, it should be clear to what extent my interest in locating aesthetic concerns in Wittgenstein's later writings is at an angle to theirs.

[25]M. O'C. Drury, "Conversations with Wittgenstein," in Recollections of Wittgenstein, ed. Rush Rhees (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 160.

[26]Joachim Schulte quotes Wittgenstein's remark to Drury in the "Introduction" to his Wittgenstein: An Introduction, trans. William H. Brenner and John F. Holley (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 14, placing it at the beginning of a section titled "Personality." Not surprisingly, given that placement, the immediate lesson Schulte draws from it is purely biographical: music was an "important part in his life" and "a determining factor in the way Wittgenstein interacted with many of his friends and acquaintances" (Ibid.). It is true that Wittgenstein's remark, as remembered by Drury, could be read as saying that his life with music is important (only) to understanding him. But if that is what one takes it to say, then one must account for the fact (an implication of this particular voicing of despair) that Wittgenstein would care to place the singular hope of his being understood on what is, by most accounts, a work of philosophy.

allude to an experience of music. For insofar as he does refer to his life with music in his writings, it is not clear how we could understand there being a difficulty in his saying this, giving voice to it. Wittgenstein's remark to Drury would seem to announce: Nothing of what I write is untouched by this experience, by the fact that my life has been, among all else, a life with music. Should we understand this to mean that every remark in the Investigations speaks – or rather fails completely in each instance to speak – somehow to a life with music? It seems we could come to believe that nothing of the book breaks faith with that experience.

But what if we don't? What would it mean for me to overlook this aspect of Wittgenstein's interest, or to fail to understand it? The remark to Drury tells us at most that I would have failed to have understood Wittgenstein's book. And it is not much of a discovery to have discovered another way to do that. I said above that Mulhall's reading of the aspect-seeing remarks would be found to be a misreading that is anticipated by Wittgenstein's text. I did not mean simply that Wittgenstein anticipated being misread.

Consider the following, representative part of the public record of Wittgenstein's life with music. He learned to play the clarinet when he was in his 30s, and thereafter played on occasion informally with others. We are told that he took great care over the exact manner of performance, but whether his concern was unusual or straightforwardly musicianly is not clear. He was fond of the music of Brahms and Josef Labor, both of whom had been personal friends of his family when he was growing up. He had little interest in or patience for the music of modern composers – which should be understood to include Mahler no less than Schoenberg; but on at least one occasion he showed an

interest, or more a curiosity, in jazz. He was, according to those who heard him, an excellent whistler: he would whistle Schubert songs while his friend David Pinsent, to whose memory Wittgenstein dedicated the Tractatus, accompanied him on the piano. He grew up in a family that had a wealth of musical talent. His mother was an outstanding sight reader; his brother Paul was a concert pianist; and his brother Hans was composing music when he was four years old, the age at which Wittgenstein, we are told, began to talk.[27]

While these particulars and anecdotes are intriguing, and despite a continuing fascination with their cultural background – with fin de siecle Vienna and the breaking apart of empires – what we have here is not an exceptional life with music, a life with music unlike any other, unlike any we could imagine. (What would the public record of such a life look like? Perhaps it would look like Mozart's; perhaps like Helen Keller's: "I am blind – yet I see; I am deaf – yet I hear.") Someone could object that while we do not find Wittgenstein's life to be exceptional musically, he might have. But I think we could not imagine that as a mere error in judgment on his part, as a lapse in self-knowledge. And if we must then imagine it as "deep personal solipsism" (in J. N. Findlay's phrase), it seems to miss Wittgenstein altogether.[28] Thus despite its melodramatic expression, or let us say its transcendental claim, its gesture in the direction of all that music has meant in

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[27]For facts cited in this paragraph, see Monk, The Duty of Genius, 8, 11-14, 78, 213, 240; Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, Wittgenstein's Vienna (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 175-76.

[28]See in this regard Frank Cioffi, "Congenital transcendentalism and 'the loneliness which is the truth about things,'" in Wittgenstein on Freud and Frazer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 241.

his life, Wittgenstein's remark is not best taken to be singling out his experience with music as opposed to, say, mine, my deeply felt but unexceptional life with music. Yet neither is his an ordinary life with music. We cannot imagine Wittgenstein's particular despair as belonging to just anyone. (Is Wittgenstein right in thinking that most people do something comparable to his rhythmical grinding of teeth when they imagine a piece of music? Do they do it "often every day"? See CV, 28b.) A despair that is not everyone's and not obviously Wittgenstein's alone is the (possible) despair of a few. Then does Wittgenstein's remark to Drury betoken a book for a few – or in Nietzsche's phrase, "a book for all and none"?

I said above that taking Wittgenstein's remark seriously will not direct us to turn single-mindedly to his remarks on music. But it would be equally unwise to overlook the several remarks in the Investigations that speak to or draw connections to or otherwise pertain to music. I count over thirty such remarks in its 232 pages. And there are dozens of others in what has been published of the typescripts and manuscripts and slips of paper from this period when Wittgenstein was at work on what he described to Drury only as "my book." Indeed, as one follows the suggestion that a life with music informs the later writings, and looks back at the latter part of the Investigations, one can be struck by the richness of those remarks that make mention of music and by their often pivotal locations in the book. These remarks belong to paths of thought that include further remarks about the sense in which we can and cannot describe sounds (PI, §78) and smells (PI, §610), what pictures tell us (PI, §523), what it means to understand a picture or a drawing (PI, §526), how we lead others to comprehend a poem (PI, §533), what goes on in reading a

poem with and without feeling (PI, 214h), and, of course, what it means that we can see and hear things in a particular way (PI, II.xi passim) or in a particular sense (PI, §534) or with a particular phrasing (PI, 202k). Then the wonder may be not whether we can take Wittgenstein's remark to Drury seriously, but whether we can account for what I believe is a not uncommon experience in reading the Investigations: the sense that one is discovering its aesthetic import, as if the remarks about music and pictures and words in poetry came upon one by surprise, as if the presence of these remarks, or what they gesture to, has always been missed. How is it so much as possible to overlook them or forget them? This experience is no doubt tied to another which one can have in reading Wittgenstein's "Lectures on Aesthetics,"[29] namely the sense that much of what is said there is only tangentially related to what we tend to call aesthetics, so that one forgets that one is reading lectures on aesthetics. (One of his first remarks, for example, is that one learns which words in a foreign tribe correspond to "good" or "fine" by looking for food or toys – LC, 2.) These complementary possibilities of forgetting suggest to me the difficulty in mastering the extent to which Wittgenstein's work treats the aesthetical – as Cavell has said it treats the ethical[30] – not as a separate discipline within philosophy but as somehow integral to the task of thinking philosophically, or as Wittgenstein prefers to say, perspicuously (PI, §122). To take Wittgenstein's remark to Drury seriously now asks that one bethinks oneself how a life with music, or let me say a relation to the aesthetical,

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[29]Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief, ed. Cyril Barrett (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), hereafter referred to as LC.

[30]See Cavell, "Declining Decline," 40.

figures in the pursuit of philosophical perspicuity. One direction such a line of thought might take through Wittgenstein's published work is detailed in the next section.

We have found reason to consider the possibility, contra Mulhall, that Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-seeing are not to be subsumed under his earlier critique of sense-data theory but are part of a continuing interest in philosophy's relation to the aesthetical. That is not to deny the relevance of this continuing interest to a critique of traditional philosophy's emphasis on, or discovery of, sense-data. But it is a critique from a position quite different from Mulhall's, with its privileging of continuous or normal seeing, seeing (and saying) as normative. In the next chapter I will argue that aspect-dawning experiences are important to Wittgenstein both as indication of what our claims to see something rest on and as representation of the natural limits, or natural demands, of philosophical writing.

Chapter 2. Internal Relations, Grammar, and the Audience of the Investigations

Man hält mich auf der Straße oft für blind.
– Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on Colour

2.1 Aspect-seeing, Aesthetic Descriptions, and Perspicuous Representation

I ended the previous chapter by proposing a connection between Wittgenstein's concern with aesthetic matters – meaning, among others, the matter of aesthetic insight or the dawning of an understanding – and the ideal of philosophical clarity or perspicuity which Wittgenstein's later method tries to embody. To bring out this connection between the aesthetical and the philosophically perspicuous, (A) I will turn, first, to look more closely at Wittgenstein's characterization of his method as one of perspicuous representation. (B) I will then consider how the philosophical task of perspicuous representation relates to the kinds of critical descriptions called for by experiences of, among other things, music. (C) Lastly, returning to the phenomenon of aspect-seeing, I will compare these to Wittgenstein's description of the dawning of an aspect as the perception of an internal relation.

(A) In the remark where Wittgenstein emphasizes the importance to his method of a perspicuous representation (PI, §122), he explains that such an account "produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate cases". What kind of understanding is Wittgenstein describing here? We come to know through the course of reading the Investigations what he means by "finding and inventing intermediate cases" (Zwischengliedern, "connecting links"): they are instances of language use (of language-games) summoned as "objects of comparison which are meant to throw light on the facts of our language" (PI, §130) at moments of philosophical darkness, or when one is most in danger of succumbing to one or another form of philosophical error. Where Wittgenstein (1) finds an intermediate link, it may counter a tendency to view the occasions of use of a particular word unvaryingly – for example, the tendency to imagine that "I know..." always implies being able to say or describe what one knows (cf. PI, §78). Elsewhere Wittgenstein will (2) invent an intermediate link, not so much between existing occasions of use as between existing human or even biological forms of life, say between human and animal,[1] to counter the tendency to view certain words or concepts as fundamental (cf. PI, 230b). Thus Wittgenstein asks his readers on occasion to imagine a language use as natural at some time in our primitive past, or for creatures differing from us in some important

[1]Here we have the sense of "intermediate" implicit in Pascal's remark, "Man is neither angel nor beast, and the unfortunate thing is that he who would act the angel acts the beast." With Wittgenstein's intermediate cases, however, we are often left to wonder whether it makes sense to imagine his invented peoples as acting the beast – i.e. whether it makes sense to imagine them as human enough to imagine, to picture their condition, for instance, as intermediate. (The topic of imagining in relation to the aspect-blind will be taken up in section 2.5.)

respect, or natural to us were certain facts about us somehow different. The builders in PI, §2 are introduced in this way;[2] and Wittgenstein's conceptual investigation of the aspect-blind may look to be a similar instance of an intermediate case. Wittgenstein calls the making of these intermediate cases "constructing fictitious concepts" (CV, 74f) or "inventing fictitious natural history" (PI, 230a).

But it is not so obvious how laying before us these findings and inventions will produce "just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections.'" For saying that an understanding consists in "seeing connections" does not straightforwardly exclude very much of anything we understand by "understanding." Yet Wittgenstein asserts that a perspicuous representation, the concept of which "is of fundamental significance for us," has the effect of producing "just that understanding." It will help in this instance to turn to the original context of his remarks, since they specify at least one sort of understanding he means to exclude.

The remarks on perspicuous representation appear in a typescript from the early 1930s, and conclude ten pages of consecutive commentary on Frazer's The Golden Bough.[3] It could be said that Wittgenstein's aim in those remarks is to distinguish his new method of responding to philosophical puzzles – a method he finds articulated by the concept of a perspicuous representation – from what he finds objectionable in Frazer's

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[2]PI, §2: "That philosophical concept of meaning [i.e. the one Wittgenstein sees pictured in the quotation from Augustine that opens the Investigations] ... is the idea of a language more primitive than ours. Let us imagine a language for which the description given by Augustine is right."

[3]Wittgenstein, "Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough," in PO, 115-55.

enterprise of explaining magical and religious practices by seeking to establish their historical origins. He writes,

> The historical explanation, the explanation as an hypothesis of development, is only one way of assembling the data – of their synopsis. It is just as possible to see the data in their relation to one another and to embrace them in a general picture without putting it in the form of an hypothesis about temporal development....
>
> "And so the chorus points to a secret law" one feels like saying to Frazer's collection of facts. I can represent this law, this idea, by means of an evolutionary hypothesis, or also, analogously to the [Goethe's] schema of a plant, by means of the schema of a religious ceremony, but also by means of the arrangement of its factual content alone, in a 'perspicuous' representation.

There follows in reverse order two short paragraphs that constitute the last two-thirds of PI, §122:[4]

> The concept of a perspicuous representation is of fundamental significance for us. It earmarks the form of account we give, the way we look at things. (A kind of 'Weltanschauung' as it is apparently typical of our time. Spengler.)
>
> This perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in 'seeing connections.' Hence the importance of finding intermediate cases.

And the remarks on Frazer from the early 1930s conclude,

> But an hypothetical connecting link should in this case do nothing but direct the attention to the similarity, the relatedness, of the facts. As one might illustrate an internal relation of a circle to an ellipse by gradually converting an ellipse into a circle; but not in order to assert that a certain ellipse actually, historically, had originated from a circle (evolutionary hypothesis), but only in order to sharpen our eye for a formal connection.
>
> But I can also see the evolutionary hypothesis as nothing more, as the clothing of a formal connection. (PO, 132-33)

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[4]Here I substitute Anscombe's more familiar translation in PI for Beversluis's translation in PO wherever the German in the two versions is identical, so as to bring out that identity.

The goal of a perspicuous representation, an understanding which consists in seeing connections, is thus distinguished from an understanding of "the facts" (e.g. concerning ritual practices) which proposes an hypothesis to explain their interconnectedness, or attempts to draw a conclusion about the origin or condition of their interconnectedness (e.g. that they are an early and superstitious attempt to do what greater experience has taught us to do by means of full-fledged scientific inquiry).[5] Understanding the facts in the former sense requires that one not be led by arrogance, dullness, unease,... to explain the nature of their connections to other more familiar, less interesting, more comforting,... human practices. For Wittgenstein, seeing the connections among the facts is the goal: philosophical perspicuity requires not that you find the historical or causal connections of the facts collected and set down, but that you see how the facts connect to you, or sit with you, how your response to them is telling of you. For Wittgenstein, to say it otherwise, philosophical perspicuity takes the form not of a demonstration, something on which one can build, but of a way of looking, something which must itself be built up (reconstructed, practiced, gone over).

But there is something curiously unguarded in Wittgenstein's voicing of this ideal of philosophical clarity. I have in mind the claim – reproduced unaltered in PI, §112 – that a perspicuous representation "produces"[6] that keen seeing of connections that

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[5]The thought that a philosophical inquiry is not a scientific (empirical) one, that the urge to provide an explanation must give way to the task of description, and that "description" here means a laying out or arrangement of what we already know, finds its most concentrated expression in the Investigations at §109.

[6]Wittgenstein's "vermittelt" is perhaps not as strong as Anscombe's "produces"

(continued...)

characterizes philosophical understanding. For why must it produce this? Couldn't someone fail to see? The unguardedness is furthered in the earlier version when it calls what one sees "an internal relation" (as between ellipse and circle) and "a formal connection." In the Tractatus,[7] an internal relation – whether that describes a relation between or among pictures or depictions (TLP, 4.014) or the forms or structures of propositions (TLP, 5.131, 5.2) – is what can be shown and cannot be said (TLP, 4.122). So a question in assessing the remarks on Frazer is whether one's seeing, for example, an ellipse changing into a circle means (entails?) that one must be on the way to seeing their "internal relation" ("sharpen our eye for a formal connection"). And a similar question in considering the method of the Investigations is whether one's seeing, for example, a list illustrating the multiplicity of things we do with words (PI, §23) or seeing two quite different schema for reading a table (PI, §86) means (produces the effect?) that one must be on the way to "seeing the connections" among our words – which would mean, among other things, that one sees that these connections are not everywhere the result of rules.

(B) The same distinction outlined above – between a knowing, whose goal is seeing the connections, and a knowing, that proposes a causal connection behind the connections – is important to Wittgenstein's understanding of the comparisons we come

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[6](...continued)
("mediates" seems closer); but neither is it hedged ("vermittelt etwa das Verständnis" or something similar).

[7]Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1961), hereafter referred to as TLP, followed by the proposition number. I have also consulted the German/English edition of TLP, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1922).

to make in describing our experiences of music. Here the relevant remarks appear in Wittgenstein's various discussions of what "understanding music" is and what "explaining to someone what one understands in music" is. I summarize the points, numbering four, that I draw from these passages.[8] (1) We explain what we understand in understanding a stretch of music, e.g. a musical theme, by coming up with certain comparisons or associations (connections). We might make a gesture, or we might say "Here it is as if a conclusion were being drawn," "Here the symphony's second idea stands to the first not as blood relations but as man and wife," etc. (PI, §527; CV 34a). (2) Insofar as these comparisons or associations can be justified (PI, §527), it is not a justification which the other person must accept; we cannot give conclusive reasons (propose a causal connection) for our making them, for example by noting something the composer said about what the passage is supposed to represent (CV, 69d). I mention in passing that our relative inability to defend our words here is tied to our relative inability to defend our reproach of someone for "merely knowing" a stretch of music (see above, p. 43). In each case we face the same danger of opacity, and for reasons that are, let me say, internal to the sorts of judgments these are. (3) The comparisons or associations that I come up with

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[8]It is not part of my concern whether the following remarks fail to discriminate between descriptions of music and descriptions of painting or dance or architecture. It may matter in a way that goes beyond what I have written here – indeed, I suspect it does matter – that it was a life with music and not, for example, painting that Wittgenstein despaired his being unable to say anything about. But whether, if it matters further, we should attribute this to music's abstractness or purity or directness, is not my immediate concern to say. Nor am I interested in criticizing Wittgenstein for his fairly scanty enumeration of what can be said to convey an understanding of a stretch of music. It is enough for my purpose that the examples he does give are felt as accurate, recognizable as expressive of a life with music.

in describing a stretch of music can be of interest to me no less than to someone else (LC, 32). I may even begin with the feeling that I don't know what a musical passage is doing, "don't know my way about" with it (cf. PI, §123) but then, when the association occurs to me, say: Now I understand (BB, 167; LC, 37). (4) Nevertheless, when I offer comparisons or associations as a way of explaining what I understand about a stretch of music, or what I understand in understanding it, I am not claiming that they are what I understand. That is, I am not claiming that the associations are what occur to me in understanding this stretch of music, as if forming them were the criterion of that understanding.[9] And thus my intention in offering the associations is not to, as it were, put these associations in the other person's head; for in that case it would do just as well for her to acquire the associations independent of hearing this stretch of music – from my words alone, say, or from some other musical passage (LC, 34, 36).[10] My intention is rather to get her to hear what I hear. And since I am aware that the connections I am making only hint at this (cf. PI, 183b), I might describe my intention as one of getting her to hear what I hear before the connections are formed (cf. PI, §§125-6). Understanding a stretch of music is not a matter of "having" (suffering) associations; understanding music is following it. (Still, as always, what someone says or does as the music is playing, or

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[9]Cf. Wittgenstein, Philosophical Grammar, ed. Rush Rhees, trans. Anthony Kenny (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1974; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), III:37 (p. 79), hereafter referred to as PG.

[10]Wittgenstein adds that producing associations could be our interest in art (his example is poetry) were we, or our culture, different (LC, 34). What this suggests about the nature of art, I take it, is that a question perpetually worth asking is whether we are on the way to becoming, or are already, different in just this sense.

afterwards – and in general, what I know of her – will be what I look to if asked whether I think she understands a musical passage.)

But to return to how understanding music bears on seeing connections: my interest in voicing a musical association is not alone to get the other person to hear what I hear, to understand what is there to be heard. I am moved in part to tell her in order that she should understand me – at any rate, that we should share an understanding, that she should acknowledge my association as apt. Let us imagine that it is apt – at any rate, that it is not one I simply choose, that it is forced on me, or from me (cf. PI, 178h, 215a). Am I still inclined here, as I am with the ellipse and the circle, to say that there is an internal relation between this musical passage and my description of it? And is my ambivalence in thinking through my response to that question not unrelated to the fact that the other person may well fail to acknowledge this relation, fail to understand me? The positivist inheritors of the Tractatus would say that my description – e.g. "It is as if a conclusion were being drawn" – is nonsense. Yet of music Wittgenstein expresses the conviction, as he does of the self-affirmed nonsense of the Tractatus, that it can teach us something as well as give us pleasure (CV, 36f; TLP, Preface). And he is willing to speak of something in discussions of aesthetic associations as "decisive" (PI, 219b). We will need to ask: what are we speaking to, or for, when we are inclined to speak of an internal relation?

(C) Wittgenstein emphasizes a structure of "seeing an internal relation" at one further and seemingly crucial juncture, in the Investigations' discussion of aspect-seeing. A central task over the first half of the remarks on aspect-seeing is to characterize the odd

mix of features in our expressions of this phenomenon, the sense of its being "a case of both seeing and thinking" or "an amalgam of the two" (PI, 197h). After Wittgenstein rejects, here as in other conceptual studies, the suggestion that the phenomenon of aspect-seeing just is an amalgam, a simple compound of discrete, familiar processes – in this case, of "looking plus thinking" (PI, 211e) – he offers the following:

> The colour of the visual impression corresponds to the colour of the object (this blotting paper looks pink to me, and is pink) – the shape of the visual impression to the shape of the object (it looks rectangular to me, and is rectangular) – but what I perceive in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects. (PI, 212a)

The internal relation among the relevant objects in this context is not something prepared for us, as by a perspicuous representation or setting out. The internal relation simply dawns in the seeing, as in the Tractatus the internal relation between propositional forms "shows" itself. Wittgenstein says the internal relation is "what I perceive."

Before considering the implications of this for our understanding both of aspect-seeing and of philosophical perspicuity, we should notice that the pertinence of Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect-seeing to a consideration of his philosophical method appears in two distinct ways. First, Wittgenstein approaches the topic of aspect-seeing with the same goal of clarification that he claimed as central to our understanding of Frazer's facts about ritual practices. At the opening of Part II, Section xi of the Investigations, immediately after he introduces the concept of "noticing an aspect," Wittgenstein draws the distinction between an interest in its causes (an interest, in this case, which he ascribes to psychologists) and "our" interest in "the concept and its place among the concepts of experience" (PI, 193d-e). Here again, his interest is in discovering

and laying before us conceptual connections, connections the seeing of which constitutes a kind of clearing of the philosophical fog. But further – coming to the second point of pertinence – in this instance the concept of aspect-seeing identifies an experience, or a family of experiences, which is itself a seeing of connections. To study its connections to other concepts is to study the conceptual connections of the concept of seeing connections, the concept of that understanding which the Investigations sets out to convey. This affinity between subject and method strongly suggests that aspect-seeing is more than a metaphor or figure for the experience and pitfalls of growing philosophical understanding. Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect-seeing is a meditation on the possibility of his philosophical procedures, of his unpublished method.

2.2 Aspect-seeing and Seeing an Internal Relation

Let us return to Wittgenstein's description of aspect-seeing as the perception of an internal relation, and so to the particulars of how the experience of aspect-seeing is itself a seeing of connections. I suggested above that in aspect-seeing the objects whose connection I am perceiving are not "prepared" for me. (There are ways in which the relevant objects could be prepared or represented to me, as a separate experience; but of course that need not happen.) The immediate point of Wittgenstein's remark is the related suggestion that the objects whose connection I am perceiving are not all placed before me – neither all at once, like Frazer's facts, nor consecutively, like the ellipse and the circle. The objects whose internal relation I perceive are, for example, this which is before me – Jastrow's duck-rabbit – and rabbits, with their rabbit ears, rabbit noses, rabbit eyes, etc.;

and I simply, suddenly see the one in the other: "It's a rabbit!" When we compare this experience to one of seeing the internal relation or formal connection that Wittgenstein is describing in his remarks on Frazer, it seems that here more, as it were, depends on me; more is contributed from my side of things. One could say that with an aspect-dawning experience the perception of "an internal relation" is more distinct grammatically, but less distinct chronologically, from the perception of the object than it is in the case of Frazer's facts or the changing ellipse. One could say in addition that with aspect-dawning experiences the relation is more obviously something that I bring to the table (since at least one of the "objects" is). But that I perceive a relation need not be telling of me; my interest in it need not entail the sense that it is mine, as we found it did with the musical associations I form. That I perceive a relation does not seem particularly telling, for example, with the switch of aspects of the duck-rabbit, at least not once I become familiar with such drawings; it may seem more telling were I unable to make it switch where you and most others could. And it may be telling where the object of perception is more ambiguous (a cloud, a Rorschach test), as it would be telling, and troubling, were I to discover that I could no longer see any figures in clouds, the adroitness of childhood possibly abandoning me, here as elsewhere.

Do we find that we are inclined, with Wittgenstein, to call what we perceive in aspect-dawning experiences "an internal relation"? When we are most inclined to say this, we are thinking most likely of gestalt-figures like Jastrow's duck-rabbit. And our inclination here seems to be strengthened by the peculiar unambiguity of these ambiguous figures, the feature of there being, we want to say, exactly two ways of seeing them. Even

when we find that there are multiple ways of seeing a figure, as Wittgenstein seems to discover between his remark about the schematic cube pictured at TLP, 5.5423 and his remark about the similar rectangular prism pictured at PI, 193f, we may still be inclined to say with the earlier Wittgenstein, "we really see two [three, four, ...] different facts" (my emphasis). The picture shows the very possibilities we see; or we might say that it anticipates them, provides for them. It is this feature of self-presentation or transparency that such figures, despite their ambiguity, share with unambiguous pictures (whether picture-objects or full-fledged pictures). And it is that aspect of our life with pictures which makes that life appear to offer the perfect solution to the problem of meaning, in the guise of the tractarian picture-theory. But when Wittgenstein turns to the example of someone (he suggests a child at play) seeing a chest as a house (PI, 206e-g),[11] and after touching base with the duck-rabbit again, moves immediately to the example of a musical theme played at successively slower tempos until the listener (he offers himself) exclaims "Now at last it's a [march, dance,...]" (PI, 206i),[12] we may be less willing to say, or less certain what it would mean if we said, that these possible relations are internal to those objects. And we are certainly no more willing when shortly thereafter Wittgenstein turns to related experiences or examples, such as my having a purely visual concept of "hesitant posture" or "timid face," which is said to be comparable to my associating a "perceived

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[11]"And if you knew how to play this game, and, given a particular situation, you exclaimed with special expression 'Now it's a house!' – you would be giving expression to the dawning of an aspect."

[12]"In the end I say 'Now it's right', or 'Now at last it's a march', 'Now at last it's a dance'. – The same tone of voice expresses the dawning of an aspect."

structure" with the concepts "major" or "minor" (PI, 209b-c), and my hearing the plaint in a plaintive melody (PI, 209f) or the seriousness of a tune (PI, 210b). But when he moves on, in the pages immediately before and after his brief discussion of aspect-blindness, to consider "experiencing the meaning of a word" (PI, 210c, 214d and following) and speaks equally of the "physiognomy" of an aspect (PI, 210e), of a word (PI, 218g; cf. 181d) and of meaning (PI, §568), are we very far from descriptions of our understanding of a musical passage? Yet Wittgenstein nowhere says that the connections we make in describing our understanding of a musical passage express the perception of an internal relation. Do we want to characterize these other, aspect-dawning experiences and recognitions as instances of seeing (hearing, experiencing) "an internal relation"?

When I direct this question to myself, I find that as with the examples of musical description, I am again ambivalent, do not see how to read "internal relation" into every one of these quite diverse experiences and recognitions. But it strikes me that in this instance my ambivalence has been produced by, or is the effect of, the very examples that Wittgenstein lays before us. Wittgenstein's perspicuous representation of the experience of the dawning of an aspect, embodied in the examples and discussion of Section xi, appears to me to argue against a strong reading of his use of "internal relation" in describing that experience. It is worth noting that Wittgenstein nowhere tries to justify this singular invocation of "internal relation" in the Investigations, despite its frequent, significant, and ultimately mysterious appearances in the Tractatus.[13] One could say that at this late point in Wittgenstein's thought "internal relation" has suffered a shift in

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[13]See TLP 4.014, 4.122-4.125, 5.131, 5.2-5.232.

meaning from its tractarian past, has become a figure of speech – and so is intended to pose a problem of interpretation, to leave the answer to the question of its application ambiguous. But since the Tractatus eventually, already acknowledges that "internal relation" is a sort of figure, that what can be said with it cannot be said by it, it would be better to say that by the time of the remarks on aspect-seeing, "internal relation" has become a more complex figure – as complex as the "hugely many interrelated phenomena and possible concepts" (PI, 199d) discussed under the rubric of "aspect-seeing" itself.[14] In identifying Wittgenstein's use of "internal relation" as a figure, I am denying that it is meant to denote a connection that is established or grounded by anything beyond my or anyone's perception of it – established or grounded, for example, by what Mulhall calls "conceptual or grammatical structures" (OBITW, 131). While "internal relation" may have the appearance, from the Tractatus on, of describing the structuredness of language (whether inflected as logic or as grammar), it is merely standing in for or occupying the place of its mystery.

In the Tractatus Wittgenstein does seem willing to attach philosophical importance to the expression "internal relation," if only because of his impatience with its misuse by most other philosophers.[15] The sense that he appears to give initially to the

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[14]The distinction between the something that Wittgenstein says with the words of the Tractatus and the nothing that is said by those words is brought out by James Conant, "Throwing Away the Top of the Ladder," The Yale Review 79 (Spring 1990): 338-64. My debt to Conant's essay will be further apparent in the following paragraph.

[15]TLP, 4.122: "(Instead of 'structural property' I also say 'internal property'; instead of 'structural relation', 'internal relation'.

"I introduce these expressions in order to indicate the source of the confusion

(continued...)

expression, but in the end does not give to it, is in line with that sense which generates the turn-of-the-century debate between idealists and their opponents over the existence and extent of internal relations.[16] It is expressed at TLP, 4.123:

> A property is internal if it is unthinkable that its object should not possess it.
>
> (This shade of blue and that one stand, eo ipso, in the internal relation of lighter to darker. It is unthinkable that these two objects should not stand in this relation.)

As is thematic throughout the Tractatus, the nature of the unthinkable-not, of that which cannot not be thought, is that it is unsayable: "It would be just as nonsensical to assert that a proposition had a formal property [that a pair of propositions had an internal relation] as to deny it" (TLP, 4.124). An internal relation between possible states of affairs "expresses itself" through an internal relation between the representing propositions (TLP, 4.125), and their internal relation likewise "expresses itself," is not something we can express, not something our words can say (TLP, 4.121). For the early Wittgenstein, then, the tractarian remarks including the phrase "internal relation" are to be understood according to that interpretive stance that readers of the Tractatus are asked to take towards the book as a whole: they are to be surmounted, transcended, finally done without (TLP, 6.54). It is thus nearly inexplicable why readers of Wittgenstein not only persist in reading the conventional philosopher's sense into Wittgenstein's use of "internal relation"

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[15](...continued)
between internal relations and relations proper (external relations), which is very widespread among philosophers.)"

[16]For an overview of the positions and arguments in this debate, see Richard Rorty, "Relations, Internal and External," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 7:125-33.

in the Tractatus but adopt that expression and that sense in explicating the meaning of "grammar" in the Investigations – despite, as I say, the all but complete non-appearance of "internal relation" in that work.[17] We seem to have two interpretive options in reading this phrase in its subsequent, singular appearance in the Investigations: either "internal relation" now says something, or it still says nothing. We also have two, parallel interpretive options in understanding Wittgenstein's elucidative purposes in adopting this phrase in his later writing: either he is saying whatever one now takes "internal relation" to say – something, most likely, that one takes Wittgenstein's notion of "grammar" to say – or he is still saying something that "internal relation" cannot say – which is why, since this is the option I opt for, I speak of its being used as a figure. Which option one adopts will depend on, or reflect, the spirit one finds pervading the Investigations, and whether one finds it to be a rejection of the spirit of the Tractatus or more a continuation of that spirit. (And that will depend on what one takes the spirit of the Tractatus to be.) Or we might say: which option one adopts will depend on what one takes the perception of an internal relation in the dawning of an aspect to turn on – something registered or something seen, something underlying the fact of human commonality or something suggestive of the provisionalness of commonality.

Let us imagine that Wittgenstein is not using "internal relation" as a figure but means it somehow literally, or as shorthand for something like "logical connection" or

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[17]P. M. S. Hacker is the most influential representative of this practice. See his Insight and Illusion: Themes in the Philosophy of Wittgenstein, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 118-19, 203, 249-50, 269, 334. Mulhall, for whom Hacker served as both supervisor and example (OBITW, 5), follows this practice, as detailed below.

"grammatical connection." And now consider a relatively unambiguous case in which one might be inclined to speak of an internal relation, or at any rate of a close similarity or likeness,[18] between two objects – for instance, the relation between ellipse and circle. What leads one to speak of an internal relation between the ellipse and the circle? Impressed by Wittgenstein's remarks on Frazer, one might say initially: let me show you an ellipse changing into a circle, and you'll see. But is there any difference worth mentioning between that experience and one that computers have made commonplace, of seeing, for example, a picture of a human face changing into that of a rat? Well, there is a close relation here too – e.g. they both have two eyes. And so in a sense does the car, with its headlights, that follows the rat; and like the car, the desk that follows it stands on four appendages. So there is, if not one internal relation among them all, a host of relations or visual similarities, something like a family resemblance. –And now I have lost what "internal" is being contrasted with.

Wittgenstein, in his remarks on Frazer, says that the gradual conversion of an ellipse into a circle merely illustrates their internal relation, and he distinguishes the understanding this implies from an understanding which takes the visual experience to show the way to a causal explanation for the connection. If our motive is clarity of

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[18]Garth Hallett suggests that "Likeness between two things (as opposed, say, to their spatial proximity) is a paradigm example [of an internal relation]"; see A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Philosophical Investigations" (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1977), 698. And he reminds us that "the example W. used to illustrate 'noting an aspect' was: 'I see the likeness between these two faces'" (Ibid.; cf. PI, 193a). But I question whether the later Wittgenstein intends the concept of "likeness" to give "internal relation" the sort of definitional precision that Hallett's talk of a paradigm example suggests. (It is telling of Hallett's view that he renders "Ich sehe eine Ähnlichkeit" as "I see the likeness," not "I see a likeness.")

thought, we do not show the transfiguring of ellipse into circle "in order to assert that a certain ellipse [i.e. the one I see, or saw] actually, historically, had originated from a circle (evolutionary hypothesis)...." That could be our interest, and Wittgenstein's interest could seem irrelevant to ours, or worse – stunted, backward, as if one denied the conclusions of the theory of plate tectonics in order to draw our attention to how well South America could fit in the side of Africa.[19] But the connection Wittgenstein is concerned with, the one for which, or in place of which, Frazer offers an evolutionary hypothesis, rests on neither a causal nor a purely visual antecedent. And this we already seem to know; for he calls it "internal." Then what else is it?

What leads one to speak of an internal relation between the ellipse and the circle? Foregoing the exclusive appeal to a visual experience, one might say any number of things: that ellipses and circles are both round (or anyway, curved); that they are both conic sections, where the circle is "the limiting case" of a series of ellipses that we imagine cut from a single cone; that they have similar equations, where the equation for a circle is again a sort of limiting or simplified version of the equation for an ellipse; that on the one hand I can make an ellipse by tying the ends of a string to two different pegs and, keeping the string tight with the barrel of my marker, draw a continuous line until it comes back around to itself, and on the other hand I can make a circle using the same procedure if I simply bring the pegs together, or tie both ends of the string to one peg; that circles and ellipses are almost always discussed and pictured side by side in geometry

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[19]For a discussion of whether Wittgenstein's interest in description precludes other (scientific) interests, and if not whether his interest in description must be ours as well, see Cioffi, Wittgenstein on Freud and Frazer.

textbooks; that both work particularly well for the shape of the lip of a coffee cup, though ellipsoidal cups become problematic the more the lip of the cup is, as we say, flattened; and that they look a lot alike. If I now proceeded to remind us of the various occasions on which we say that something is "internal" (a clock, a combustion engine, evidence, an exile, friction, a rhyme, revenue, ...) and concluded that all of these and similar things we say and do are what we go on in calling the relation between circles and ellipses an internal relation, I would be appealing to what Wittgenstein calls grammatical remarks. And I might explain my appeal by noting that Wittgenstein says, "Essence is expressed by grammar" and "Grammar tells what kind of object anything is" (PI, §§371, 373). But is such an appeal successful? In what sense do we go on what we say or do in seeing a relation or a connection between things? In what sense does what we say or do lead us to speak of an internal relation between the ellipse and the circle?

To raise these last questions is not to deny that one among the things we do is call some of the things we see by the same name; I am not denying that, to put it formulaically, perceptual connections are linguistic connections. My seeing two chairs before me and my calling them both chairs (though they are not one and the same, nor need they be two alike), my hearing singing on two different occasions and my saying of each that it is singing I hear (though the songs, the singers, ... are different) are, I want to say, facts or achievements on the same level. This thought or discovery, that in speaking I give form to a world I purport to describe, is one whose impact is registered by philosophers as diverse as Kant (in the premise or surmise of his transcendental standpoint) and Nietzsche (in the surmise or metaphor that truths are illusions whose

illusoriness we have forgotten, proffered in the early essay "On Truth and Lie in the Extramoral Sense"). What I am denying is that the appeal to grammar can remove the natural anxiety or unease that one may feel when philosophizing about the role of judgment in our attributions of a particular kind of relation or connection between objects. If the appeal to grammar could remove that unease, then a perspicuous representation of our grammar, the synoptic view of what we say when, really would – indeed must – produce understanding, show the connecting links to be indubitable requirements of meaningful speech and thought. But if establishing connecting links is not a feature of our grammar – as I believe the later Wittgenstein comes to believe it is not – then a perspicuous representation of that grammar cannot establish them either, and thus may well fail to produce understanding, despite its success at conveying language's evident systematicity and normativity. For what is to be understood is not, simply and finally, the systematicity and normativity of language, the patterns and connections among our concepts. What requires understanding is what one might call the musicality of grammar, the recognition that grammatical connections, despite their systematicity and normativity, are formed and held together by nothing more than our individual judgments, the individual occasions of our engagement with language. (Similarly, despite the disarming delights of music's systematic structures, nothing forms and holds together, nothing makes understandable, this stretch of music if we do not or cannot make the connections in the particular occasions of our hearing it.)

Wittgenstein's despair over the impossibility of saying one word about all that music has meant in his life reflects, among other things we cannot hope to fathom, his

sense that his book cannot do justice to this lesson – essentially the lesson of aesthetic judgments, at least for one who finds that an aesthetic impression can be indescribable (LC, 37) and yet produce conviction, and so model that everything and nothing which stands behind whatever sense one's words can convey. Wittgenstein writes, in the year he articulates his method as one of perspicuous representation: "Perhaps what is inexpressible (what I find mysterious and am not able to express) is the background against which whatever I could express has its meaning" (CV, 16d). But despair over a failure to do justice is not despair over a failure to express anything at all. In this instance, it is despair following from an awareness that the words needed to convey philosophical understanding do not function within a calculus.[20] And it is an awareness that philosophical clarity arrives not like the solution to a jigsaw puzzle – which everyone, no matter how much its construction demands of me, immediately recognizes is the solution – but like the wording of an aesthetic perception, with its peculiar balance of obviousness and opacity, of tenacity and fragility.

2.3 Mulhall on Grammar and Internal Relations

[20]I continue to find various illuminating permutations of this thought in Rush Rhees, Wittgenstein and the Possibility of Discourse, ed. D. Z. Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Two differences (so far) in Rhees's presentation of this thought are (1) Rhees's insistence that speaking is not functioning within a calculus is articulated in the domain of "saying something" in general rather than in the domain of philosophical writing and speech (though I am not opposed to Rhees's broader, and so somewhat different, use of that disanalogy); and (2) Rhees tends to argue that this awareness is one that the later Wittgenstein continued to miss. Here my disagreement with Rhees is predicted, and possibly shared, by D. Z. Phillips (Ibid., 19).

Stephen Mulhall seems to recognize the mutual dependence of perceptual connections and linguistic connections. That aspect of our grammar is one he has in sight when he says, thinking of both Heidegger's notion of readiness-to-hand and Wittgenstein's treatment of aspect perception, "[Continuous] Seeing-as pervades all our encounters with things just because language does so too" (OBITW, 126).[21] But, in a move reflective of a project that understands the importance of aspect-seeing to be exhausted by what it can reveal about continuous or ordinary seeing, Mulhall comes to shun the implications of this mutual dependence when he takes up the perceptual connections in the experience of the dawning of an aspect. By reading "internal relation" not as a figure but as descriptive of a particular sort of relation or class of relations, one that Wittgenstein's writing has clarified and makes available to us in the notion of grammar, Mulhall is able to convince himself that invoking linguistic connections can mollify the natural anxiety or unease that accompanies aspect-dawning experiences, the awareness that one is seeing or hearing what others will fail to see or hear. But to construe Wittgenstein's use of "internal relation" as an appeal to grammar – that is, to construe grammar as something one can appeal to, as involved in a project of philosophical grounding – is to misconstrue it in a way Wittgenstein's writing anticipates.

When Mulhall takes up Wittgenstein's remark, "What I perceive in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects," he begins by recasting the contrast between "perceiving a property" and

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[21]See also Mulhall, "The Givenness of Grammar: A Reply to Steven Affeldt," European Journal of Philosophy 6 (April 1998): 35-6, hereafter referred to as "GG."

"perceiving an internal relation" as a contrast between seeing some overlooked part of a given object and seeing a new kind of object. I think that one should not draw this contrast too starkly. Mulhall is forgetting those occasions in which my seeing some part of a picture for the first time, a part I had failed to notice, brings about precisely that transformation of what I see that Wittgenstein identifies as the dawning of an aspect. (I may spot something in the background which I had missed, and which clarifies instantly the preoccupations and attitudes of these human figures in the foreground.) Nevertheless, I take Mulhall's point to be that in suddenly seeing the duck-rabbit as a rabbit, for example, I suddenly see these loops (that I have seen all along) as rabbit ears, identify this dot as an eye looking now in that direction, and so on. Mulhall's guiding thought – that seeing an object in a new way entails my saying a number of things about it that I did not anticipate could be said about it – seems to me undeniable. But he goes on to say,

> In thus perceiving the applicability of a certain system of concepts, one perceives a relation between the object and those objects to which that set of concepts is also applicable; and since this relation has been established via conceptual or grammatical structures, it can validly be called an internal relation – one pertaining to the essence or identity of the relata. For Wittgenstein ... grammar is that which tells us what kind of an object anything is. (OBITW, 131)

There are two different sorts of difficulties with this gloss on PI, 212a. But before naming them and saying why they present a problem, let me articulate Mulhall's interest, or what his words imply about his interest, in this "key remark" (OBITW, 130) from the Investigations. (It is an implication borne out by Mulhall's more recent writings on Wittgensteinian grammar,[22] and in what follows I will be relying on these later sources as

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[22]See Mulhall, Stanley Cavell: Philosophy's Recounting of the Ordinary (Oxford:

(continued...)

well.) We have discussed one difficulty with aspect-seeing expressions which Mulhall sets out to solve in On Being in the World (above, p. 23) – namely, why do we voice the experience of the dawning of an aspect by adopting an expression which marks a change in some thing, when we know that (it is part of the grammar of "seeing an aspect" that) the object itself has not changed. The difficulty that comes to occupy Mulhall now is, why do we adopt an expression which marks the change in an aspect-dawning experience as a change to this (kind of) thing – that is, how can I justify my saying e.g. "Now it's a rabbit!" Mulhall is concerned to show that the odd conveyance of this expression – that I now see or understand the unchanged object in a way I could not or could only imagine before – is no more "mediated" (in the sense perfected by the sense-data theorist), and so no less justified, than my saying of this blotting paper "It's pink" or "It's rectangular." And Mulhall believes not only that this is Wittgenstein's concern as well, but that the justification for the implicit claim in my expression of the dawning of an aspect is to be found in Wittgenstein's remark about an internal relation – a relation, on Mulhall's reading, "established via conceptual or grammatical structures."

I distinguish two claims, or two versions of a single claim, in Mulhall's reading of Wittgenstein's remark: (1) My perception of the dawning of an aspect is normative; it rests on something common between us – on "conceptual or grammatical structures," which is Mulhall's conception of grammar, the connections that Wittgensteinian criteria reveal. Thus (2) the implicit claim in my expression of the dawning of an aspect is

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[22](...continued)
Oxford University Press, 1994), hereafter referred to as SC, and "The Givenness of Grammar" (cited in footnote 21).

justified by the internal relation between this object (the duck-rabbit) and other objects (rabbits) established by grammar. Unlike Mulhall, however, I do not find that Wittgenstein takes on the project of justifying in this way what we see in the dawning of an aspect. In fact, I believe that such a project is wrong on at least two levels. First, it takes as a model for the justification of this experience a scientific – Wittgenstein calls it at times a philosophical – conception of justification, as Frazer does, and thereby adopts an ideal and a procedure for pursuing philosophical understanding that Wittgenstein explicitly opposes. Why Mulhall should be drawn to this model in reading Wittgenstein is not clear, or is not clearly distinct from why one might be drawn in general to justifying or grounding one's most immediate claims on the world. But in this case it looks to be of a piece with Mulhall's attempt to understand aspect-dawning judgments in terms of ordinary judgments, since here, too, the effect of the move is to minimize the natural anxiety or unease of aspect-dawning judgments.[23] I want to suggest, on the other hand, that Wittgenstein's model for justification in aspect-seeing contexts is what he himself might call an aesthetic conception of justification – one in which our judgments are potentially telling of us and have the potential of separating or isolating us. And second, in reading a scientific model of justification into Wittgenstein's text, and so committing the sort of error in reading it which Wittgenstein says Frazer commits in reading the anthropological material he collects, Mulhall fails to recognize that the topic under consideration in the text he reads is the form of error his reading instantiates. So that in

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[23]I will be characterizing this anxiety further as the fear of self-trust and as a moment in "the dynamics of influence" when I turn to discuss Emerson in Part 2, below.

this instance Wittgenstein's perspicuous representation fails to convey its meaning for precisely the reasons which Wittgenstein's perspicuous representation sets out. This second set of considerations will be developed in the next section. At present we must locate the error in turning to grammar to justify the expression of the dawning of an aspect.

Mulhall claims that my perception of the dawning of an aspect is normative to the extent that it is the perception of a relation that "has been established via conceptual or grammatical structures." What sense of "established" does Mulhall intend here? He cannot quite mean that something is established before the perception of the object, e.g. before I see the duck-rabbit. One wants to reject this possibility because Wittgenstein says that the internal relation I perceive has as one of its relata this object, and Mulhall follows Wittgenstein in identifying the relation to which conceptual or grammatical structures pertain as a relation between objects, not between concepts which one brings to experience. Whatever relation is established via conceptual or grammatical structures, it would appear that it is established in some sense at the moment the aspect dawns. But then it is not immediately clear why Mulhall speaks of this leading to a relation that "can validly be called" internal, and why an internal relation is here glossed as "one pertaining to the essence or identity of the relata." Those are terms suggestive of a certain objective picture of justification. The suggestion is borne out when we notice that Mulhall has added a new layer to Wittgenstein's account. He says in his gloss on PI, 212a that one perceives an internal relation between this object (x) and other objects (call them ys) in perceiving the applicability to x of a certain system of concepts somehow connected with

(internally related to?) ys. The significance of this added layer of connections will appear in the next section. Further, Mulhall is not arguing (at least not in his recent work) that the relation that is established depends on conceptual or grammatical structures that are somehow exhaustively specifiable, as in a catalog ("GG," 40). As we seem to learn from our ability to go on using the name "Moses" even as we are not prepared to give a Russellian description of what it names (PI, §79), the grammatical structures of a concept are "more extensive than any specific explanation will reveal" ("GG," 39). We can never enunciate the full criteria for our use of a word. Rather, given that I find myself in a situation in which the expression "Now it's a rabbit!" is forced on me, or from me – given, that is, that I am not (aware of myself as) imagining a rabbit as I look at some object before me while failing to see it as a rabbit – then as with any occasion on which I offer an explanation of my meaning, I "can always say more" about what I see, explain how what I see is a rabbit ("GG," 39).

Would grammar so understood – roughly, as a given but inexhaustible collection of conceptual or grammatical structures – justify my saying, "Now it's a rabbit!"? Certainly in a trivial or weak sense it would. When I say "Rabbit!" as an expression of the dawning of an aspect, there is indeed always something more I can say. It may be precisely no more than "I mean the animal (the one that hops, eats carrots, feels soft to touch, etc.) and not these other things (a boxing punch, a bad cricket player, an expletive, the Updike character, etc.)." That is, I can always say more to "explain my meaning" if what needs explaining is what I am tacitly claiming to see. Similarly, if I say "For me the vowel e is yellow," I can go on to explain what I mean by "yellow" "in the usual way" (PI,

216d, g) – e.g. by pointing to a yellow raincoat and saying, "That color" – if that is what needs explaining. We might say: I am always able to continue to speak the language in which my expression is the expression of an aspect dawning. And in that sense, the grammar of "rabbit" "establishes" the relation I perceive. But this trivial or weak sense does not seem to capture Mulhall's sense when he represents Wittgenstein's grammatical outlook as "a view of language as the bearer of conceptual structures which alone determine the bounds of sense in experience" (OBITW, 127), or when he claims in his recent writing that "grammar forms the basis of specific judgments and explanations" ("GG," 39). I think Mulhall's understanding could be put as follows: the conceptual or grammatical structures indicated by Wittgenstein's notion of grammar – the grammatical rules, as Mulhall favors calling them – are not given in the sense of my being able to articulate them exhaustively, but they are given in the sense that what I say, and what I see, is fully exhausted by them. (The thought may be, or sound, tractarian: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" [TLP, 5.6].) This is what distinguishes, on Mulhall's account, Wittgenstein's metaphysics of essence from that of Heidegger's later philosophy, "where the essence of beings is never fully exhausted by the resources of language" (OBITW, 127). As Mulhall says in summarizing Wittgenstein's view, "grammatical rules – which determine what it makes sense to say about any given category of phenomena – are held to be autonomous, i.e. they do not reflect but rather constitute the essential nature of the corresponding phenomena" (OBITW, 127).

But I find that this picture gets things importantly backwards, or rather sideways. For no matter how conceptual or grammatical structures are conceived – whether as a

catalog of criteria or as structures subsequently determinative of what more I can reasonably say – they cannot serve to justify what I say unless the one to whom I am offering justification comes to see what I see, counts this as I do; and whether she does is not determinable by conceptual or grammatical structures. I cannot justify my calling this a rabbit by appealing to my calling these "rabbit ears," this "a rabbit nose," that "fun to pet," and so on, unless we come to agree in treating these as ears, this as a nose, and so on. But that agreement is precisely what I cannot assume with the dawning of an aspect. (That is a grammatical remark.) Indeed, I take some form of this recognition to be a central teaching of Wittgenstein's notion of grammar: our agreeing in the use of this word and our agreeing in finding this to be an occasion for the use of this word are, as I said above (p. 72), facts or achievements on the same level. But then the grammatical connections of a word ("rabbit") to which Mulhall appeals in order to justify an aspect-dawning expression ("Now it's a rabbit!") are no more a fact, and no less a mystery, than that one suddenly sees the (rabbit) aspect itself; so the former cannot justify the latter. Earlier it had appeared that Mulhall had caught sight of this mutual dependence in Wittgenstein's notion of continuous seeing-as (see above, p. 74). But now it appears that there is a way of understanding such mutual dependence – a way which seems to answer to Mulhall's interest in subsuming aspect-dawning experiences to continuous seeing-as – which seeks to privilege the notion of agreement over individual occasions of agreement or acts of judgment. One might describe Mulhall's view as one which requires that "agreement" name a kind of super-order between or among humans (cf. PI, §97).

If there is evidence in the Investigations for Mulhall's view, it would seem to lie in Wittgenstein's saying that "If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement ... in judgments" (PI, §242), a remark Mulhall paraphrases by saying, "there can be a shared practice of employing a word only insofar as there is agreement in what counts as its correct use from case to case" ("GG," 38). But Wittgenstein's remark does not imply that communication must take place, in every employment; and "agreement in judgments" does not imply "agreement ... from case to case," since agreement in what counts as a case may be, as with aspect-dawning expressions, that on which communication waits. To say it otherwise, agreement in judgments does not imply agreement in conceptual or grammatical structures, grammar as a framework of rules. Agreement in judgments can mean, as has been argued in Stanley Cavell's work and furthered in Steven Affeldt's recent elucidation of that work,[24] the agreement which is manifest, when it is, in the ways we continue to respond to each other, continue to find that we share responses to the world, continue to draw or discover the same connections. It is a hallmark of Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein that the systematicity and normativity of language, which is both revealed and required by those investigations Wittgenstein calls grammatical, is not to be understood as providing a foundation for my meaning something when I speak. Wittgensteinian criteria – what we discover when we follow the ordinary language philosopher's question "In what circumstances do we say...?" (CR, 30)

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[24]See Steven Affeldt, "The Ground of Mutuality: Criteria, Judgment, and Intelligibility in Stephen Mulhall and Stanley Cavell," European Journal of Philosophy 6 (April 1998): 1-31. Affeldt is responding primarily to SC (see above, footnote 22 in this chapter).

– are not an explanation or justification (let alone a proof) of the extent of our agreement in language, but more like a redescription of that agreement, at most a proposal of it. The systematicity and normativity of language is not a fact separate from what we say, from our individual utterances and judgments of others' utterances. The claim "Language is systematic" is itself no deeper than the fact that I can say "Language is systematic" and be understood (if and when I can).

Our occasional wonder over the extent to which our responses connect, are aligned or attuned – as if here we arrive at the notion that we have not only a species-nature but a soul-nature, that there is a human nature which we might glimpse as convincingly as on occasion we glimpse Fate, or seem to – this wonder may itself be inexhaustible; at least it need not be exhausted. The difficulty, for Wittgenstein, is to observe the extent of our attunement without imagining that one can exhaust it, by attempting, in our philosophical efforts as with Frazer in his anthropological efforts, to read a causal or justificatory connection between the facts or occasions of attunement. Consider that just prior to his speaking of agreement in judgements, language, and form of life (at PI, §241-42), Wittgenstein has this:

> Disputes do not break out (among mathematicians, say) over the question whether a rule has been obeyed or not. People don't come to blows over it, for example. That is part of the framework on which the working of our language is based (for example, in giving descriptions). (PI, §240, my emphasis)

The "framework" of agreement in judgments, language, and form of life is, in part, that disputes do not break out over whether a (mathematical) rule has been obeyed, and in part that they do not break out over whether an unambiguous picture of a rabbit pictures a

rabbit. Grammar offers no further framework. (So one might think, as Wittgenstein goes on to say in PI, §242, that the requirement of agreement in judgments "seems to abolish logic" – though he continues, "but [it] does not do so." The difference between Mulhall's reading and the alternative presented here might be put like this: Mulhall cannot see why the absence of grammatical structures or rules would not abolish logic, whereas I cannot see why his paraphrase of Wittgenstein's "agreement in judgments" would so much as suggest the possibility that it abolishes logic.) Part of the philosophical significance of aspect-dawning experiences is to bring out this aspect of our agreement in judgments, language, and form of life – that the extent of our natural agreements is not everywhere a mere supposition of our speaking what we call the same language; our speaking the same language and our natural agreements are discovered mutually, if and when they are.

Mulhall's inclination to misread Wittgenstein on this point is suggested further by the fact that the direct object in Mulhall's paraphrase of PI, §373 – "grammar is that which tells us what kind of an object anything is" (OBITW, 131, my emphasis) – is not to be found in Wittgenstein's German. Recalling Wittgenstein's enigmatic and typically ignored parenthetical close to PI, §373 – "Theology as grammar" – one could read the difference between Mulhall's and Wittgenstein's rendering of what or how grammar tells as registering a difference in the object of theological commitment. For Mulhall, "grammar tells us" in the way a rule, or say a commandment, tells us (what is allowed and what is forbidden). For Wittgenstein, "grammar tells" somewhat in the way Adam's naming of every living creature brought before him tells (what sort of creature each is). One could say that Wittgenstein's model for grammatical "telling" is biblical naming: in

Genesis, the act of giving a name – to Adam, Ishmael, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Beersheba, Jehovah-jireh, ... – is "explained" not by an appeal to a rule, but by a reminder of a related use of a word or word-part. Frazer might understand these "explanations" of ancestral and place names as pre-scientific attempts at etymology, as if fragments of an ancient grammarian's Just So Stories. But the tag "And that is how this [man, place] got its name" is typically absent from the retelling of these acts of naming. They do not say what they are for; they are simply instances of the natural projections of words, such as etymologists presuppose and that make etymology what it is – namely, telling of a human world, not a mere chronicle of unintelligible semantic alterings. What we, like Adam and the biblical namers, have to go on in telling what kind of object anything is, is simply the rest of what we say and do. What the philosopher is to see is that our sayings and doings express (our) forms of life; they are "the given," what must be "accepted" (PI, 226d). It is a misunderstanding of Wittgenstein's notion of "grammar" to imagine that it is meant to serve a justificatory role at all; it is a fortiori a misunderstanding to imagine that grammar "tells us" that Jastrow's duck-rabbit and rabbits "can validly be called" internally related.

I have said that agreement in what counts as a case of saying one thing rather than another may be that on which communication, hence justification, waits. Aspect-dawning expressions are paradigmatic here. If you say "Now it's a rabbit!" while standing in my study, in the vicinity of my desk and chair, a desk lamp, a photograph on my wall of a Pittsburgh street scene, a dictionary, telephone, computer..., I may be at a loss to know where to look, much less how to look, to understand your utterance. I may not know even whether looking is called for: if I do not see a rabbit, and cannot imagine

anything present as taking on the look of a rabbit, I may begin to wonder whether you are hallucinating, reciting something, remembering something.... If now, seeing my look of worry, you point to a reproduction of a line drawing by Picasso that hangs nearby, a drawing of two rather large-boned ballerinas, and help me along by saying, "If you look at these dancers a certain way, it suddenly becomes a rabbit in the grass," I will now think I recognize what kind of thing you are seeing (not an hallucination, not eyeing something which has somehow gotten into the house, but seeing, apparently, an aspect of this Picasso drawing). Still, there remains a misunderstanding, or the absence of a shared understanding, which no amount of enumeration of conceptual connections can alleviate ("Her elbow is the nose, this one's head is its eye, and it is about to pounce on something as if it were a cat" – I start to worry again at this last) unless I can, in fact, see it your way, and so begin to make my own connections. ("So this would be the hind leg? And it's long, like a whitetail jackrabbit's? Okay, I think I can see it"; or, "No, it is still not there for me.") The point is not a skeptical one: I may decide that you can see something which I cannot see, without worrying this fact into a general conclusion that I can never see what another sees. But my failure to see is not trivial either, or may not be, if the rabbit-aspect takes on meaning for you – say, if you become convinced that Picasso's drawing is misunderstood if one fails to notice it. Whether it takes on meaning for you or not, my granting that you see a rabbit in my Picasso line drawing is not a response to a justification of your expression of an aspect dawning; it is, at most, a response to your

expression.[25] It may be all the response you need or want. But then you will not be thinking that "the bounds of sense in experience" rest on our agreement in judgments, as that is understood by Mulhall to express our agreement in what counts as a word's correct use from case to case.

This is the place to mention a distinctive feature of aspect-dawning expressions: while the phenomenon of seeing an aspect is in some sense open to grammatical investigation, the expressions of such experiences are in one sense not. The expression of my being struck by an aspect of the world – in particular, its registering an experience through its characteristic use of "Now" (as in "Now it's a rabbit!") – requires a secondary use of words (cf. PI, 216c-g), and secondary senses have no grammar, are not (fully) guided by our antecedent agreement in their employment. To spell this out somewhat, I note that aspect-dawning expressions share the following features of secondary uses of words. (1) The characteristic "Now" of an aspect-dawning expression is employed in a non-ordinary way (cf. PI, 216c). It specifies a moment of change, yet in full recognition that nothing has changed: the change it marks is not an event. (2) I might arrive at a physiological or psychological explanation of my experience, and yet retain an interest in my expression of it, in the fact that I (still) want to say it (cf. PI, 212c, 216c). (3) My aspect-dawning expression is forced on me, or from me, and so is not something I simply

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[25]Contrast this to the parenthetical addition at OBITW, 134-35: "we can place no logical constraints upon what we might see any given object as (apart, of course, from requiring that the perceiver be capable of giving an intelligible explanation of how one might see the object as he sees it)." It is unclear to me, and possibly unclear even to Mulhall, why he shifts from treating the expression of an aspect-dawning experience as "an exclamation," i.e. not "an ordinary perceptual report" (OBITW, 11), to describing it as a "claim" (OBITW, 130) and as a description of what I see (OBITW, 131).

choose, as if it were a metaphor; I do not have other words for it (cf. PI, 215a, 216c, g). Thus one could say in response to Mulhall's attempt to justify aspect-seeing expressions: such expressions have no grammar, and so of course they cannot be justified by appeals to grammar. The "of course" registers the fact that "Aspect-seeing expressions have no grammar" is itself a grammatical remark (cf. CR, 355).

But surely, one might object, there is a difference between seeing an aspect and having an hallucination of one! When you say "Now it's a rabbit!", your expression has implications for the world beyond conveying how things are with you (as if you had said "Ouch!"). Even if no one should happen to see what you see, for your expression to be the expression of the dawning of an aspect it must be possible to justify your expression, to make clear to others that what you see is not an hallucination, a dream, a phantasm.... That means, on Mulhall's reading of Wittgenstein, necessarily giving voice to a perception that is established via conceptual or grammatical structures: "it must be possible for us to justify how we go on, and as Wittgenstein tells us [at PI, §265] 'justification consists in appealing to something independent' of that which is being justified" ("GG," 39).

Noting, but putting aside for the moment, the odd sound of desperation in "it must be possible for us to justify how we go on" – a remark easier to imagine voiced by one of Wittgenstein's interlocutors than in defense of his developed view – I should say that I am not tempted to deny that "justification consists in appealing to something independent." In the context of PI, §265 that means, for example, that we would not call it "justification" were someone to say, "I know that 'Now it's a rabbit' is true because the

aspect I see matches my (private) image for 'rabbit.'" But the error I find in Mulhall's appeal to Wittgenstein's remark, and the confusion given voice to in the objection as a whole, lies in the thought that "justification" implies an appeal to something beyond one's present voicing of the connections one sees. What sustains the error is the thought that any attempt at justification that is not an appeal beyond one's present voicing of connections is an appeal to something private, and so participates in the delusion of a private language; or else (and this is more the force of Mulhall's remark in its context) it is an appeal to something made up on the spot, and so misconstrues the grammar of "justification." To imagine a different alternative, and one we have been prepared for, consider Wittgenstein's description of how one justifies the way one plays a stretch of music, as discussed late in The Brown Book:

> —'But surely when you play [a tune that has made its full impression on you] you don't play it anyhow, you play it in this particular way, making a crescendo here, a diminuendo there, a caesura in this place, etc.' —Precisely, and that's all I can say about it, or may be all that I can say about it. For in certain cases I can justify, explain the particular expression with which I play it by a comparison, as when I say 'At this point of the theme, there is, as it were, a colon,' or 'This is, as it were, the answer to what came before,' etc. (This, by the way, shows what a 'justification' and an 'explanation' in aesthetics is like.) (BB, 166)

For these words to be a justification (or a 'justification', if that is something else) it is still the case that the other person must hear it, hear the point of my making these and other comparisons. There is no further course of appeal to show that what is called for at this juncture of the tune is as it were a colon, or an answer to what came before, or an exhalation, or less a repetition than a remembrance. Of course I may find, as I may in other contexts where I employ a figurative or secondary use of words, that I need to

explain, and so in a sense can "go on" to appeal to, the ordinary or primary use of "colon," "answer," "exhale," "remember."[26] But when I do go on in that way – however I justify my thinking that I need to go on in that way, with this person – are the things I then say justified by something beyond me, as modeled in the notion of grammar as a framework; or are they 'justified' by my continuing to make the connections I do, in hope – typically borne out – that the other will make them too, the kind of justification modeled in Wittgenstein's remarks on justification in aesthetics? If one finds that the latter better models Wittgenstein's description of the role of grammar, then that is itself worth considering, as it may suggest that justification in aesthetics reveals in bald form our condition whenever we give voice to (verbal, visual, aural) connections. —This is very close to Cavell's claim on behalf of the procedures of ordinary language philosophers.[27]

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[26]Cf. CV, 52a: "If I say for instance: here it's as though a conclusion were being drawn, here as though someone were expressing agreement, or as though this were a reply to what came before, – my understanding of it presupposes my familiarity with conclusions, expressions of agreement, replies."

[27]See Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," Must We Mean What We Say? Mulhall addresses Cavell's "Aesthetic Problems" at length in the first chapter of SC where, not unexpectedly, he distorts Cavell's description of aesthetic judgments in much the same fashion as he distorts Wittgenstein's description of grammar. In summarizing Cavell's view he says, for example, that when someone utters an aesthetic judgment "she is obliged to identify the features ... which justify her judgement," aware that "anyone who can follow the argument need not accept the conclusion" (SC, 25). But Cavell (following Wittgenstein and Kant) does not think that justifying aesthetic judgments is a matter of identifying features: there is no aesthetic feature such that having it makes a work bland, or pretentious, or noble.... And Cavell does not characterize disagreement in aesthetic judgment as disagreement in the conclusion of an argument that both sides can otherwise follow, which looks to be an incoherent conception of following an (aesthetic) argument – as if I could be brought to see these loops as rabbit ears, this dot as the rabbit's eye etc., without seeing this object as a rabbit. Mulhall's distortions of key concepts in Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein are detailed in Affeldt, "The Ground of

(continued...)

What the present paragraphs add to the claim is evidence for the thought that Wittgenstein, too, conceived his appeals to grammatical criteria as modeled or inspired by the form of justification in aesthetics.[28]

2.3.1 Longing for Understanding and the Role of Grammar

In the previous chapter I characterized Mulhall's reading of the aspect-seeing remarks as underemphasizing or unexceptionalizing Wittgenstein's concern with aspect-dawning experiences, and I showed that he achieves this by miscasting the distinction between seeing and merely knowing as a distinction between philosophical models of ordinary seeing, rather than as a familiar, albeit malleable distinction available in ordinary speech. In this chapter I have characterized Mulhall's reading of "internal relation" as intent on minimizing the natural anxiety or unease of aspect-dawning judgments, and I have argued that he achieves this by misconstruing Wittgensteinian grammar as offering grounds for justifying what we say, including what we say we see or hear when struck by

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[27](...continued)
Mutuality."

[28]Or perhaps Cavell shares this view of Wittgenstein without quite knowing it, since one of his central descriptions of Wittgensteinian criteria traces the remark on aspect-dawning that we have been examining. Compare: "Wittgensteinian criteria do not relate a name to an object [as e.g. the criteria for "goldfinch" do], but various concepts to the concept of that object" (CR, 76; cf. 73); "what I perceive in the dawning of an aspect is not a property of the object [as its color and shape are], but an internal relation between it and other objects." If one finds that Cavell's characterization of Wittgensteinian criteria is accurate, and if one allows (as I argued in chapter 1) that Wittgenstein's investigation of aspect-dawning is guided in part by aesthetic concerns, then Cavell's surprising and, as I imagine it, half-conscious variation on Wittgenstein's remark could be seen to intimate the thought I am advancing.

an aspect. In each instance I have wanted to claim that Mulhall's misreading (of the seeing/merely knowing distinction, of internal relation, and of grammar) is one that Wittgenstein's text has anticipated. Now I think we can say: what Wittgenstein's text anticipates, and what Mulhall's reading instantiates, is a version of the human longing to guarantee, or suspicion that one cannot guarantee, that one will be understood. That is clearly not a longing from which the later Wittgenstein is exempt, as evidenced e.g. by his remark to Drury. (So his anticipation of Mulhall's misreading is not exactly clairvoyance.) The longing to guarantee understanding should not be confused with the more familiar, possibly less troubling, skeptical longing to guarantee that what I mean when I say something is identical to what other speakers of the language would mean were they to speak the same words – the problem addressed, for example, by Locke. Our problem is not semantic – I have at my disposal all the normal ways of teaching the meanings of the words I use – but closer to a moral problem: the burden of not being understood is in this instance like the burden of not being believed or trusted (cf. "MD," 192-3).

The wish to guarantee understanding is expressed in the philosopher's concern to ground human experience ("the world") and what humans say ("language") simultaneously in something reflective of natural human responses, such as "conceptual or grammatical structures" seems to name. (Wittgenstein does not deny an interest in "very general facts of nature" [PI, 230a], but his interest or motive stops where the philosopher's interest extends to appealing to these as a ground, as "possible causes of the formation of concepts" [Ibid.].) It is expressed further in the philosopher's procedure of

identifying his interest or concern with what can be said to anyone, or by identifying "what can be said to anyone" with "what can be said." But as a vision of what counts as understanding, this overlooks our interest in voicing, and our subsequent failures to agree in, what does or will strike us: call these our disagreements in judgment. To overlook this interest and failure is tantamount to overlooking the sort of commitment we have to aesthetic judgments, as if our commitments to philosophy and to art can only disavow one another. Then Wittgenstein's remark to Drury is an expression of a wish – and as I read it, the latter part of the Investigations increasingly realizes the wish – to make their mutual disavowal itself a matter for philosophical dismantling. The best-known precedent, certainly, for considering the pleasures of art as somehow matching and challenging the ambitions of philosophy is Plato's dialogues. I would characterize the vision of philosophy expressed in the latter part of the Investigations as akin to that voiced in certain unfashionable readings of Plato, Nietzsche's and Strauss's among them, according to which philosophy must come to learn from the pleasures of art not only the limits of reasoned or grammatical discourse but the corrective to philosophy's aspirations of universal intelligibility.

If my critique of Mulhall on grammar and internal relations offers a lesson for us (some "us") in reading the later Wittgenstein, it is that no amount of perspicuous writing, no amount of representing the grammatical connections in the language we speak, can justify the philosophical role Wittgenstein assigns to grammar – including, if I am right, that its role is not to offer a justification for "what we say when," despite our wanting or expecting this in a writing which claims among its subjects "the concepts of meaning, of

understanding, of a proposition, ..." (PI, Preface). Grammatical investigations are, in that respect, of a different order from logical demonstrations. For no one who finds in logical proof a model for philosophical persuasion would deny that its role is to justify whatever particular claim is demonstrated in a given and successful application of its methods. (How do I know this? Is my remark a logical or a grammatical one?) Yet, however Wittgenstein's method convinces, it does not convince in such a way that one can hope to justify its overlooked discoveries to others who continue to find that clarity of thought, or pleasure (TLP, Preface) or stimulation to thoughts of one's own (PI, Preface) lie elsewhere, if anywhere. That is something which the remarks on aspect-seeing mean to convey, and anticipate their failure to convey, even to a scrupulous reader like Mulhall. Foregoing justification, Wittgenstein's method would seem to disqualify itself as a candidate for advancing clarity of thought. Part of my aim has been to suggest that whether it offers clarity or not remains – to an extent it knows to be exceptional for a work of contemporary philosophy – to be seen. One cannot do better. —There may, nevertheless, be a cost to overlooking Wittgenstein's method; certainly he thinks there is. The cost is to suffer captivity to a picture (PI, §115) or to speak like an engine idling (PI, §132). But this cost is not, of course, exacted when one is engaged in the sorts of ordinary language uses Wittgenstein so often mentions – buying apples, chatting, etc. – but essentially only when one is doing philosophy. No wonder Wittgenstein's method can be overlooked: as if Chicken Little were to tell the world that the sky is falling ... but only on other chickens; and only when they act like chickens.

2.4 Internal Relations and the Echo of a Thought

In order to further assess the cost, given the exceptionality of Wittgenstein's method, of overlooking considerations of method when interpreting the remarks on aspect-seeing, I must begin this section by mentioning one last criticism of Mulhall's coupling of internal relation with the notion of grammar. If Wittgenstein's use of "internal relation" entailed an idea of something established by grammatical structures, or were suggestive of "grammar" so understood, then we would have reason to speak of the internal relation not only between Jastrow's duck-rabbit and rabbits, but between an unambiguous drawing of a rabbit and rabbits, or between an actual rabbit and (other actual) rabbits. In his more recent writings Mulhall describes himself as "committed to the idea that [grammatical] rules and their applications are internally related" ("GG," 39). It is a self-description we anticipated, having noticed above (p. 79) that Mulhall adds a new layer to Wittgenstein's account of what one perceives in the dawning of an aspect. What he adds is precisely this postulate of an internal relation between rules and applications, enabling, it would seem, the relation between objects in any of the contexts just mentioned to "validly be called an internal relation." One wants to ask: what would be conveyed by describing a case of continuous seeing – I look out my window and see a rabbit sitting on the grass nearby – as one of perceiving "an internal relation between it [that rabbit] and other objects"? If this says more than that it is a rabbit I see, it says too much; for it then appears to duplicate the efforts of the sense-data theorist. If on the other hand all that it says is that it is a rabbit I see, it says too little; for it cannot so much as address the difference between seeing a rabbit and seeing a rabbit-aspect dawn. By

attempting to validate Wittgenstein's use of "internal relation," Mulhall undermines the conceptual distinction that the contrast between "property of the object" and "internal relation" is introduced to make. I want to develop a little now the thought that the important feature in this distinction is that, in perceiving the dawning of an aspect, something dawns: one perceives a connection (as if) for the first time, a connection that others may not as a matter of course (i.e. in their ordinary glances and passings-by), and may never, perceive.

Mulhall is not alone in highlighting Wittgenstein's use of "internal relation" and the remark in which it appears. At least one other commentator has found in this remark a kind of passing apotheosis of Wittgenstein's analysis of aspect-dawning.[29] One gets an inkling of why this sense arises when one notices that the singularity and oddness (for the Investigations) of the phrase "internal relation" at PI, 212a is matched by the company of words it keeps, specifically by the appearance there of the words "visual impression," "corresponds," and "property of the object." It is perhaps the most relentless succession of essentially metaphysical terminology to be found in the Investigations in Wittgenstein's full voice, i.e. not that of an interlocutor. That is part of the remark's attraction, I gather. Its familiar locution makes it somehow too easy to fail to ask oneself how the author of the preceding pages can mean these words, to fail to consider that they are neither more

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[29]See Robert J. Fogelin, Wittgenstein, 2d. ed. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 204. To his credit, Fogelin observes that the appearance of "internal relation" at PI, 212a is unique in the Investigations. See also David Seligman, "Wittgenstein on Seeing Apects and Experiencing Meanings," Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 37 (1976): 216, and Malcolm Budd, Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology (London: Routledge, 1989), 95.

nor less clarifying than the (just) more obviously poetic words which follow them: "It is almost as if 'seeing the mark in this connection' were an echo of a thought. 'The echo of a thought in sight' – one would like to say" (PI, 212b).[30] To find these words clarifying, however, one has to ask why anyone would like to say them.

The first thing to recognize is that Wittgenstein does say them, and does not retract or reject them straightaway as he does the similar suggestion, two remarks back, that being struck is looking plus thinking (PI, 211e). Earlier Wittgenstein "should almost like to say" that noticing an aspect is an amalgam of seeing and thinking (PI, 197h); here he uses "almost" ("beinahe") to signal the figurative use of "echo," but there is no almost to his characterizing aspect-dawning as "the echo of a thought in sight." Why not? The attractiveness of "echo" stems from the fact that my echo – as opposed to my reflection or shadow, say – is not so easily recognized and dismissible as simply mine, as dependent on me. (In Ovid's telling of the myth, Narcissus comes to discover that his reflection is his, but Echo remains personified, separate; she is heard yet overlooked, unacknowledged.)[31] My echo responds to my words; thus, like the German "Nachhall," "echo" can name the words of someone else: "He echoed my sentiment." I can throw my voice; I cannot throw my echo (my echo's voice?). But I can and do cast my shadow; and if I dance or cut a figure, my shadow does what I do at the same time. So too does my

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[30]I have modified Anscombe's translation slightly.

[31]Ovid Metamorphoses 3:359-510. I was reminded of this tale and of its pertinence to issues of human separateness and speechlessness by George Toles, "Thinking About Movie Sentiment: Toward a Reading of Random Harvest," Arizona Quarterly 49:2 (Summer 1993): 75-111.

reflection, which I neither throw nor cast, but not because it has its independence: it cannot so much as spread or scatter itself. My shadow and my reflection do not respond to anything; they are mute. When Wittgenstein says that the dawning of an aspect is the echo of a thought in sight, he expresses the sense that what dawns is a response to my looking; thus I might exclaim, "What I see is there!" But that I am led to exclaim this shows that it is forced, and undoubtedly impotent to convey what I want from it; for I know, again, that what dawns is a response to my looking, and so not simply there, there for all to see. For it to be there for me, in the world, it must be borne by me: I might say it is internally related to me. My thought is that, in its appearance in the Investigations, "internal relation" is not proffered "in the jargon" (cf. "GG," 37) but offered as an image: not for something inner – which would not be Wittgenstein – but for something visible that I am responsible for, more than responsive to. Such a reading is reinforced, or echoed, by the remark which follows, with its image of echoing a thought. If "seeing the mark in this connection" is the echo of a thought in sight, then seeing can at times seem to intimate a world in which one hears only one's own echo, and so signal a form of narcissism, if not skepticism. But our condition is less that of Narcissus than of Echo: we are fated to speak the words of others (there is no private language), yet at times to such purpose – and paradigmatically when struck by an aspect – as to be impenetrable to some, possibly no more than audible. That this is not a discovery, least of all a skeptical one, is what I have meant to convey in speaking of the natural anxiety or unease of aspect-dawning experiences.

Mulhall gives up very little in this regard when he rejects a notion of the full criteria of a word in favor of a notion that more can always be said about the meanings of the words I speak, and rests his claim that "grammar forms the basis of specific judgments and explanations" on this latter assertion. For the thought that more can always be said may still reflect the fantasy that no lack of agreement in judgments need be final, that where agreement is not manifested in the other's responses it always sits just beyond the stamina of the discussants. The fantasy is that either the other must be at least capable of saying "Now it's a rabbit!" (capable of seeing the rabbit-aspect) by virtue of being human, though she cannot manage it here and now, or we are logically or grammatically forced to imagine her as a human defective, possibly an automaton. That is the understanding which Mulhall seems eager to drive home concerning the aspect-blind: "His body, we might say, will not seem to be the field of expression of a soul: we will see him under the aspect of an automaton" (OBITW, 199). The category of the aspect-blind, on this reading, forms a kind of conceptual null set whose virtue is to fortify our contrasting conception of ourselves, of every human, as sharing in the "inherent possibilities" of its species, e.g. of "grace and mastery" (OBITW, 201). But there is a risk in asserting that Wittgensteinian grammar does not countenance a certain imagined incapacity (aspect-blindness), as there is in saying that it does not countenance a certain primitiveness in humans (the language of the builders in PI, §2). The problem is not that such assertions are false as they stand; once the lives of these candidates for humanity are described sufficiently, so that it is clear what grammar is said not to countenance, the

assertions may be true.[32] The problem, rather, is that we may want such assertions to say more than they do, particularly if we conceive of grammar as a ground of intelligibility. So we may imagine, in contrasting human capacities to the fiction of aspect-blindness, that because human experience is everywhere tied to concepts, and (ordinary) concepts are everywhere shared, then an experience whose expression rests on ordinary concepts must be potentially communicable to one who shares those concepts. But I do not see that we know this; or rather, I do not see what it communicates short of the fantasy just outlined. And if we do not know it, even as we acknowledge the extent of our natural agreements, then we should begin to wonder why we are led to idealize or concretize the notion of human capacity. (That could well be misconstrued by someone, particularly in our present political climate, as an argument for idealizing or concretizing one or another notion of human inferiority. My point is rather that that, too, should inspire wonder.)[33]

Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-dawning experiences tend at the very least to undermine one's sense that our capacity to become intelligible to each other is limited only by the attitude we adopt towards each other; or that our at times undeniable strangeness to each other can be understood as our temporary, willful blindness to each

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[32]Both Goldfarb and Cavell raise contrasting possibilities for picturing the builder's "language" in PI, §2, and suggest that Wittgenstein's philosophical project requires that we not decide between these possibilities. (See the citations in chapter 1, footnote 2.) In the next section I will be describing a similar ambiguity and requirement in picturing the aspect-blind.

[33]I will be pausing again over the notions of human capacity and inferiority when I turn in chapter 5 to certain of Strauss's claims in "Exoteric Teaching."

other. Yet such thoughts would seem to epitomize a lesson of Cavell's reading of the aspect-seeing material. He says late in The Claim of Reason, for example:

> We may say that the rabbit-aspect is hidden from us when we fail to see it. But what hides it is then obviously not the picture (that reveals it), but our (prior) way of taking it, namely in its duck-aspect. What hides one aspect is another aspect, something at the same level. So we might say: what hides the mind is not the body but the mind itself – his [mind] his, or mine his, and contrariwise. (CR, 369)

> The block to my vision of the other is not the other's body but my incapacity or unwillingness to interpret or to judge it accurately, to draw the right connections. The suggestion is: I suffer a kind of blindness, but I avoid the issue by projecting this darkness upon the other. (CR, 368)

Mulhall in On Being in the World cites these passages among others to argue that Cavell has misconstrued – or at best, gone beyond – Wittgenstein's purposes in broaching the topic of aspect perception. I tend to agree that Cavell goes beyond Wittgenstein here (as he announces he will – cf. CR, xv); but since I think that Mulhall rests his argument on a faulty reading of Wittgenstein's purposes, and so is not in a position to assess in what sense Cavell goes beyond these, I must explain the difference I see differently.[34] Cavell speaks of my being the source of the block to my vision when I fail to see an aspect of the world that the world presents to others (e.g. the rabbit-aspect). But as the disjunction "my

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[34]Cavell's error, according to Mulhall, is that he interprets the aspect-blind as unable to make the (interpersonally or morally) right connection to what is directly seen, rather than as unable to see immediately and spontaneously at all. Cavell thereby undermines "the primary thrust of his recognition that Wittgenstein uses aspect-blindness to highlight the sense in which continuous aspect perception is not a matter of knowing" (OBITW, 88). But as Mulhall means this, it is not the primary thrust of something in Wittgenstein that Cavell recognizes. If our relation to the world is not one of knowing (as Cavell says), neither is it – for Wittgenstein or Cavell – one of simply seeing directly; for we often enough find ourselves blind to the world's response to another's gaze, and occasionally irremediably so. That is closer to the primary thrust of Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-seeing. My difference in emphasis from Cavell is in describing the nature of this occasional blindness.

incapacity or unwillingness" reveals (in the second of the two passages cited), he does not claim that our occasional strangeness to each other represents a willful blindness in every case. Indeed he says, as Wittgenstein might have in his remarks on Frazer, that there is no single lesson to draw from our sense of being cut off from one another, or that that is the lesson: "We are endlessly separate, for no reason" (CR, 369). As Wittgenstein reminds himself, "one human being can be a complete enigma to another" (PI, 223f). Still, Cavell continues: "But then we are answerable for everything that comes between us; if not for causing it then for continuing it; if not for denying it then for affirming it; if not for it then to it" (CR, 369). My wish is not to deny either pole of these pairs of implications or responsibilities of our finding ourselves unintelligible to others or finding others to be unintelligible; but at the moment my purpose is not to affirm them either. Cavell in his writing has chosen, more often than not, to emphasize our answerability to these occasions of mutual unintelligibility. In assessing Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-seeing in the context of his underscoring his life with music and his joining that life to his despair of being understood, I find it necessary to emphasize, or to stop at, the moment of mutual unintelligibility itself. My interest is in Wittgenstein's interest in understanding our occasional failure to convey to others what it is we see or hear, when their failure to see or hear is neither a question of our withholding something from them, nor a question of their refusing to see or hear, of blinding or deafening themselves. It is the possibility of a conceptual remainder here that leads Wittgenstein, eight pages after his discussion of the contrast between seeing and merely knowing, to introduce the concept of aspect-blindness.

2.5 Aspect-blindness and the Audience of the Investigations

As emerges from Wittgenstein's page-long discussion of aspect-blindness (PI, 213f-214c), the distinguishing characteristic of the aspect-blind is not that there are some things they will not see (e.g. the rabbit-aspect of the duck-rabbit) or at least recognize (e.g. that the schematic cube represents a cube). The aspect-blind are not even said to be incapable of seeing different aspects of an object at different times. But they will not describe these different aspects as aspects of the same object, for they will not see them (experience them) as of the same object. What characterizes aspect-blindness is the failure to say or show that one has been struck by a change of aspect; it is the failure to experience an aspect dawn.

This suggests various consequences if we imagine the aspect-blind as a tribe, a people. (Wittgenstein's question is always about "Menschen," human beings, more than one. His interest in the aspect-blind, as with the builders in PI, §2, has to do in part with how they would talk to each other.) For a community of aspect-blind people, seeing the same object would always entail seeing what we would call the same aspect of the object.[35] Not only would a fork always be a fork, but a duck-rabbit would always be either a duck or a rabbit, or a meaningless squiggle, if it is any thing. Thus the aspect-blind would always agree, where we only generally agree, on the look a thing presents, and things would always maintain their look. They would always agree, in short, on what

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[35]To be more precise: seeing the same object would entail seeing the same aspect of the object for those objects that "have" more than one aspect. Otherwise the aspect-blind, like us, one wants to say, just see the object. (One does not take the cutlery at a meal for cutlery; a fork does not have a fork-aspect.)

kind of object anything is (cf. PI, §373) so long as what it is can be seen, is not hidden, ambiguous, unfamiliar, etc. Further, for such a community, seeing what we would call a different aspect of an object would always entail seeing a different object. Thus they would always fail to see, where we only sometimes fail to see, a different aspect appearing to someone else; they could not obey the command, "Now see the figure like this" (cf. PI, 213e). Since the aspect-blind would understand any disagreements over the look that an object presents as evidence that they were seeing different objects, their language-game here would be similar to ours when we speak of seeing hallucinations, dream-images, phantasms, etc. Such objects, in other words, would not exist for them.[36]

—We are beginning to see how the remarks on aspect-blindness might illuminate the familiar philosophical ideal of perfect, mutual intelligibility. The image of a community of aspect-blind people seems to answer to that impulse in philosophy which privileges claims of universality and stipulates the elimination of my part in what I see, my responsiveness to it and my responsibility for it: one might call this philosophy's antipathy for aesthetics. As I suggested above, one can read the latter part of the Investigations as doing battle against this ideal or impulse and its picture of intelligibility.

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[36]The aspect-blind might treat disagreements over the look of an object as the symptom of an illness; but it would not be a simple matter to decide which party was ill. Perhaps they would have special judges – a kind of mystical guild – whose perceptions were held to be free of illusion. Or perhaps they would simply decide that each party was ill, and mark "off-limits" those objects, I mean those regions of their world, where outbreaks of disagreement arise. But I can also imagine that they would simply learn that some experiences of what one sees are not shareable from time to time. And when a few but not all should happen to agree in their reports of what they see – just as when we, pressing our closed eyelids, each happen to see pulsating blue dots – they would understand it as simply a happy coincidence. (And perhaps, like Berkeley, they would see in it the hand of God.)

But even if the aspect-blind are the answer to a philosophical dream, we have yet to discover whether the dream can be dreamt – i.e. whether the aspect-blind are conceivable, or whether, as Wittgenstein asks, there could be human beings lacking in the capacity to see something as something.

In trying to imagine a people who never saw objects differently from one another, or such that no object ever struck them differently unless the object itself changed, we should ask not only whether we can imagine a community with the concepts of "seeing" and "object" altered in this way, but whether we can imagine them as having a language, as speaking to one another, as having things to say. The reason to seek an answer here would be to clarify why we can speak to one another and why we should have things to say. In approaching these questions I hope to bring out the naturalness or humanness of aspect-dawning experiences by considering an as yet unremarked implication of such experiences. What I have to say along these lines is not, to my knowledge, to be found in Wittgenstein's later writings, but it is prepared by his interest throughout the Investigations in the learning of language, particularly when we pair that interest with his observation that aspect-seeing is, like imagining, subject to the will (PI, 213e). It is often taken as an implication of the concept of aspect-seeing that the ability to be struck by an aspect presupposes – in some sense I am not confident in characterizing – the ability to see continuously. One finds this thought in Mulhall. Thus: "the possibility of experiencing aspect-dawning is a function of our general attitude to pictorial symbols when an aspect-change is not in question" (OBITW, 31); "any particular experience of aspect-dawning, in making us aware that we can see a given entity as a new kind of

object, thereby highlights the fact that we are already regarding it as a particular kind of object" (OBITW, 136). The thought seems all but demanded by the "seeing x as y" schema: one cannot have a y – an aspect of something – without an x – something continuously or unambiguously there, something seen-as. That suggests that one cannot experience the dawning of an aspect before one has (continuous-seeing) concepts, before one can speak. And yet Wittgenstein is happy to suggest, and happy to present an example that suggests, that we can imagine otherwise (cf. PI, 207f).

To say that aspect-dawning presupposes continuous seeing would seem to go hand in hand with the thought, which Mulhall is not alone in giving voice to, that the experience of an aspect dawning "is a very specific and relatively rare one" (OBITW, 136). Insofar as Mulhall's pointing this out serves his overriding interest in minimizing the philosophical significance of aspect-dawning experiences, its motivation is understandable. But it is otherwise not clear why he and others should want to point this out, or what it should be taken to mean. One wants to say: "Aspect-seeing is rare" is part of the grammar of "aspect-seeing." To point out that aspect-seeing is rare seems to ask, at best, that we carry out the conceptual investigation that complements Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect-blindness, by imagining a people who never simply regard something as something but for whom aspects of a thing are continually dawning, aware that no one else, for the most part, is seeing what they see as they see it: a state of perpetual hallucination. Various consequences for the lives of these people suggest themselves, none of which tempt us to view the heightened sensitivity of the absolute aspect-seers as a gift. Could they, in particular, be described as agreeing in judgments

among themselves? It is not clear that they could even so much as have a language, since they could not name things. (How could someone for whom the aspects of the world are continually in flux attach a label to a thing [cf. PI, §15, §26]?) —The point of imagining such people would be, I take it, to clarify the grammar of the concept of aspect-dawning: being struck by an aspect grammatically requires that one is not struck continually (in that respect it is like falling in love), and so it implies or anticipates a certain unequal balance of the familiar and the unfamiliar (in that respect it suggests a kinship to Freud's concept of the uncanny).

If one is willing to maintain that human beings who could see only aspects could not manage to attach a label to a thing, and so could not form a community of speakers, one may want to consider whether the aspect-blind, given the parity in their ability or disability, could do these things. I think that when one does consider it, one finds that they could not. To arrive at a place where one can consider it, however, I want to ask how we ever come to attach a label to a thing, to speak a first word. The answer I want to give will suggest that, notwithstanding the "seeing x as y" formulation, continuous seeing is not conceptually prior to aspect-seeing.

Imagine a toddler who has just learned his first few (maybe four) words, the words his parents subsequently write down in his baby book, one of which is "ball." The child reverses phonemes, and it comes out "bloh" (at first his parents think he is saying "block"): not an auspicious-sounding step into language, and it may not be right to imagine it as the first step, but it is a step. I want to think about the change that has taken place for this child, not only by weighing the changes one can see, but by considering the

change in the child through the concept of seeing – that is, by sketching how or what one imagines the child now sees. I do not think that such an examination mistakes an empirical question for a conceptual one. I am not asking for the image of the result of an imagined experiment (cf. PI, §265), for as I mean the question "What does the child now see," there is no experiment to carry out, at least none that I can imagine. What I want is for the child to say what has changed for him beyond what I already know – i.e. that he now "says" "ball"; and of course he cannot tell me. On the other hand, in trying to imagine what else has changed, I am not forgetting Wittgenstein's warnings against the conjuring trick of imagining an inner process or state (PI, §308), though I admit to being interested in the child's experience. But my interest in the child's "bloh" does not extend any further than Wittgenstein's interest in "noticing an aspect" does – that is, no further than finding "its place among the concepts of experience" (PI, 193e). And I take it that the child's "bloh" is the expression of an experience, an exclamation of sorts. (I will simply assert without argument that it is not an assertion, nor an avowal, description, or "perceptual report." Could it be a command, as the builder's "block" at PI, §2 looks to be? I might say this later, perhaps, when the child – who I now adopt as mine, since he is – utters it loudly and somewhat crossly, and cries if I do not "obey" him. But I am imagining a time in the child's life when he utters his "bloh" excitedly, sometimes repeatedly, and when my repeating it or something like it back to him, doubtless excitedly, and probably with the ball already at hand, seems response enough.) I understand my interest, in short, to be conceptual.

The toddler, for the first time in his brief life, says "bloh": What else, if anything, has changed? Before he "started to talk," my saying "ball" did not elicit much of a response from him, at least not that I could see. Now not only does he frequently say "bloh" when I say "ball," but he uses "bloh" in ways I can make sense of, not least when he repeats "bloh" over and over, which I understand as a kind of delight, call it the delight of first words. His world, the world he sees and otherwise experiences, now has a ball or balls "in" "it." But did it not before? Surely the first time he said "bloh" was not the first time he saw a ball, as if as soon as he saw one he could see immediately that it was one. Like other toddlers, he has been playing with a ball or balls for months before he said "bloh" – reaching for them, grabbing them, putting them in his mouth, tossing them, shrieking when I roll them back to him, etc. On the other hand, to imagine that he was seeing a ball all along would seem to imply that he already had the concept "ball," and lacked only a (our) label for it. And is that any more coherent? It is a conception of language – one that Wittgenstein attributes to Augustine (though he has others in mind too, including the early Wittgenstein), and that he comes to criticize in these terms:

> Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a strange country and did not understand the language of the country; that is, as if it already had a language, only not this one. Or again: as if the child could already think, only not yet speak. And 'think' would here mean something like 'talk to itself.' (PI, §32)

But "talking to oneself" has its own range of looks, assumptions, and implications, and this child shows none of these. He does not mutter, for instance, but babbles – and not particularly, or ever, to himself.

If the child's first "bloh" betokens neither the first time he sees a ball nor the first time he gives a name to an object he has seen all along, then what does it betoken? As I imagine it, it must betoken that the ball or balls he has been playing with – reaching for, putting in his mouth, etc. – and our repeated utterance of the word "ball" – which the child now hears as one (sort of) utterance, and as (close to) the same utterance he now makes – together have undergone a change of aspect for him. The ball he sees is not yet the ball that I and his 4-year-old sister see, which we may tell one another is round, red, shiny, the size of a grapefruit, etc. Likewise, his "bloh" is not yet our "ball" – nor would it be if the two utterances sounded identical. One comes to recognize this strange and familiar condition of the child when one sees how little he can do with his word (for now). But I think one can describe the child, in his first tentative or delighted or contented utterances of "bloh," as "experiencing the meaning" of "ball" (cf. PI, 214d ff.) – by which I mean to suggest that a word's meaning begins for him necessarily as the experience of its meaning, as finding a new home in its utterance – so that there is something the child can do with his word more readily than we can after all. My claim would then be that the experience of having an aspect dawn, or of being struck by something, or of seeing the familiar in a new light, is as intimately and pervasively joined to the human form of life as talking. Rather than saying that continuous seeing is conceptually prior to aspect-seeing, I find it more felicitous to say that continuous seeing – a taking for granted the furniture of the world – presupposes an ability (interest, desire) to be struck by aspects of the world, to find the face of the world change in answer to one's gaze. —Would that make aspect-seeing conceptually prior to continuous seeing, or

simply developmentally prior, an incidental fact about us, like the tails we grew in the womb? If one insists, impressed by the "seeing x as y" schema, that aspect-seeing is at most developmentally prior, then one is perhaps more willing than I am to separate the fact that humans speak from the fact that humans must come to speak.[37] That willingness is perhaps not unlike the philosopher's willingness to separate the words we speak from the occasions of their use. It is, however, part of Wittgenstein's method of "bring[ing] words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use" (PI, §116) that one ask oneself how we come to learn, or in what contexts we are first at home with, the meaning of a given word. In extending the application of this methodological question to consider in general the contexts in which a repeated sound becomes a first word, I am in effect proposing on Wittgenstein's behalf that the remarks on aspect-seeing continue the preoccupation of earlier sections of the Investigations with the conceptual or grammatical conditions of learning to speak. It is worth noting in this regard that Wittgenstein's initial example of "noticing an aspect" is the experience of seeing a likeness in a face – an experience whose home for us is, I take it, the face of a mother. (Wittgenstein speaks initially of the likeness between two different faces, but he soon mentions in addition the experience of seeing a familiar face in an altered one, i.e. seeing someone's face as hers, recognizing her.)

We are moving towards the conclusion that among the consequences of aspect-blindness would be (if not the absence of language, then) the inability to grow into

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[37]Cavell's reading of the opening sections of the Investigations is to some extent an unfolding of the thought that "what language is is bound up with our ideas of what acquiring language is." See Cavell, "Notes and Afterthoughts," 144 ff.

language, to learn to speak. Early in his remarks on the aspect-blind Wittgenstein says that he "do[es] not want to settle" the question whether the aspect-blind will be able to notice the similarity between, or the identity of, faces (PI, 213f) – so that even the question of recognition, as of a mother's face, is left unsettled. To arrive at a settlement here might seem more like settling the aspect-blind's fate than investigating the concept of their possibility, and Wittgenstein's ambivalence reminds us that when one examines a concept by inventing forms of life one may not be able to say which (other) facts of nature will be altered or implicated. Yet Wittgenstein adds hopefully that the aspect-blind "ought to be able to execute such orders as 'Bring me something that looks like this.'" One ought to be able to say this, of course, because the aspect-blind have not been conceived as blind to what a thing unambiguously is. But one may be inclined to say it because executing the order "Bring me something like this" is enough like what the builder's assistant in PI, §2 is said to be able to do (e.g. when the builder calls "Block" or "Slab"), and the aspect-blind had not been conceived at the outset to be more primitive and dull than the builder and his assistant. But mightn't the aspect-blind be as primitive? It is a curious feature of the language-game of PI, §2, and a feature that has gone unnoticed in my experience, that the builder's assistant does not speak. (When in The Brown Book Wittgenstein extends the builder's language along the same lines as he will at PI, §8 – most notably, by introducing numerals that the assistant must "know by heart" – he says explicitly, "Here both the parties use the language by speaking the words" [BB, 79; my emphasis].) The builder's assistant as described in PI, §2 could be simply a trained animal, his execution of the builder's orders a kind of circus act. It need not be an

unattractive life: while we may still picture the builder with his four words as moving about sluggishly or halfwittedly, his assistant looks suddenly carefree in his dumb, dog-like obedience. Then is he better off than his master? Lacking language, he simply lacks all human possibilities; the builder, on the other hand, looks to have had human possibilities somehow foreclosed, stopped short. Which one we find better approximates the condition of the aspect-blind will depend on whether we picture the aspect-blind as already having a language they could not have learned or acquired (Augustine's picture, the philosopher's ideal), or as simply lacking the prospect of language altogether. Either way, aspect-blindness will appear unimaginable as a human possibility.

In countering Augustine's description of language acquisition as "grasping" the connection between word and thing, or as "gradually learning to understand" that connection (cf. PI, §1), the picture according to which acquiring a first word is undergoing a change of aspect describable as experiencing its meaning suggests that learning to talk is conceptually connected to one's (the child's) taking an interest in one's experience, particularly in one's experience of words themselves.[38] I do not mean an interest in the utility of words, their being more serviceable for expressing a desire or a state of mind, as Augustine notes, than crying or cooing or thrashing about. Rather, I have in mind an interest in the changes that words bring about in the child's desires, changes the child must desire if he is to continue to grow into language. If a child can

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[38]"Taking an interest in one's experience" is Cavell's locution; see Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 12. The importance of this notion for an understanding of Emerson and Thoreau is a central element of Cavell's reading of them and of the tradition of moral perfectionism that he finds exemplified by their writing; see below, chapter 3.

speak, not only is it safe to say with Rhees that "he has got something to tell you,"[39] but that he desires the things words do, the world that his embryonic utterances are inevitably constituting.

And yet, if the experience of having an aspect dawn is as pervasively joined to the human form of life as talking, why does the child, in growing into language, and so coming to continuously-see the furniture of the world – not only its objects but its attitudes and expressions, that aspect of our human form of life Wittgenstein formulates as agreement in language and in judgments – why does the child seemingly grow out of the interest or desire to be struck by aspects of the world? Nietzsche says, in effect, that losing interest in our experience is the price we pay for language. I assume that he does not quite mean what this says, or have in mind some alternative deal that could be struck, since it is not at all clear what would be gained by experience, or left of it, if we lost our concept of it. Nonetheless, it seems no accident that the bulk of Wittgenstein's examples of noticing an aspect that are not drawn from experiences related to art are drawn from activities of childhood. There are puzzle-pictures, flipped figures, games of "What do you see?", games of make-believe in which e.g. a chest is a house, and lessons in rudimentary arithmetic ("Now take these things together" – PI, 208c). It is true that there are also games in which children of a certain age cannot yet participate – e.g. obeying the command to see this angle of a triangle as its apex, or this segment as its base – games for which "the substratum ... is the mastery of a technique" (PI, 208e). And with some responses to art – Wittgenstein mentions finding certain themes of Brahms to be

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[39]Rhees, "Wittgenstein's Builders," 80.

extremely Kellerian while being unable to say why they should strike him this way (cf. LC, 32) – the substratum might rather be called a culture (cf. LC, 8-11) or "the whole field of our language-games."[40] One might say: our conception of our experience, and so the sort of striking something that that experience will trigger, is transformed by our growing into language every bit as much as our concept of "ball" or "block" (or "bank" or "Boston" or "baby") is transformed.

But despite the ways in which our grown-up responses to art, for example, answer to our interest or desire to be struck by aspects of the world, we may nonetheless lose interest in that interest. If the child growing into language is learning what to do with such experiences as lay behind his first words, he may well be learning to forget such experiences, to repress them. After he takes his first steps into language, and can say his first several dozen words, there may be no encouragement from those around him for what merely strikes him, what then and there may be striking to him alone. When he pronounces one of his words in a non-ordinary context (says "bloh" when I put an ice cube in his hand), I may "correct" him – encourage him to say "ice cube" or "cube" or "cold" – even as I find his error understandable, even metaphorically suggestive to me. One might imagine the child finding this new response to his utterance itself striking. But one cannot say in general whether he will experience these encounters over time as encouragement (to our ways of seeing the world) or as admonishment (for not yet having

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[40]Z, §175; cf. CV, 51e-52a, and Wittgenstein, Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, vol. 1, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980; reprint, Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1988), §433, hereafter referred to as RPP 1.

mastered our ways). While I think Wittgenstein intends a certain kinship between the notion of aspect-dawning and our concept of the dawning of an understanding ("Now I know how to go on!"),[41] there is at least this disanalogy, that expressions of a dawning of understanding are more readily praised than expressions of the dawning of an aspect. This is because, as I have said, one cannot so much as assess the expression of an experience before one understands it to be expressing this (e.g. something seen a new way). And in aspect-dawning contexts that is not as simple a matter as recognizing, in my interactions with the child, that he can now do what I am able to do, or gives me the answer I want – as when in later years he says "Now I can do it!" and proceeds to recite the natural numbers in order up to a hundred, or plays the passage with the correct rhythm, or reads the time off of an analog clock. Even when one does see what is expressed in an aspect-dawning expression, one may not have any pressing interest in praising or encouraging it. (What would be the conditions for one's wanting to do so, for finding the child's unprompted, non-trivial way of seeing or hearing something to be praiseworthy? Perhaps a condition is wanting to encourage his independence. But what are the conditions for wanting that; and when are they realized?)

It thus appears both that our coming to continuously-see the furniture of the world requires our interest or desire to be struck by aspects of the world, and that the price we pay for our growing into language is a loss of interest in what may here and now strike us

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[41]The affinity between Wittgenstein's remarks on aspect-dawning and the dawning of an understanding has been observed by, for example, T. E. Wilkerson, "Pictorial Representation: A Defense of the Aspect Theory," in Philosophy and the Arts, Midwest Studies in Philosophy, vol. 16 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), 154. For Wittgenstein's discussion of the dawning of an understanding, see PI, §151 ff.

alone. It is almost as if, at some point and to varying degrees, we come to adopt the philosopher's static view of the connection between the words we say and their systematic implications, and begin to imagine that the field of our words[42] has in every instance and in each utterance long since been surveyed – whereas our words extend in and along the fields they do for no reason beyond our finding them called for when we do, and trusting that others will follow them, or anticipating in certain contexts that they may not. From the standpoint of our loss of interest in our experience, aspect-blindness will seem to us not unimaginable as a human possibility, but quite familiar, a kind of literal-mindedness in taking in the world. We will not picture the aspect-blind as hesitant, stumbling, stiff automatons (cf. OBITW, 89), but as visibly indistinguishable from us: people we think we have met, or been.[43] "Anomalies of this kind are easy for us to imagine" (PI, 214b) because people who have "an altogether different relationship to pictures from ours" (PI,

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[42]The image of the field of a word, or the field of a sequence of notes, appears frequently in Wittgenstein's writings: see e.g. Z, §175 and its variants (cited above in footnote 40); CV, 47d; and RPP 1, §525. Its single appearance in the Investigations occurs in a late remark about aesthetic description: "It is possible – and this is important – to say a great deal about a fine aesthetic difference.... That first judgment is not the end of the matter, for it is the field of a word that is decisive" (PI, 219b). I translate Wittgenstein's "Feld" (his emphasis) as simply "field" rather than "field of force," as Anscombe does, to preserve the ambiguity, present in German as in English, between a force field – something the word exerts – and a field or plain – something in which one might roam, following the word, as it were. Beyond its pertinence to the interpretation of Wittgensteinian grammar presented in this chapter, the sense of "field" as something to traverse allows us to make connections to Wittgenstein's repeated remark, "A multitude of familiar paths lead off from these words in every direction" (PI, §525, §534), as well as to his description of his method (in the Preface to the Investigations) as compelling him "to travel over a wide field of thought [Gedankengebiet] criss-cross in every direction."

[43]This is the view Joachim Schulte adopts in explicating Wittgenstein's related notion of meaning-blindness. See Schulte, Experience and Expression, 68-70.

214a) could be, in effect, anyone. If "our" relation to pictures is often to merely regard them and less frequently to concern ourselves with them, or to find that they live for us (cf. PI, 205g-h), then who among us might we not, at one time or another, suspect of having lost the capacity to fetch a picture to life – including, in moods of discouragement, ourselves? Or again, if our relation to this picture is such that the words we find to express it say nothing to someone else, or fail to get her to see it as we do, to what do we ascribe our failure, or hers, if not in the end to some difference whose name is scarcely more unequivocal (assuming it is not a difference in knowing a word's meaning) than its consequences are foreseeable?

If our response to the possibility of aspect-blindness is consequently ambivalent – aspect-blindness seems neither fully imaginable as human nor completely foreign to us – that might express our ambivalent conception of ourselves as both imaginative and unimaginative, both spirit and flesh. Aspect-seeing is not completely commensurate with having an imagination: unlike imagining, aspect-seeing works with a perception. But the picture that emerges from Wittgenstein's discussion of the differences among kinds of aspects (PI, 207-8) is that seeing a change in aspect requires, at a minimum, that one can imagine something.[44] A more telling connection for our present purpose is that aspect-seeing, like the imagination, is subject to the will (PI, 213e), suggesting that our interest or desire to find the world striking is the natural expression or projection of our imagination on the world, a kind of epitome of our freedom. And are we not meant to notice that Wittgenstein places this observation in the Investigations immediately before

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[44]See especially PI, 207b, 207h, and RPP 2, §508.

his introducing the concept of aspect-blindness with the words, "The question now arises: Could there be human beings lacking the capacity to see something as something..." (first emphasis mine), suggesting that his interest in the concept of aspect-blindness is prompted by an interest in willing, and his, or anyone's, propensity to relinquish it? If we are meant to notice this, then Wittgenstein's willingness not to say something conclusive about the aspect-blind opens the possibility that this conceptual investigation should be carried beyond the explicit considerations presented in these few remarks, if indeed the human will is not already seen to be one of its explicit concerns. I conclude this section and chapter by recommending two further places to which one might carry it: (A) to the question of the connection between willing and writing; and (B) to the question of the connection between reading a sentence with understanding and understanding a stretch of music.

(A) I have argued (1) that human understanding is not grounded in conceptual structures to which one might appeal to justify what one says; (2) that, in fact, the condition for growing into language is the ability or interest or desire to be struck by aspects of the world, which is to say the condition is one whose expression distinguishes us here and now (it is I who am struck, who sees things a new way, even while others have made or continue to make a similar leap); (3) that, consequently, speakers of what we call the same language who fail to convey to one another an aspect seen, or fail to see what the other sees, may suffer these failures for no reason, none that more words must erase, though they may (understanding is contingent, and not for unequivocal reasons); (4) and that, accordingly, such occasions of failure produce a natural anxiety or unease

that one may choose to quiet, possibly by constructing philosophical models of justification that fail to justify, and more generally by losing interest in one's experience, gradually willing oneself aspect-blind (though doubtless there are other reasons to do so). To bring this last thought to bear on reading Wittgenstein: his interest in the possibility or suggestiveness of aspect-blindness is prompted by the philosophical model, familiar to the author of the Tractatus, of human language as proceeding without our interest, a model which asks us finally to relinquish our will, i.e. the part we play in expressing the systematicity of language. In now wanting to claim that for the later Wittgenstein a task of philosophy is not only to present the errors in such a model, or to expose the temptations to it, but to model in one's writing an interest in one's experience, I am guided by three or four comments that Wittgenstein makes on the role of the will in that peculiar use of language called philosophical writing. I will set these comments down, beginning with a summary statement by one of Wittgenstein's biographers:

> He often remarked that the problem of writing good philosophy and of thinking well about philosophical problems was one of the will more than of the intellect – the will to resist the temptation to misunderstand, the will to resist superficiality.[45]

> Lying to oneself about oneself, deceiving yourself about the pretence in your own state of will, must have a harmful influence on [one's] style; for the result will be that you cannot tell what is genuine in the style and what is false. This may explain the falsity of Mahler's style; and it is the same danger that I run myself.

> If I perform to myself [think that I'm writing as such a man would], then it's this that the style expresses. And then the style cannot be my own. If you are unwilling to know what you are, your writing is a form of deceit.

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[45]Monk, The Duty of Genius, 366.

> If anyone is unwilling to descend into himself, because this is too painful, he will remain superficial in his writing.[46]

These thoughts, if not their tone or favorite musical whipping-boy, are Nietzschean; and few can answer their charge. But at present I want only to highlight the following: the obstacle to knowing what one is is not just one's refusal to look at what one is, but one's not knowing where to look, or how: and finding these requires a will, too, and an interest in one's experience. Lying to oneself about oneself would not be a danger to one's philosophical or musical style if it were as easy to spot in oneself as lying about one's age. To will self-knowledge is not a matter of exerting willpower towards a given goal, but of being willing to look for what one is, not knowing where or how to look, and so not knowing the cost of finding out. That was Meno's paradox, and his sticking-point – though of course he did not know this; and Socrates could not tell him. –The peculiar look of Wittgenstein's later style has often been mentioned. Less often have I heard someone observe the peculiar demands on will and judgment evident in his style, particularly in its unrelenting venting of doubting voices – not only voices of skeptical doubt but other, accusatory voices raising the suspicion that the direction taken by the

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[46]Quoted in Rhees, "Postscript," Recollections of Wittgenstein, 174. Wittgenstein wrote these last three comments in a manuscript book (MS 120) in February 1938. A year earlier he had made a series of personal confessions to a few friends, relatives, and former students. But, only three months before these manuscript entries (on 18 November 1937), he wrote of his disappointment that the confessions had not, it seemed, radically changed him, brought him to sufficiently "greater seriousness." See Fania Pascal, "Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir," in Recollections of Wittgenstein, 34-39; Rhees, "Postscript," 172-98; Monk, The Duty of Genius, 367-72.

protagonist at this juncture is no longer one that he continues to will, but is instead a direction he may be finding simply less resistant, or more familiar.[47]

One does not know in approaching a philosophical problem, or in taking up a text like the Investigations, what the temptation to misunderstand will prove to be, or where the temptation to superficiality will lie, so that one can make preparations to resist it. (Before the duck-rabbit flips for you, it looks just like a line drawing of a duck, or of a rabbit.) Then how does one come to know how to proceed in philosophy, or in reading a text like the Investigations? Wittgenstein characterizes good philosophical writing as writing that shows "a genuine style." Perhaps he thinks that one comes to recognize this, to know it, in much the same way that one comes to know "the genuineness of expressions" in others. And how does he think that one comes to know that?

> Can one learn this knowledge? Yes; some can. Not, however, by taking a course in it, but through 'experience'. —Can someone else be a man's teacher in this? Certainly. From time to time he gives him the right tip. —This is what 'learning' and 'teaching' are like here. —What one acquires here is not a technique; one learns correct judgments. There are also rules, but they do not form a system, and only experienced people can apply them right. Unlike calculating-rules.
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> What is most difficult here is to put this indefiniteness, correctly and unfalsified [i.e. genuinely], into words. (PI, 227h-i)

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[47]"Is it a case of both seeing and thinking? Or an amalgam of the two, as I should almost like to say? The question is: why does one want to say this?" (PI, 197h); "I should like to say that what dawns here lasts only as long as I am occupied with the object in a particular way. ('See, it's looking!') — 'I should like to say' – and is it so?" (PI, 210d); "But wait! Do I ever really say of an ordinary picture (of a lion) that I see it as a lion? I've certainly never heard that yet. And yet here I've been talking about this kind of seeing!" (LW 1, §675-6); "But I have kept on saying [e.g. at PI, 230b] that it's conceivable for our concepts to be different than they are. Was that all nonsense?" This last is from Wittgenstein, Remarks on Colour, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. Linda L. McAlister and Margarete Schättle (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), III, §124.

Can one conceive these ten or eleven sentences as a complete description of the sense, or the use, of the Investigations? The implication would be that philosophical knowledge of the sort pursued in this text is learnable and teachable in a sense different from the knowledge pursued in a text intent either on building a system of language (a logical calculus) or on justifying the systematicity language has. But another implication would be that it takes the number of those who can learn this knowledge to be limited, not by native intelligence, nor by anything in nature one can name (except in scare-quotes). And the consequences of not learning this knowledge are, like the 'consequences' of aspect-blindness, "of a diffuse kind" (PI, 228a). If a genuine style rests on a kind of watchfulness for self-deception – I do not mean a paranoid suspicion of it, which may itself be a kind of self-deception – then it rests on one's interest or desire to notice, to watch for, one's watchfulness: a kind of double- or aspect-seeing. And it may not rest there.

If that describes Wittgenstein's vision of philosophy – philosophy as watchfulness, as a double-seeing or a weighing of one's experience – then presumably he would hope to convey that vision in his writing. And we have found that he does not so much draw conclusions about matters unseen (the glue that binds world to language, or language to meaning, or speaker to speaker) as prepare connections to be seen (a "series of examples" that "can be broken off" [PI, §133]), while recognizing that seeing the connections asks for a reconstituting way of looking. But where, if one is Wittgenstein, does one place one's hope that one will be understood? If what Wittgenstein means by our "agreement in judgments" is not a fact about us – not that ideal of agreement we found in considering

the aspect-blind – so much as it is a proposal for a shared investigation of the content and extent of our agreement, then what it proposes is conversation, perhaps even the ideal of conversation, which is philosophy. Since the voices of the Investigations, including those of doubt and accusation, are all Wittgenstein's, the conversation it proposes includes its reader, say me. I am to find in its attempt at a perspicuous representation of our language not grounds or a causal connection for our understanding one another, not rules or a framework to which I might appeal, not a theory of language or knowledge, but simply the content and extent of our agreement – in reading, for example:

> What is fear? What does 'being afraid' mean? If I wanted to define it at a single shewing – I should play-act fear.
>
> Could I also represent hope in this way? Hardly. And what about belief? (PI, 188d-e)

I am asked to try these questions and answers out on myself, but not only in the way that any philosophical claim asks this of me, to examine and assess its truth – in this instance, by seeing whether I agree that the most salient features of hope cannot be shown by play-acting, as those of fear can. I am certainly asked to consider, in addition, whether Wittgenstein's answer to his first question helps to dispel the thought that "I am afraid" always or even principally refers to a state of mind, and whether his second remark diminishes the appeal of the thought that the difference between "I fear that x," "I hope that x," and "I believe that x" is that the first two refer to emotive states while the last refers to a propositional attitude. Beyond weighing Wittgenstein's words against my experience, however, I am invited to weigh my experience in light of his words, to try on a method – Wittgenstein likens it to a therapy (PI, §133) – for returning to an interest in

my experience, in the words I speak and in my part in voicing their justification, when that is required of me. But that requires that I dissolve or destroy the barriers to my interest in my experience, the (philosophical) problems I have constructed to keep my real interest, and what satisfies my real need, out of my everyday thoughts and speech, out of my sight (cf. PI, 206a). –On the other hand, if I am looking for grounds for our understanding, or rules to which I can appeal, or a theory, whether out of hope or out of fear, then even the remarks from the Investigations just quoted will answer to my desire when read a certain way, viz. out of that hope or fear.

(B) In asking what the consequences of aspect-blindness would be, Wittgenstein begins by presenting two possible comparisons: "Would this defect be comparable to colour-blindness or to not having absolute pitch?" (PI, 213f). His final remark proposes a different simile: "Aspect-blindness will be akin to the lack of a 'musical ear'" (PI, 214c). This kinship is not further spelled out. What is its point? People who lack a musical ear are neither most of us nor only one or two of us, but some number in between. Does the connection to aspect-blindness lie in the relative numbers of those without a musical ear and the conceptual consequences that derive from this – that is, from one's minority or majority status as a speaker of the language – insofar as "the lack of a 'musical ear'" describes a kind of middle ground of influence between color-blindness, a disability few of us have, and not having absolute pitch, a "disability" nearly all of us have? Or does the kinship lie in a diagnostic similarity? For whereas color-blindness is a physiological condition complete with its own physical correlate of damaged or missing cone cells, and the lack of absolute pitch is easily verifiable, "the lack of a 'musical' ear'" identifies a less

precise distinction, or one precise in a different sense. And unlike the case, at least, of not having absolute pitch, one cannot discern this disability without having its paired ability, which seems true of aspect-blindness as well. Either speculation seems tenable as far as it goes, and both seem to answer to that middle ground of ambivalence one occupies in considering aspect-blindness, in finding the aspect-blind to be both literally unimaginable and figuratively accurate.

But I want rather to pair this concluding simile by the crafter of beautiful similes – as Wittgenstein once half-deprecatingly, half-seriously described himself[48] – with another simile. Before I do, I note that the simile of lacking a musical ear, which joins an absence of a kind of musical hearing to an absence of a kind of seeing, is followed directly by the remark, "The importance of this concept [of aspect-blindness] lies in the connexion between the concepts of 'seeing an aspect' and 'experiencing the meaning of a word'" (PI, 214d). Here Wittgenstein joins a seeing that he had associated with art to an appreciation of words that he will associate with poetry (cf. PI, 214g and following). The simile I wish to pair with the simile of lacking a musical ear completes the circle, by joining a relation to words – understanding a sentence – to a hearing that is unambiguously musical. I reproduce the version of this remark as one finds it in The Brown Book:

> What we call 'understanding a sentence' has, in many cases, a much greater similarity to understanding a musical theme than we might be inclined to think. But I don't mean that understanding a musical theme is more like the picture which one tends to make oneself of understanding a sentence; but rather that this picture is wrong, and that understanding a sentence is much more like what really happens when we understand a tune than at first sight appears. For understanding

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[48]Wittgenstein, letter to G. E. Moore, October 1936; quoted in Monk, The Duty of Genius, 363.

> a sentence, we say, points to a reality outside the sentence. Whereas one might say 'Understanding a sentence means getting hold of its content; and the content of the sentence is in the sentence.' (BB, 167)

Wittgenstein will abandon the language of "getting hold of the content of a sentence" when he rewrites this passage in the Investigations (at PI, §527). But I think that the impulse behind the clause "the content of the sentence is in the sentence" does not disappear in the later writings. How should one describe that impulse? Certainly it includes the thought that one does not look elsewhere to explain what we call 'understanding a sentence' – in particular, not to the objects which each individual word names (cf. PI, §1).

Let us get at that impulse by asking: How does one understand a musical theme? To understand a musical theme I must, at a minimum, hear it. But thinking back to the distinction between kinds of seeing discussed in chapter 1, should we say that one must "continuously hear" it? Then "hearing with understanding" would name a kind of aural equivalent to regarding a picture or a photograph as the object it depicts. But what would that aural equivalent be, if music does not, in general, depict objects? Should we rather say that one must "be struck" by the theme? Then "hearing with understanding" would name the experience of the dawning of an aural aspect. But when, at what moment of the theme, must one be struck? (Do I understand a theme if I am struck by its first three notes?) Perhaps "hearing a theme with understanding" means that one is struck by it when the theme is over. But then in what sense would one's experience of being struck by the theme be an experience of it, of hearing it?

Earlier I offered this suggestion (p. 60): "Understanding a stretch of music is not a matter of 'having' (suffering) associations; understanding music is following it." Cavell tentatively suggests that our idiom "seeing the point" captures this understanding, but he then points out that "in ordinary cases of seeing the point, once it's seen it's known, or understood; about works of art one may wish to say that they require a continuous seeing of the point" ("MD," 191).[49] Does this last description propose that understanding a stretch of music is a case of both continuous hearing and aspect-hearing? We might call it an amalgam of the two: understanding a stretch of music means following it, which means, not continuously hearing it, but continuously hearing its point. "Why is just this the pattern of variation in loudness and tempo? One would like to say 'Because I know what it's all about'" (PI, §527).

Returning to the relation among Wittgenstein's various similes: if (1) being blind to aspects is like lacking a musical ear, so that seeing aspects is like having a musical ear; (2) seeing an aspect is like experiencing the meaning of a word; (3) understanding a sentence is like understanding a musical theme, and so in some sense like exercising a musical ear; and (4) understanding a musical theme is like continuously hearing its point, "knowing what it's all about"; then one could say that (5) being blind to aspects is like continuously missing the point of one's words, or is akin to one's being unable to 'justify' them – that is, in the way that one 'justifies' an aesthetic judgment (cf. PI, §527). Wittgenstein himself connects the idea of "experiencing the meaning of a word" to the

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[49]At the end of the next chapter I will be considering the advice Thelonious Monk gives to someone performing music – specifically, improvising it – to "stick to the point" and to "not lose the point."

idea of our attachment to our words, to the way we choose and value words (cf. PI, 218g). "Experiencing the meaning of a word," like "continuously hearing the point" of one's words, is a figure for one's taking an interest in one's experience; and taking an interest in one's experience, as we saw above, is a prerequisite to Wittgenstein's "style" of writing philosophy.

Although Wittgenstein says that understanding a sentence is like understanding a theme in music, he seems to think that this is more true of some sentences, or on some occasions, than others:

> We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.) (PI, §531).

Can we ask, finally, how we are asked to understand this, or any other, sentence in the Investigations – whether in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same, or whether in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other? If one reads this question together with Wittgenstein's question to Drury – "It is impossible for me to say in my book one word about all that music has meant in my life. How then can I hope to be understood?" – one can find that they answer to one another. (While a simile can be replaced by another simile, not everyone knows how to make a good one. Same with reading one.) What is it to read a sentence in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other? It is, I take it, to read it with an interest in one's experience (of it). But can that be one's commission in taking up a philosophical text? And how can a text ask for that, give the reader the right tip, if finding oneself encouraged to an interest in

one's experience presupposes an interest in one's experience, a readiness to be struck by what passes before one's eyes, meaning, here, the words on the page? "It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another – but, of course, it is not likely" (PI, Preface). What is the darkness of this time? –Who is the audience of Philosophical Investigations?

PART 2. EMERSON AND THINKING IN ART

Chapter 3. Emerson's "Art" and Jazz Improvisation

> This one fact the world hates, that the soul becomes....
>
> – Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Self-Reliance"

> [Thelonious Monk] was also very interested in errors, and when someone made a mistake he would pick up on it and examine the ramifications (Duke's word) therein.
>
> – Steve Lacy, Foreword to Thelonious Monk: His Life and Music

The project of the present chapter will be to sketch an approach to understanding improvised music, one which I find called for by the work of certain outstanding jazz musicians, and which discovers in such improvisations an emblem of what Emerson typically calls self-trust, and Stanley Cavell in recent years has called moral perfectionism. Thus perhaps the greatest burden of this chapter is to show how a way of attending to improvised music might reveal a form of knowledge that is essentially moral. By extending that general claim to moral perfectionism, I will be joining my discussion of a way of listening to improvised music not only to the previous chapter's discussion of aspect-seeing, but to a broader philosophical project, as well as to a tradition of thinking, to which I now offer a brief overview.

Moral perfectionism is best characterized not as a set of moral axioms or principles, as though it stood in competition with the dominant theories of morality (Utilitarianism, Kantianism), but as a kind of thinking that begins after or beyond such theories, and whose distinctive features are a commitment to speaking and acting true to oneself, combined with a thoroughgoing dissatisfaction with oneself as one now stands. One might summarize these features as identifying a way of living set against a life of conformity and a lifeless consistency. It is in his essay "Self-Reliance" that Emerson famously describes our human tendency to nullify ourselves in the face of our craving for conformity and consistency. The way out of this danger to the self is what Emerson means by self-trust or self-reliance; he speaks in similar contexts of heeding one's genius. There are of course trivial as well as arrogant ways to take up Emerson's call, exactly as many as there are trivial and arrogant ways of reading. But that it can be read as belonging to a tradition of thinking inherited from such figures as Plato and Pascal, and continued in such figures as Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, was perhaps the most fertile conclusion of Stanley Cavell's 1988 Carus Lectures published as Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome. The central concern of those lectures, beyond their identifying this tradition of thinking, was to argue that the necessarily unending commitment to perfecting the self is not only in harmony with the equally unending or ongoing political commitment to democracy but is, in fact, democracy's precondition, even its fullest meaning. But the feature of interest to me here, as I set out to suggest some connections between moral perfectionism and the work of some exemplary jazz improvisers, is the understanding that emerges from this tradition of how we manage to do anything new or

different or original at all: to check our habitual responses to the world – for example, the reliance, when improvising a jazz solo, on familiar solutions to a pattern of chord changes – in favor of newly-discovered or newly-charted desires. What I claim is that both Emerson's writing and the work of the best improvisers exemplify a feature of the notion (discussed in chapter 2) of taking an interest in one's experience: a feature Cavell has called, giving voice to a thought he finds in both Emerson and Thoreau, the capacity for "checking one's experience." That expression is meant to capture, as Cavell says,

> ... the sense at the same time of consulting one's experience and of subjecting it to examination, and beyond these, of 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 the education cannot be achieved in advance of the trusting.[1]

In section 3.1, I sketch a picture of how novice jazz improvisers learn their skill: in particular, I consider what it is they learn in learning how to forget their training and practice, learning how to sound other than rehearsed or contrived or canned. My remarks are directed in response to David Sudnow's problematic but still pioneering account of the phenomenology of improvisation, Ways of the Hand,[2] in which he describes his attempt to teach himself jazz in isolation, declaring his experience to be representative of most competent jazz practitioners. There will be occasion here to compare elements in Sudnow's account to elements in Augustine's account of learning language, and thus to

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[1]Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness, 12.

[2]David Sudnow, Ways of the Hand: The Organization of Improvised Conduct (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978; reprint, Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1993), hereafter referred to as WH.

consider Wittgenstein's criticism of those elements. The next section (3.2) presents a critique of standard efforts to interpret improvised solos as though they were composed or preconceived, contrasting that approach to one that treats the procedures of improvisation as derived from, and importantly at play in, our everyday actions. I then turn (section 3.3) to a pair of discussions of artistic genius and originality: to Kant's account of artistic genius in Critique of Judgment §§46-50,[3] but more especially to Emerson's concluding essay in Essays: First Series, the one he calls "Art."[4] My intent there is twofold: to show the extent to which Emerson's essay is written in response to Kant's understanding of the nature and function of artistic genius or originality, and to work through several levels of correspondence between the interest jazz enthusiasts find in improvisation and the demands Emerson makes in his writing. Emerson writes with an interest in the multiple meanings of words, in their potential for transformation. Because of this interest, whose moral intent is to set the reader on her way to her own transformation of thoughts, the reader can come to feel that she is no longer reading inert symbols, but is rather being addressed with an intimacy that defies the distance between page and eye, between writing and reading. But that is an artistic goal, and one not far removed from the interest that I will be claiming for the best of jazz, in which a sense of immediacy and what has been called "the sound of surprise" are paramount.

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[3]Immanuel Kant, Critique of Judgement, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafner Press, 1951), hereafter referred to as CJ, followed by section number.

[4]The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Robert E. Spiller, Alfred R. Ferguson, et al. (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971-), 2:207-18, hereafter referred to as CW, followed by volume and page numbers.

In the following section (3.4) I give a reading of portions of three exemplary jazz performances by Charlie Parker and Lennie Tristano. Those remarks, which constitute an untried approach to jazz criticism, might be described as attempts to locate the genius in the solos, to name the place where the soloist and the solo find themselves in such a way that what follows – by which I mean both what comes next and what makes sense – can be heard to be the result of the improviser's full awareness of his place and presence, of his working through his conventional responses. If educating and being educated by your experience entail that you reveal yourself in your most ordinary and unrehearsed actions; and if, as I argue, improvised music is best understood as a species of ordinary, unrehearsed activity, of thinking on one's feet, or in the heat of the moment; then one should not be surprised to find examples of improvised jazz that exemplify this – that reveal the self heeding the self – and which command our interest for that reason.

I conclude in section 3.5 by returning to the question of acquiring skills, now at some levels beyond mere competence, by considering a recent and striking oral account by Steve Lacy of elements of the jazz instruction he received from Thelonious Monk when Lacy played briefly in Monk's band in the 1950s. It will become apparent how Monk's advice amounts to so many encouragements or invitations to the kind of thinking we will have located in moral perfectionism. Both the recorded performances examined below and the ideal of performance offered in Monk's words to Lacy can be heard as instancings, as I wish to put it, of a kind of knowledge which most moral philosophy at best hints at in its talk of practical wisdom. In the previous chapter I described it as a kind of self-knowledge, or a knowledge to ward off self-deceit, whose goal Wittgenstein

identifies as a genuine style, and Emerson identifies as the production of a new and fairer whole. It might help in the present case to describe such knowledge further as knowledge which one has only in its instancings; or less problematically, as knowledge which is only expressed. Through considering the example of acquiring competence at, and then knowledge of, the practice of improvising music, I hope to provide a broader view of the conditions and the cost of philosophy's unease over its attachments to art.

3.1 Improvisation and Learning Competence

How does one learn how to improvise jazz? I begin by suggesting that progress in this depends less on the particular approach of a teacher and the response he or she elicits from you, and more on your response to the two positions you occupy: those of the one who practices and the one who monitors his or her own practice, the novice attempts at improvising and the full-blown improvisations heard in the head, the positions, Emerson might say, of the self and the next or higher self. Thus progress here, as in Wittgenstein's model of philosophizing, will depend on a kind of double- or aspect-seeing. In claiming that with jazz there is a sense in which the roles of teacher and student must merge, I mean to stress that the learning takes place in an act, as with learning how to walk or talk or throw a baseball or ride a bike. The lesson is next to nothing, the practice is everything. Further, it may be that what you think you are doing in your attempts at improvising is more telling of how far you will go than your particular doings are; and that the sign of progress is not your ability to do new things (move around to different parts of the keyboard, say) but is rather your reconception or reconfiguring of your

doings, something like finding out what your goal is, what it is you want to do. In that sense, working at improvising is a kind of therapy, a therapy by acting rather than by talking.

These remarks might seem to harmonize with the description David Sudnow gives in Ways of the Hand; and what I have to say about that book should be read through my sense of indebtedness to it. That nevertheless I think Sudnow's account is flawed adds, if I am right, a further element to my characterization of how one learns to improvise – namely, that some practices can appear to be a radical reconfiguring of one's doings without being so, perhaps especially if one is caught up in a peculiarly sociological stance or picture of what it means to set out to do something, to decide on a course of instruction. In this respect, Sudnow's methodological self-assurance is reminiscent of Mulhall's, though his methodological commitment (to a descriptive phenomenology) is not. Sudnow envisions the acquiring of improvisatory competence as a more or less self-prescribed undertaking, the way buying a car is: you decide what you want, you obtain the needed resources, you apply them to the thing that first caught your eye, and you get what you expected. But such a picture falsifies the experience of learning how to play jazz no less than it falsifies the experience of learning a language.

Sudnow's account of his course of instruction following an embarrassing debut at a jazz club reveals for me the ground of his stance. Here are the opening two paragraphs from the chapter he calls "Going for the Sounds":

> Over the next few years, committed to becoming skilled at jazz, but not tied to the occupation and a need to make a living at it, I played for the most part at home and alone, venturing only occasionally into situations of performance....

> Although I was advised from time to time to start working as a musician, that by getting a steady job my playing would 'come together,' and while I could see the sensibility of the advice for gaining skills at relaxing in my approach to improvisation, I was not attracted to the work situations someone with my skill level would be at first compelled to pursue. I saw no crucial point at working in noisy bars, where no one seemed to listen to the musicians, when I could play at home, on my own schedule. I had been making what I regarded as real progress on many fronts, sensed that I had a basic grasp over the feelings of what jazz play was like, knew about my play that for all its lacks there was the necessary potential for relevant skills to develop and figured after a year of lessons, with a firm understanding of the theory of the keyboard, chord structure, and melodic principles, I was in position to learn the rest by myself in solitary practice.
>
> I did things for several hours each day that more or less seemed reasonable. I practiced various technical exercises that I knew all musicians worked with, spent much time investigating the keyboard to discover new sorts of melodic configurations, finding various intervallic relationships to be explored, evolving ever-new pathways constructed on principles similar to ones I had been instructed about (so that the characteristic jazz sound was present), listened to a small collection of records (seldom trying the horrendous task of solo-copying), and aimed always for what I felt to be the most sophisticated and intricate examples of contemporary jazz piano playing. For the most part, my practice sessions were given over to playing a handful of songs, doing my improvisations. (WH, 34-5)

I find several things about this account immediately striking. The first is Sudnow's description of his understanding and rejection of the advice that he should perform more often in public: he takes the advice to be, or to mean, that performing regularly would serve to make him (only) more relaxed. The second is Sudnow's conviction that what remains for him to learn can be developed "in solitary practice." And third, in the course of listing six or seven elements of his solitary practice, Sudnow mentions that one thing he rarely did was transcribe some jazz solos, a task he calls "horrendous."

Sudnow appears later on to acknowledge the peculiarity, or at least the unrepresentativeness, of this approach to learning jazz improvisation. He says near the

end of his book, "... had I been more inclined and perhaps occupationally compelled to learn by first getting some simple sentences [i.e. phrases, licks] together, a different course of socialization might have evolved" (WH, 143). But it then appears in the somewhat lengthy footnote he attaches to this sentence that the "different course of socialization" he has in mind is one which forgoes not only science but the intellect altogether, as though his course of instruction ought to seem unusual, out of the ordinary, only against a romanticized ideal of the natural musician:

> One does not have to learn about places [i.e. notes, scales, chords and patterns] by their names to become an improvisor, though most beginners do much of this these days, and most recent jazz vocabulary shows it.... To speak colloquially, you must practice your scales.... (WH, 143)

With this as an example of what Sudnow means by speaking "colloquially" – which I take to characterize a remark more like "You gotta get your chops together" – one begins to wonder what kind of language he means to oppose it to. He continues in the footnote:

> The most complex possibilities are not inconceivably attained by listening to records and doing no theorizing. But in modern literate circles, where a language undergoes continuous and substantial modification over single generational careers, where playing fast and intricately has come to competitively differentiate performers in a scarce marketplace, where being a good musician means to be multilingual – in such a set of circumstances, speaking [again] colloquial sociology, the days of that young man and his horn, sitting every night on the edge of the bandstand, practicing every day, learning to speak jazz like one first learns to speak a first language, are poverty-stricken and numbered. (WH, 144)

I will return momentarily to the analogy between learning to speak jazz and learning to speak a first language. For now I wish to point out the remarkableness of the suggestion that the alternative to the life of solitary practice is the life of the illiterate working musician, the man married to his horn for whom the stage and the street are all the

classroom he needs. Why does Sudnow overlook even the possibility of practicing with other musicians? Most jazz musicians of whatever musical background, schooled or unschooled, enter their jazz studies by playing in groups with other players, both better and worse than themselves. Academic approaches to teaching jazz vocabulary do not undermine the fact that knowledge of it is acquired, shared and passed on among a community of musicians not just swapping advice but trading fours, not just talking about it together but doing it together. Given the prevalence of this practice, it can seem that the romantic figure in Sudnow's book is not the "young man and his horn" but Sudnow himself, who paints himself as a middle-aged university professor working at home with his piano and typewriter, woodshedding for five years while writing about his trials and revelations, then at last bursting on the jazz and literary scenes simultaneously.

We ought to look at two other passages from Sudnow's book that will fill in the picture of his education in jazz. The first of these elaborates on "the crucial turning point in [his] progress toward competent play," the experience of watching his mentor Jimmy Rowles at the piano. Here Sudnow is at his most eloquent in suggesting the importance of how the hands and body move:

> I watched him night after night, watched him move from chord to chord with a broadly swaying participation of his shoulders and entire torso, watched him delineate waves of movement, some broadly encircling, others subdividing the broadly undulating strokes with finer rotational movements, so that as his arm reached out to get from one chord to another it was as if some spot on his back, for example, circumscribed a small circle at the same time, as if at the very slow tempos this was a way a steadiness to the beat was sustained.
> ... I found over the course of several months of listening to and watching Jimmy Rowles, and starting to play slow ballads myself ... that in order to get the sound of a song to happen like his, his observable bodily idiom, his style of articulating a beat, served as a guide. In the very act of swaying gently and with elongated

> movements through the course of playing a song, the lilting, stretching, almost oozing quality of his interpretations could be evoked.... I found that I could get much of his breathing quality into a song's presentation by trying to copy his ways. (WH, 82, 83)

The second passage I want to cite is a conflated summary of the lessons Sudnow learned from watching Jimmy Rowles in action; it also contains what could serve as the motto for his book:

> I had come to learn, overhearing and overseeing this jazz as my instructable hands' ways – in a terrain nexus of hands and keyboard whose respective surfaces had become known as the respective surfaces of my tongue and teeth and palate are known to each other – that this jazz music is ways of moving from place to place as singings with my fingers. To define jazz (as to define any phenomenon of human action) is to describe the body's ways. (WH, 146)

I would like to juxtapose these words to that part of Saint Augustine's account of learning a language that Wittgenstein quotes at the beginning of the Investigations:

> When they (my elders) named some object, and accordingly moved towards 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.... 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.[5]

In both accounts, I want to say, the movements of parts of the body, especially the sound-producing parts (Sudnow's instructable hands, Augustine's trained mouth) play a surprising and what seems to me an unnatural role. Both accounts emphasize what is communicated by bodily movements, what Augustine calls "the natural language of all peoples": for him, his elders' pointing, as much with their eyes (and looks of anticipation

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[5]Augustine Confessions I.8; quoted in PI, §1.

and interest) as with their outstretched arm and index finger; for Sudnow, the gentle swaying and embodying of the beat in the hands and playing posture of his mentor Jimmy Rowles. I do not mean to deny the importance of these moments. They are undoubtedly among the natural responses captured in Wittgenstein's conception of our agreement in judgments, a conception which includes our willingness as infants and toddlers, for example, to pick out what 'picking out' something is: to know which way to look when someone is pointing to something (from elbow to fingertip, not vice versa), what to read as encouragement in response to our babbling, what for the infant constitutes a response, and so on. But even if these movements and gestures are a kind of natural language, it does not follow that when we describe the looks of pointing we have captured what pointing is. Similarly, we do not capture what talking is when we describe the series of motions of a well-trained mouth which sounds for all the world like it is saying something. Since I have already argued that nothing may capture these to our satisfaction, that our natural responses to the world are not grounded in any fact about us or about the world, my criticism here is not that these descriptions are inadequate, but that the ground they mean to gain cannot be won by description, whether grammatical or phenomenological.

But where one wants to take issue with Augustine is not so much in his stressing the importance of his elders' movements as in his imagining how his practice, his self-instruction, proceeded – namely deliberately, or deliberatively, in, for example, his imagining himself guiding or directing the muscles of his lips, tongue and jaw. That is a further feature of Augustine's description that Wittgenstein is addressing when he says:

"Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child ... already had a language, only not this one. Or again: as if the child could already think, only not yet speak" (PI, §32). Whatever thinking there is at work in a child's taking our cues, repeating our sayings, accepting encouragement, trying out these sayings in various circumstances (sometimes with the named object present, sometimes not) – and whatever problems there may be with our speaking here of the child "taking cues," "repeating," "accepting," "trying things out" – Augustine bypasses these in favor of, or by means of, a description he feels some confidence in, one involving the mechanics of what his elders did, the mechanics of what his mouth did, and the implicit assumption that their interrelation is unproblematic. In addition, Augustine pictures his mastering of language as taking place in solitary practice, learning how to voice his desires not in his encounters with his elders but in between those encounters, or if in their presence then in a place that might as well have been set off from his elders. Augustine's picture is this: his elders teach him the names of objects; he, mute and apparently inactive, attends to their sounds and movements (and they do not so much encourage him as put on a show for him); then he goes off and practices reproducing their sounds, practices making conversational music on his vocal instrument. But because the steps to socialization, to putting on forms of life, have already been taken – and not only, or not even at all, in the moments of instruction with his elders but prior to those moments – there is no reconstituting, reconfiguring transformation for his practice to bring about. Training his mouth to form word-sounds changes nothing essential about him any more than training his body to do back flips would. He practices making sounds the way a novice pianist practices his

scales – not to see what music can be made of them, but mechanically, knowing what the result of the practicing will be.

I have emphasized the place in Augustine's picture of language where he portrays his childhood self as practicing alone, by himself, in order to suggest both how much more convincing a role solitary practice has in Sudnow's account of one's development as a jazz improviser, and how nonetheless his practicing is described in remarkably similar terms – as so much guiding and adjusting and encouraging the achievement of particular body movements, all in the absence of speaking or playing with others. Does Sudnow's writing reveal a more mindful self-transformation than we find in the brief passage from Augustine's Confessions? It might be significant that Sudnow's musical growth forces him to alter the way he speaks and writes, as he says explicitly at one point (WH, 141), and his style becomes more evocative towards the end of the book. But what is his model for these transformations? What is being transformed?

> It was not that a sort of jazz line would appear, something better than another had been, and then one a bit better still, with gradations that would reveal readily detectable shifts in a range of isolatable components of my ways. The distinction under fleeting regard was not as between a street corner conversation and a passage in Rilke, [was not] as between the ordinarily competent jazz pianist's solo and the elegance of a Herbie Hancock improvisation. It was like the difference between the aphasic's or stutterer's or brain-damaged speaker's or new foreigner's attempts to put together a smooth sentence, and the competent three-year-old's flowing utterance: Daddy, come see my new doll. Former ways had been lacking at the level of difference, between features of action that all the jazz on the records minimally share and the sorts of struggling amateur efforts that would never pass for competent play at all. This level becomes my descriptive concern as it was my practical one. (WH, 85)

There are two levels to my response to this passage. First, I do not find that Sudnow's description of his descriptive concern is accurate to the likeness between

learning to play jazz and learning a first language. The problem with his description is evident when one looks at the competent 3-year-old, who somehow or other gets to her flowing utterance without passing through the stages occupied by the aphasic or the stutterer or the retardate or the new foreigner (and hence without passing through the stage represented by Augustine). My alternative for drawing out the likeness between learning jazz and learning language, as I began to advance in taking up Sudnow's young man with his horn, is to describe jazz improvisation as a form of life maintained in a community of fellow-speakers, and so one in which flowing utterances are arrived at, when they are, in (musical) conversation. Here I need to say more about that feature of most jazz players' training which Sudnow neglects, viz. the work of transcribing an improvised solo from a recording. Transcribing a solo once meant that one risked wearing the record out – which is, not unimportantly, what one might have said of a toddler who was repeating a new word or favorite phrase over and over. "Wearing the record out" designated a rite of passage, the worn record serving as a record of the accomplishment, its sound pattern having been transferred from the record's surface to the player's memory, so that when the sounds in the grooves became all but inaudible to everyone else they were hyper-audible, clearer than a bell, to the one who had worn the record out. When a novice transcribes and practices the inflections and nuances of a model jazz solo, she begins to learn not only how to make a "characteristic jazz sound," but <u>what</u> in the sound matters most. She learns why, given all the things that (for example) a pair of trained hands can say at the piano, <u>these</u> things are worth saying.

One area for investigation that touches on this discovery of what is worth saying is the following: What is the relation between "developing your ear" and "finding your voice"? That question can take the form: Why are the better players invariably the better listeners? And does that relationship suggest that players play the way they listen, just as we might discover that most of us write the way we read: superficially, or carefully, or playfully...? I can know how someone listens (or reads) by knowing how he or she plays (or writes). Then having a good ear is like being able to read well, as we found Wittgenstein almost saying; and together with the observation that the better players are the better listeners, that suggests that the practice of listening, like the practice of interpreting a text, makes demands that are akin to those of performing.[6] The novice improviser should begin finding his way by finding his way of listening, by discovering what sounds interest him, what he most wants to hear. And the way this is traditionally done is by transcribing and practicing those jazz solos that speak most forcefully and eloquently to him. My sense is that Sudnow undermines the work of the ear by his fixation on the ways of the hand.

This brings me to a second level of response to Sudnow's description of his descriptive concern: granting that Sudnow acknowledges other avenues for learning how to improvise, and granting for the moment that one can get there on Sudnow's path, where, for him, is "there"? He tells us that it is the level of competence this side of Rilke and Herbie Hancock. His objective, in short, is competent play; and the comparison suggests that from there, while the steps to artistic mastery may be large, the difference is

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[6]Cf. Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness, 37-38.

more one of degree than of kind ("a sort of jazz line ... better than another had been, and then one a bit better still ..."). But I question Sudnow's assurance that his description of the development of improvisational skills is essentially complete – as though we can now characterize what these higher levels of musicality consist in, and that what they consist in is such-and-such ways of the body ("To define jazz ... is to describe the body's ways"). Equally in Sudnow's and in Augustine's accounts, we are asked to believe that the quasi-introspective, guiding-of-the-body description is not simply one to set alongside others (others made from, so to speak, other perspectives) but that as a first-person narrative it is a privileged description, the transcription of each man's willful doings. I have already suggested reasons for considering Augustine's description of his instruction unusual and unnatural. Sudnow's account of his hands' ways may faithfully transcribe his understanding of the feel of improvising, but I do not see how I can, or why I should, relate it to anyone else's. And I imagine that Sudnow, in a certain mood, would not want to attribute his interest in the improviser's hands to anyone else. Creating that interest is his achievement. But then seeing his achievement as an acquired taste suddenly makes it appear less important. I want to suggest, as an alternative to Sudnow's interest, that a willingness to refigure or bethink oneself is the best indication of one's (artistic) genius.

3.2 Improvisation and Everyday Actions

The two properties of artistic genius that Kant proposes – namely, originality and exemplariness (CJ, §46) – are complements to his antinomy of taste: the first half of the

antinomy (that there are no principles of taste) demands as a result our recognition of artistic originality, while the second half of the antinomy (that there are nonetheless judgments of taste) reminds us that there is such a thing as original nonsense, and so requires the clarification found in the notion of exemplariness. The requirements of originality and exemplariness themselves exemplify the tension that is present in the creation and acceptance of works of art in any art form old enough to have a history, that tension between an art's tradition and its most recent candidates for inclusion, or between the current practice of an art form and where certain recent efforts would like to take it. For Kant, this tension raises for the artist the challenge to make what Timothy Gould has called "original sense."[7]

Now what if one were to ask: How does a jazz improviser experience this tension, and how does he come to make original sense? Here are three regions of response. First, the improviser finds in jazz a history and tradition comparable in richness to that of Western art music. Familiarity with it leads one to discover various procedures for solo development, standard forms, characteristic phrases, innovations in technique, and so on. Second, the tunes which typically serve as the vehicle for a performance will themselves often have a history of definitive performances, of both conventional and unusual voicings and tempos, lyrics and other extramusical associations, and so on. Third and finally, perhaps most significantly, there is the history of development of the performer's style, his evolving ways of making music in the moment.

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[7]Timothy Gould, "The Audience of Originality," in Essays in Kant's Aesthetics, ed. Ted Cohen and Paul Guyer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 184.

All three of these areas of tradition and response have their analogues in other art forms. I mention them with respect to jazz improvisation only because of the tendency to think that what prompts the improviser is the desire to be free from tradition and learned ways altogether – as though the goal of improvisation were originality at the expense of musical sense. Yet even the most free of jazz improvisers come to their performances knowing some of the traditional ways around their instrument and preferring some part of their instrument's sound possibilities to others. They know, for example, that if they want to sound free of a tonal center they had better have some very familiar ways of avoiding certain intervals that could suggest a tonic. It is, as Wittgenstein would say, part of the grammar of the word "improvise" that we call this "improvising on a tune," this "improvising a dinner," that "improvising a dance step," and so on: improvisation always occurs in some context, as part of some practice or other. Where we improvise is where we might also (for better or worse) act from deliberation; and just as we deliberate about something, so we improvise with an aim towards something.

But while it is wrong to imagine that jazz improvisations proceed groundlessly or aimlessly, it is equally wrong to imagine that they should be understood as having the same ground or aim as written music, as though the procedures of improvisation brought nothing to our interest in making music, but only the convenience of getting it done more quickly and easily. This is not to say that improvised solos can't be interpreted with the procedures of written music in mind. Indeed, that is how they are often interpreted, perhaps especially by those with an interest in giving jazz an air of respectability. The late Martin Williams, who was Director of the Jazz Program at the Smithsonian

Institution and editor of The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz, gives in his remarks for that collection the following brief analysis of Charlie Parker's well-known recording of "Embraceable You":

> The opening motive:
>
> is repeated (variously pronounced and embellished) five times in the first five bars. But on its fifth appearance, it begins a burst of melody which (one breath being granted it) comes to rest with yet another echo of that opening motive in bars 7 and 8. From that point on, the motive appears and reappears in various permutations as a kind of organizing reference point. There is an ingenious use of it in bar 18, and there is a sequential treatment that begins after a rest in bar 27.

Then, as if in apology, he says:

> Such comments are apt to make the most warm and lyric of ballads seem an exercise in ingenuity, I know, but that is the inevitable risk one takes in such descriptions. The ultimate remedy, of course, is to return to the record itself.[8]

(The jazz and classical trumpeter Wynton Marsalis seems to take a very similar approach to unpacking a jazz solo, judging by the few episodes I have heard of his National Public Radio series "Making the Music.") If we listen as Williams does, the wonder of Parker's solo will seem to be not that the notes follow one another in the particular way they do, but that this in fact quite conventional way of organizing a stretch of music could be improvised. I do not contest the musical facts Williams brings to our attention. But so long as we read such facts about the solo as exemplary of its interest, we will find

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[8]Martin Williams, accompanying booklet for The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz, The Smithsonian Institution P6 11891, 33.

ourselves listening to the improvisation as if it were a completed work, born full-grown from Parker's head. Or at best we will listen ambivalently, as Williams seems to be advising, now attending to these and other familiar structural points, now marveling at the fact of the solo's nascence and evanescence, its being born of the moment. But in that case, our marveling will be essentially abstract, not growing out of this or that moment of the solo itself but out of, as it were, the fact that the solo exists at all, out of its ontological significance.

If that way of attending to jazz improvisations produces in us a feeling of sublimity, it is a sense of the sublime captured by Thomas Weiskel's work on the Kantian sublime, with its peculiar oscillations between feelings of comprehension and imaginative frustration.[9] Then, too, it suffers Weiskel's analysis of the experience of the sublime, which is that such experiences are reason's way of aggrandizing itself at the expense of reality and of our imaginative apprehension of reality – that is, at the expense of the ordinary or everyday.[10] Reason seems to decree, and Martin Williams assumes, that to comprehend some improvised activity (like a jazz solo) one must conceive it all at once, that to make sense of its moments means making sense of the contribution each moment makes to the whole solo. That commitment leads to a certain model of perfection, one in which every moment is related to every other, or in which each moment is controlled by some central idea or organizing device.

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[9]Thomas Weiskel, The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976; Johns Hopkins Paperbacks edition with a new foreword by Harold Bloom, 1986).

[10]Ibid., 41.

The experience of the sublime is felt, then, if one posits some unifying idea undergirding the ongoingness of the improviser's actions. The unifying idea, placed in opposition to the improvised act itself, produces the failure of imagination that reason requires for its own aggrandizement. Contrariwise, the experience of the sublime will be shattered – and this is what I am recommending – if one comes to experience improvised music as a species of ordinary, unrehearsed activity, and so begins to find interest in the details of what follows what, of what makes continuing sense. If my topic were explanations rather than improvisation, I would describe this as an interest down at the level of excuses – the level at which J. L. Austin famously worked – rather than up at the level of creeds or tenets – the level at which, for example, Kant's categorical imperative operates. I do not mean to say that we never find cause to explain our everyday actions in broad or fundamental terms. We may justify ourselves by saying "I'm a Libertarian" or "I believe in eternal damnation"; we may feel that our particular actions take that as their determining ground. But more typically, we explain our actions – say I am rummaging through my desk drawers, piling their contents in a heap on top – by saying something like "I'm searching for a key" or "I've got a picture of it here somewhere," where that describes with perfect accuracy what I am up to. If the relevant structure for making sense of a jazz improvisation is given foremost through its nature as lived activity rather than as organized sound, then it is these last examples which illustrate the level of description that jazz writers should be aiming for, and they embody the mode of attention one will need if one is to hear this music as emblematic of Emersonian self-trust.

3.3 Emerson, Kant, and Artistic Genius

I hear the analogy between the structure of actions in art and in life in the opening sentences of Emerson's essay "Art":

> Because the soul is progressive, it never quite repeats itself, but in every act attempts the production of a new and fairer whole. This appears in works both of the useful and the fine arts, if we employ the popular distinction of works according to their aim, either at use or beauty. Thus in our fine arts, not imitation, but creation is the aim. (CW, 2:209)

By the end of the essay Emerson will say that this "popular distinction" "must ... be forgotten," since "In nature, all is useful, all is beautiful" (CW, 2:218). But then what does Emerson's essay imagine as its use, and what beauty does it claim for itself? One might begin by noticing that it claims its aim is creation, however this is to be understood. For when Emerson writes, "in our fine arts ... creation is the aim," he is not forgetting already the popular distinction he had just underscored, according to which the fine arts aim at beauty (not creation), but is rather dissociating himself from that distinction, and naming whatever art is at work in his writing.[11] Thus when Emerson says that the soul "in every act attempts the production of a new and fairer whole," we should read this not as bad metaphysics, but as advertisement for the mode of thinking called for by the essay: it requires that our reading be guided by our desire, however poorly understood, to begin again, to rethink or bethink ourselves, to check ourselves – to carry out "that abridgment and selection we observe in all spiritual activity" (CW, 2:209).

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[11]The compactness and precision of Emerson's taxonomy here of the aims of art seems to be one of many passages that is overlooked by those critics who would disparage Emerson for being unsystematic.

That Kant is being addressed in this essay begins to emerge in the second paragraph, where Emerson writes, "What is a man but nature's finer success in self-explication?" (CW, 2:209) – a remark one can read as a transfiguring of Kant's definition of artistic genius: "Genius is the innate mental disposition (ingenium) through which nature gives the rule to art" (CJ, §46). Emerson writes "man" where Kant has "genius," but that is an ambiguous difference for Emerson, who identifies the personal or particular aspect of a human with his or her genius. Indeed, Emerson's most radical rewriting of Kant in these pages, along with his erasing the distinction between the fine and the useful arts, is what I choose to call his democratizing of artistic genius. Consider the following passage in "Art," in which Emerson describes seeing for the first time the paintings of the great Italian masters, on his first trip to Europe:

> I remember, when in my younger days, I had heard of the wonders of Italian painting, I fancied the great pictures would be great strangers.... When I came at last to Rome, and saw with eyes the pictures, I found that genius ... was the old, eternal fact I had met already in so many forms, – unto which I lived; that it was the plain you and me I knew so well, – had left at home in so many conversations. (CW, 2:214)

What one finds in the genius of others is never foreign; it is merely displaced. Recall Emerson's more famous remark from "Self-Reliance": "In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts: they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty" (CW, 2:27). My work for the next few paragraphs is to articulate what Emerson's democratizing of artistic genius amounts to.

I begin by remarking that Emerson encodes this cluster of thoughts about the allocation and education of genius in a sentence that appears in the third paragraph of "Art":

> As far as the spiritual character of the period overpowers the artist, and finds expression in his work, so far it will retain a certain grandeur, and will represent to future beholders the Unknown, the Inevitable, the Divine. (CW, 2:210)

On its surface, "the spiritual character of the period" is a name for the characteristic aspect of the artist's era, his time in history; and the entire paragraph gives voice to the assumption of at least one approach to art history, that every artist "is necessitated, by the air he breathes, and the idea on which he and his contemporaries live and toil, to share the manner of his times, without knowing what that manner is" (CW, 2:210). But consider for a moment that a period is also what you find at the end of a sentence, and that inevitably in Emerson the word "character" can be read to mean a written figure, the elements of our written language, so that the juxtaposition of these two, in the phrase "the ... character of the period," lends support to the alternate meanings of each. What makes the character of the period, more than other written figures, "spiritual" – that is, expressive of a relation between what we might call spirits or minds – is not its ability to stop a course of words but to start an independent train of thought. In a parallel passage in the essay "Uses of Great Men," Emerson offers the image of a sentence as a biological monad we view through a microscope, waiting for "the black dot" to appear on the animal. When this dot or period enlarges to a slit, "it becomes two perfect animals" (author and reader). "[T]he detachment," Emerson continues, has "taken place. Any accident will now reveal to them their independence" (CW, 4:17).

What might it mean to be overpowered by the spiritual character of periods? For the artist it might mean the realization, on the one hand, that the reception of his work is in fact what constitutes its completion, its goal and full realization, and yet that the work's reception is essentially beyond his control, hence beyond anything he can claim as his. But if the essential incompleteness of artistic production "finds expression in his work" – say, if the artist finds ways, as Emerson has, to encode this truth in it – then the work "will represent to future beholders the Unknown, the Inevitable, the Divine." That is, the work will represent the viewer's or reader's un-present self (hence "Unknown"), and yet also its inducement, the future self now made imperative (hence "Inevitable"), what Emerson also calls the higher self (hence "Divine"). The work of genius is one which reveals this understanding of itself, that it exists as unfinished or incomplete, and that its task is to serve as representation to the audience of their own incomplete or ongoing work.

The idea that the function of the artist is to inspire originality in others presents us with another instance in which Emerson is reworking something Kant had said about genius. In the Critique of Judgment we read: "the product of a genius ... is an example ... to be followed by another genius, whom it awakens to a feeling of his own originality" (CJ, §49). But Kant adds, by way of specifying the arena in which this originality is to play itself out, that this second genius is stirred "so to exercise his art in freedom from the constraint of rules, that thereby a new rule is gained for art" (my emphasis). That is, the ability of art to stir its audience to originality extends for Kant only to other (potentially original) artists, not to the public at large. Emerson has adopted Kant's terminology while

seemingly universalizing, or democratizing, the potential field of players who would create in freedom from constraint – from the constraint imposed not only by the phantasm of artistic rules but by the drive for human conformity broadly conceived, something not unrelated to what Kant the moral philosopher means by heteronomy. Of course, Kant has his own formulation of the match between art and morality, between his third and second Critiques. My effort here has been to show why Emerson might have difficulty with Kant's rendering of his two universalizing claims: that on the one hand, my moral maxim is justified through the universal rationality I share with others, while on the other, my aesthetic judgment's claim to universality is justified through nothing if not myself. In saying that Emerson's reworking of Kant democratizes artistic genius, I mean to characterize Emerson as suspicious of the ordering or priority of Kant's last two Critiques, as well as suspicious of there being two.

Emerson's interest in turning the audience around to the possibility of their own originality is an interest he shares with the artist; so we should see whether his writing manages to address the reader as a work of art can. It would not be part of such an address, for example, to <u>inform</u> me that I am, or could be, original. Presumably I have had that thought. The task of art, the point of its indirection, is to prepare me for the experience of being struck by the thought so that, as it were, the thought has <u>me</u>, and I find it, now, inescapable. I will try to elucidate Emerson's approach by describing how I came to read the following passage near the end of Emerson's "Art," a passage which might look to be undermining what I am calling Emerson's democratic instincts:

> There is higher work for Art than the arts. They are abortive births of an imperfect or vitiated instinct. Art is the need to create; but in its essence, immense and universal, it is impatient of working with lame or tied hands, and of making cripples and monsters, such as all pictures and statues are. Nothing less than the creation of man and nature is its end. A man should find in it an outlet for his whole energy. He may paint and carve only as long as he can do that. Art should exhilarate, and throw down the walls of circumstance on every side, awakening in the beholder the same sense of universal relation and power which the work evinced in the artist, and its highest effect is to make new artists. (CW, 2:215-16)

When I first puzzled over this passage some years ago I was led, as I think others are, to wonder what its subject is, and in particular what "Art" (with a capital "a") names. There is no evident anticipation in the essay of this brief weighing of the claims of Art versus the arts. The passage struck me then as insidiously obscure, possibly to be taken as evidence of Emerson's unchecked fondness for the transcendental. But then I saw that the word "Art" with a capital "a" appeared at the top of the page, as the essay's title, and so here, in this passage, as the essay's naming of itself. That turned out to mean, as I went back and reread the passage, that Emerson was offering in the words "lame or tied hands" and "cripples and monsters" an allegory for or characterization of one sort of reader of his essay. I realized that I was not being named as that sort of reader, and indeed no one will find themselves so named; such is the elegant logic of this passage.[12] But I was free to acknowledge that I had been that sort of reader, even moments earlier. I could see next how the closing sentences (beginning with "A man should find in [Art] an outlet for his whole energy") were addressed to me, or say to one in my position. And I understood

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[12]A similar logic, but one intent on drawing a contrasting conclusion about other readers, is unveiled in the reading I offer of Strauss's "Exoteric Teaching"; see below, chapter 5.

why the man who fashioned these sentences had praised Raphael's Transfiguration one paragraph earlier by saying, "It seems almost to call you by name." The particular originality of Emerson's writing is to allow the reader to find herself named by a transfiguration of figures or shift in meanings, which turns the act of reading into a moment of self-knowing, a sudden awareness of one's abilities to reroute one's thoughts from the rut they may occupy to what Emerson in "Experience" calls simply "the highway" (CW, 3:36).

Thinking about the ways in which art brings us to ourselves, I turn to how my remarks on Emerson's "Art" bear on jazz improvisation. I have located in Emerson the claim that all art is essentially incomplete, representing to us our own uncompleted work on ourselves. And I have claimed that jazz improvisations are essentially incomplete in a further sense, in that their ground is ordinary, ongoing activity rather than sculpted time. How might improvisation's heightened incompleteness touch our own? I would like to get at that question by thinking again about how artistic genius works. Kant tells us that "to express the ineffable element in the state of mind implied by a certain representation and to make it universally communicable ... requires a faculty of seizing the quickly passing play of imagination and of unifying it in a concept...." But if the communication of the unified concept (that is, if the work) should be flawed or imperfect, that is not necessarily cause to find fault with the artist, who

> must have let [the deformities] pass only because he could not well remove them without weakening his idea.... A certain audacity in expression – and in general many a departure from common rules – becomes him well.... [T]he genius is, as it were, privileged to commit it, because the inimitable rush of his spirit would suffer from overanxious carefulness. (CJ, §49)

I mean for the importance Kant gives here to "a certain audacity in expression" and to "seizing the quickly passing play of imagination," so as to produce a work worthy of praise despite its warts, to prepare the way for hearing what is at work in certain exemplary jazz improvisations.

There are, I believe, small anticipations both of the birth of jazz and of jazz improvisation in Emerson's essay. He writes: "The sweetest music is not in the oratorio, but in the human voice when it speaks from its instant life, tones of tenderness, truth, or courage" (CW, 2:216). Might not Emerson have in mind the courage of the American slave singing his or her work songs and church songs, the precursors of modern jazz whose words, like Emerson's own prose, are typically encoded with denunciations of the status quo and calls for a new freedom? Consider that he continues, "The oratorio has already lost its relation to the morning, to the sun, and the earth, but that persuading voice is in tune with these." Who, and of what, does Emerson hear this voice persuading? And then he says, thinking of the voice's allegiance to both the earth and the promise of the moment, "All works of art should not be detached, but extempore performances." Emerson put his devotion to the extempore into practice a few years later in his editorship of The Dial, in which he introduced a regular section devoted to impromptu verses not yet worked up for publication. His most recent biographer explains this by noting Emerson's long-time interest in "poetic first impressions, in what Melville would call half-formed

foetal suggestions, in the latent, the promising, the first unselfconscious flowers of the mind," and so on.[13]

But there is a more explicit and self-aimed embrace of the improviser in Emerson's essay. It occurs in a passage in which he sets out to talk about sculpture, but soon turns his attention to the human form, and then turns again to take up living, breathing human beings:

> I too see that painting and sculpture are gymnastics of the eye, its training to the niceties and curiosities of its function. There is no statue like this living man, with his infinite advantage over all ideal sculpture, of perpetual variety. What a gallery of art have I here! No mannerist made these varied groups and diverse original single figures. Here is the artist himself improvising, grim and glad, at his block. Now one thought strikes him, now another, and with each moment he alters the whole air, attitude and expression of his clay. Away with your nonsense of oil and easels, of marble and chisels: except to open your eyes to the masteries of eternal art, they are hypocritical rubbish. (CW, 2:212-13)

Notice that the phrase "this living man" in the second sentence has no referent to pick up from the previous sentence; nor does it from any prior sentence. One is invited to read "this living man" as naming Emerson, picturing for us himself improvising at his block of a desk, altering his single words and varied groups of sentences according to the thought of the moment, what in "Self-Reliance" he calls simply "Whim." It is an image of someone both bethinking himself and revealing himself in his most ordinary and unrehearsed actions. –Does such a reading imply that Emerson's writing is self-absorbed? But why imagine that the claim to be working at thinking originally, or for oneself, cannot be voiced seriously, or for another? That one's faithfulness to originality can serve

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[13]Robert D. Richardson, Jr., Emerson: The Mind on Fire (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 379.

another is a claim one might want to make as part of a theory of art. On that Kant and Emerson are in agreement. The particular originality of Emerson's writing, as I said above, is to intimate that commitment to the other through a transfiguration of figures which name the reader. Thus it is neither incorrect nor indecorous to say that for Emerson the end of art, and so its moral import, is achieved by inducing self-absorption, or say self-consciousness.

3.4 Locating Instancings of Genius

If one now rereads Emerson's remarks on the grim and glad improviser, imagining this time that the words belong to a Charlie Parker or Lennie Tristano – that is, if one substitutes for the references to Emerson's writing references to each man's playing, and replaces references to the reader's eyes with references to the listener's ears – one will begin to see what I will be encouraging us to hear when we turn, as we are about to turn, to the recordings themselves. My thought is not that Parker or Tristano make such claims for themselves or for their improvising as Emerson does, but rather that their improvising can be read as making such claims on us.

The following remarks on portions of three recorded jazz solos are meant as sketches of the impulse or impetus that at each moment informs the solo's progress; in that sense one could call these remarks psychological. They are attempts, once again, to locate instancings of genius: to say <u>what</u> can inspire feelings of originality in the listener, as well as what has inspired musicians of all ranks – some to originality, others to imitation. As glosses on bits of recorded music, they ought to be read and reckoned only

after one has listened to each solo afresh, unencumbered by the weight that the following observations place on one or another stretch of music. That may not be an easy or simple matter to attend to, but neither is it insurmountable. The recordings I discuss are Lennie Tristano's "C Minor Complex" from 1961, and Charlie Parker's two takes of "Embraceable You" from 1947.[14]

In Tristano's "C Minor Complex," listen to the passage in which he sets up a three-beat figure in his right hand and repeats this small figure over and over for close to twenty seconds. (The passage begins 2 minutes 9 seconds into the recording). –The repetitions of this figure create tremendous tension both for the improviser and for those engrossed in his position, or his plight, once the figure has had its bearable play (after, say, five or six seconds). One anticipates his going on and senses his needing to go on, and yet one is left unappeased as the moments pass. The tension is the result of one's not knowing how he is going to go on, even whether he can go on in any coherent way given that he remains stuck on this figure. One might begin to imagine that he is not attending but acting mindlessly, on reflex, unaware of how close he is moving towards unmusicality. And this uncertainty about where he finds himself and what he will do next makes for greater tension than is generated by the mere repetitiveness of some rock music and some minimalist music.

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[14]Lennie Tristano, "C Minor Complex," The New Tristano, Atlantic 1357; reissued as Requiem, Atlantic SD 2-7003. Charlie Parker, "Embraceable You," Roost 2210 and Spotlite 104; excerpts from both takes are reissued in The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz.

What Tristano does at this juncture is, first, underscore the repeated figure in his right hand by bringing his walking left hand to a three- or four-note repeated figure of its own, drawing us into his maelstrom instead of letting us drift off. He thereby reveals his intention at this phase of the solo, as well as reveals that he is intent. After sending his left hand on its way again, he next inverts and then transposes somewhat higher up the figure in his right hand. But after one or two repetitions of the figure at that level he takes it back down and through its original field of play one last time, as though wishing to prevent his leave-taking from sounding too abrupt, before he drops the figure altogether and moves on.

Now: what do we hear in hearing that? Let us imagine, by way of contrast, what we might have heard had he been playing the repeated figure thoughtlessly or mindlessly. (The suggestion that what we hear or fail to hear, in listening to the improviser, is evidence of thinking will be explored more fully in the next section.) Were he playing thoughtlessly, Tristano might have stopped the repeated figure suddenly, as if waking from a day-dream. He might have jumped to another part of the keyboard and played an arpeggiated run for contrast, which would have sounded like a repudiation of the figure, just as when in conversation one heaves a sigh and changes the subject. Or he might have continued to play the figure while modulating down the keyboard with a gradual decrescendo, which would have been an expression not so much of continuous thinking as of thinking running down, or out, just as sometimes one does not end a conversation so much as stop for want of things to say, letting one's words trail off. Jazz musicians have done all of these things. They have also parodied their temporary obsession with a figure,

just as, in our worst moods, we might parody ourselves. It is one of the maddening privileges or fates of humans that we can know we are not being ourselves (as we say) and yet find that we cannot be otherwise, lack the will to speak in our own voice. And so we find a way out of something like Tristano's figure, a way which is not ours but which we know serves more or less, and which becomes for us a false necessity. Tristano, by dwelling in and then sitting on and then stepping away from and then sliding back into the three-beat figure the way he does, shows how Emerson's remark, "To believe your own thought ... is genius" ("Self-Reliance," CW, 2:27) is to be understood. It should not be understood the way "live for the moment" is, as a kind of debased moralism in which one forgoes all responsibility – which is one wrong way to read Emerson's saying in "Self-Reliance," "I shun father and mother and wife and brother, when my genius calls me" (CW, 2:30). Rather, what one is encouraged to attend to in the moment is one's voice at the place it finds itself, surrounded by its present commitments, which may continue to include father and mother and wife and brother: Emerson is not predicting what one's genius will say when it calls (though perhaps Jesus, in the passage Emerson is alluding to,[15] knows how his counsel will be received). Tristano responds to the weight of the repeated figure by owning up to it and then going on in his own way. His trusting himself to his experience, following his voice, is what makes it possible for us as listeners, after a time, to find his voice worthy of our trust.

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[15]Luke 14:26: "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple."

Turning to Charlie Parker's two solos on "Embraceable You," listen to the opening several bars of each version, one after the next. –The first and obvious thing to notice is that the two versions are substantially different. That in itself is not so remarkable: one can find significant differences on multiple takes in the playing of some of Charlie Parker's sidemen, for example. What is striking in Parker's two solos is not only their complementary beauty but the nature of their complementarity. In both takes the piano player seems to be working off of a written or otherwise agreed-upon introduction; his playing is nearly identical in the two versions. But there are minor differences: the second take is at a somewhat faster tempo than the first; the piano player seems slightly hesitant and plays more sotto voce in the first take, but he walks along unremarkably in the second; and he phrases his third measure differently in the second take, dropping a sixteenth rest that slides in nervously in the first.

The detailing of the differences aside, I want to suggest that the differing characters of the two introductions foretell, by in their own way bringing about, the differing characters of Parker's two solos. The first introduction behaves as though it requires some assurance from some quarter. Parker responds like a sensitive confidant; his playing is sober, reflective. The second introduction is more matter-of-fact, and Parker feels free to take up his part at will, a bit earlier, and go for a ride with it. Responsiveness of this caliber teaches that when one's genius calls, one's whim sometimes takes its bearings from another. The differences in the piano player's first few measures are like differences in staging or lighting for an actor; for someone with ears like Charlie Parker, they can change the anticipation of an entrance in a moment. It is

such performances which serve, like Emerson's own writing, as representatives of originality, and as provocations for solving the antinomy of one's own freedom.

3.5 Instructing Thinking, Revealing Thinking

Perhaps the preceding succeeds only in maintaining a sense of mystery in the claim that moral knowledge is instantiated in certain outstanding jazz performances. For we have yet to consider how Charlie Parker, Lennie Tristano, or any exemplary jazz improviser becomes an exemplary jazz improviser. Several fine ethnomusicological studies on that question have appeared in recent years, culminating in Paul Berliner's groundbreaking Thinking in Jazz.[16] My interest here is not to challenge the ethnomusicological approach, but to draw the study of musical doings back into the community of learning broadly conceived, so that even in jazz we might find cause for understanding music's traditional place among the liberating arts. In that vein, I want to conclude this chapter by turning to the question of how something one might consider moral knowledge is encouraged and directed by an education in checking one's experience, an element of moral perfectionism frequently encountered in oral accounts of jazz instruction, including those recounted by the jazz ethnomusicologists. In thinking through this question I will be guided by an interview with the soprano saxophonist Steve Lacy which was conducted by Terry Gross and aired on her National Public Radio

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[16]Paul F. Berliner, Thinking in Jazz: The Infinite Art of Improvisation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). See also Ingrid Monson, Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

program Fresh Air.[17] At one point in the interview Gross and Lacy discuss Lacy's four-month stint with Thelonious Monk in the late 50s. Lacy conjectures that Monk hired him because Monk wanted to give Lacy the opportunity to see his music "from the inside." He then describes what he learned from that experience of working with Monk.

> TG: And what did you learn seeing the music from the inside? What are some things you got from actually playing with Monk and talking with him?
>
> SL: I learned to stick to the point, and to not lose the point, and not get carried away. And to play with the other musicians and not get all wrapped up in my own thing, and not to just play interesting notes just to be interesting, you know, weird notes just to be weird. He mostly told me what not to do, he never told me what to do. But he told me what not to do when I did something that bothered him.
>
> For example, when I played – when we were playing together sometimes he would play something on the piano and I would pick that up and play that on my horn. I thought I was being slick, you know? And he stopped me, and he said, "Don't do that.... I'm the piano player, you play your part, I'm accompanying you. Don't pick up on my things."
>
> ... He got me out of the thing of trying to be too hip. I was trying to be too hip and it wasn't swinging sometimes, you know? Then he told me, "Make the drummer sound good." 'Cause I was playing some things that confused the drummer, because I was confused myself. And so the drummer was not swinging, you know? And Monk told me, "No, make the drummer sound good." And that was an enormous help to me, really. It stopped me cold, really, and changed my focus.
>
> And Monk's thing – he told me, "Let things go by, let certain things go by. Don't play everything. Just play certain things, let other things go by." It's what you don't play that's very important, really. And that's extremely important.

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[17]Steve Lacy, interview by Terry Gross, Fresh Air, produced by WHYY-FM / Philadelphia, distributed by National Public Radio, 20 November 1997. Lacy recounts much of the same advice from Monk in Thomas Fitterling, Thelonious Monk: His Life and Music, trans. Robert Dobbin, with a foreword by Steve Lacy (Berkeley: Berkeley Hills Books, 1997), 13-14.

There is much of interest here. I begin with a couple of observations: (1) The tone of Monk's advice to Lacy is familiar to those who have heard skilled jazz improvisers give advice to the less skilled. It is a tone epitomized by the concise, one-sentence imperative ("Let things go by"; "Make the drummer sound good") that is more an invitation to thinking than a concrete suggestion. To see this, contrast Monk's advice with the following pair of instructions: "Try starting the next chorus on the fifth"; "Instead of playing this chord, substitute the chord built on its tritone." The difference between Monk's remarks and the more conventional advice can be compared to the difference between Kant's formulations of the categorical imperative, with their invitation to autonomous thought, and examples of moral casuistry. (2) Some of the advice can be heard as a fair summary of Monk's own inimitable, sparse style ("Don't play everything"; " It's what you don't play that's very important"). Such glimpses into Monk's musical approach are no doubt part of the education Lacy sought in working on Monk's music "from the inside." But neither Lacy nor we are thereby precluded from recognizing the perfect generality of the advice. To know Lacy's own subsequent, inimitable style is to know how to hear Monk's advice as prescriptive less of a style than of a genre, less a way of playing than of committing oneself. It is, again, an open invitation to thought, not a prescription for improvising in the style of Monk.

This common feature of Monk's remarks – their call for a kind of thinking, as if the words ask to be not heeded but interpreted – is evident from the first of Lacy's comments, in which he borrows a figure of speech associated with argumentation or discussion ("I learned to stick to the point, and to not lose the point, and not get carried

away"). But one should not be too quick to hear this as identifying improvisation with discussion simply. For as I suggested above in considering Tristano's solo in "C Minor Complex," the danger to someone who does not stick to the point in improvising is not that he may be carried to some other point, as to a peripheral topic in a discussion, but that his playing can become pointless, or say goalless, without direction, which suggests more a metaphor of journeying than of discussing. On the other hand, if one hears "sticking to the point" as a figure for thinking – thinking as attending or concentrating or minding – one may suddenly find oneself struck by the oddity of Lacy's lessons and Monk's advice. Why, in particular, does the exemplary improviser end up saying of himself – and why might we want to say of him as he is playing – that he is thinking? If we are talking about the performance of a classical string quartet, we might rather say that what the musicians are doing, beyond playing, is primarily expressing, even feeling. (We "might rather say" this not as part of an aesthetic theory but simply as a way of characterizing our interest or involvement. Needless to say, it need not characterize everyone's.) When we remind ourselves that classical performers do, of course, think as well, it becomes evident that to speak of the exemplary improviser as "sticking to the point" and as "thinking" is to speak equally figuratively, and is not (for instance) to affirm that he is thinking, which is not something one might reasonably hold in doubt. The attribution of thought to the exemplary improviser is meant to picture his playing: not in order to sublime it, as I claimed of Williams's musical analysis of Parker's solo, but more like domesticate it. Still, how is one to understand the seemingly natural suggestion that the hallmark of a good improviser is, that he is thinking?

To begin to arrive at an answer, consider one of the more striking elements of Monk's advice, his request that when Lacy improvises he not repeat or replay Monk's lines. (Lacy reports Monk as saying, "Don't do that.... I'm the piano player, you play your part, I'm accompanying you. Don't pick up on my things.") It is, let us grant, a piece of instruction in taste, and so open to dissent from various quarters as matters of taste are. In interpreting the advice one imagines the recordings of Brubeck with Desmond, or of Tristano with Konitz and Marsh and Bauer, to be among the counterexamples certain dissenters would offer. But while it cannot suit everyone's taste, Monk's advice can serve to initiate someone who has already achieved a certain level of performance, such as Lacy had when he joined Monk, into the practice of perhaps the dominant ideal of jazz soloing at that or any time. My interest accordingly is in trying to understand how the advice could be right: how a musical move that is fairly completely tolerated in the classical tradition, even in the closing days of the twentieth century (think of any orchestral work in which a musical figure is tossed from instrument to instrument) could sound naive, or be tolerated within a narrower range of taste, by most jazz practitioners. –Let us imagine Monk playing a line at the piano: Lacy, soloing, hears it, transposes more or less instantaneously its opening pitch and intervals, and plays the line back on his soprano sax, adjusting a note here and there in response to the altered place he finds himself in the chorus. That is surely an instance of thinking, of thinking musically, even of a musical thinking peculiar to jazz improvisation. How then is Monk's advice to Lacy ("play your own part ... Don't pick up on my things") a further invitation to thinking, where "thinking" conveys an ideal of jazz performance that Monk means to impart?

It will help if one discards the notion that Monk's advice is identical to the new and old counsel to "Do your (own) thing." That maxim, which to my knowledge first appears in the tenth paragraph of an early edition of Emerson's "Self-Reliance," is, in the now all but universal way of taking it, another bastardized form of moral perfectionism: one which takes the thing which is one's own to do to demand that one break contact with the world, not as a critique of the world (as Thoreau's demand is) but because the voices of others rankle one's conscience. More than "live for the moment," it is advice to slight one's experience of others in deference to one's present or anticipated pleasures. Monk's advice to Lacy to "play your own part," on the other hand, is accompanied by the corrective to that interpretation: Lacy says "I learned to play with the other musicians and not get all wrapped up in my own thing." There is not in Monk's instruction the suggestion that Lacy should close his mind to the musical thinking of the other musicians. Indeed, we have to hear the request to "play your own part" in conjunction with the request that Lacy "make the drummer sound good." As Lacy tells it, the effect of this request was not to show him his place in the group (as if Monk were doling out roles: "You're the bass player, your job is to keep a steady beat," and so on) but to reveal the confusion in his own thinking, a confusion directly expressed in the manner of his playing. That is, Lacy's playing already showed, by his own account, <u>that</u> he was thinking, as Tristano's and Parker's playing show that they are. But unlike their mature performances, Lacy's playing at that time did not reveal his thinking so much as <u>expose</u> it, in its confusion. The question about instructing thinking now becomes: what confusion of thinking is removed by taking up the advice to make the drummer sound good?

It is not exclusively a musical confusion; it is also a moral confusion. ("I learned ... not to just play interesting notes just to be interesting.... I was trying to be too hip.") One might characterize it as the false conviction that my identity (musical or otherwise) is, since mine, best pursued in isolation – perhaps, like Descartes, seated by the fire in my dressing gown, noticing the cloaks and hats passing outside my window. The thinking that Monk is advising is pretty clearly not the thinking of meditation. But this means more than that the thinking of the improviser typically happens in the presence of others, or that one is (of course, to some extent) listening to the other musicians. By contrasting the improviser's thinking to Cartesian meditation I mean to suggest in part that the exemplary improviser is one who, unlike Descartes, resists the temptation to adopt towards his present experience the attitude of its being given, all-too-familiar. Where the question is the relation between my identity and my present experience, Descartes's characteristic move is not his willingness to doubt systematically, to consider and reject the indubitability of (not individual beliefs but) principles of belief. His characteristic move is to assume that my present experience is given in some sense, so that the problem of my identity is clear in relation to it. (Its nature, he seems to say, while not clear, is distinct; and thus my nature must be distinct from it.) Wittgenstein speaks of our being similarly inclined to say "The steps are really already taken," as when we ask the child to continue a mathematical series and find that what comes natural to us is not (yet) natural to her (PI, §188). It is the false presumption of the givenness (not of language or forms of life, but) of experience that leads Wittgenstein's interlocutors – and not them alone – to read human experience as a series of mental processes or states, even after they have been

warned that their words may be bewitching them. As I argued in chapter 2, Mulhall's insistence on "the givenness of grammar" is in the end a similar presumption, resulting in a similarly static view of the field of our words (though he does not reduce the systematicity of language to mental processes). Elsewhere, as if on another planet, the exemplary improviser finds the task of the present moment to be the reshaping of his experience of the present moment – by attending to the drummer, say, or by feeding the drummer, nourishing him with ideas: as if that were what his identity rested on, or as if learning that "resting" is not the most unquestionable or indubitable attitude for one's (musical) identity to assume.

Returning to Monk's advice to not take up his lines but play one's own part, hearing it as an invitation to thinking, and finding the thinking it invites to be not exclusively musical but moral, a sample of moral perfectionism, I conclude with a quartet of observations and areas for further thought. (1) Monk's advice, as Lacy himself characterizes it, is negative. That is, he says merely "you play your part"; there is no further specification of what "Lacy's part" is – except for the pointed emphasis that Monk is to accompany it. (2) This is reminiscent of the posture Emerson adopts in his essays, as in the passage that includes "A man should find in [Art] an outlet for his whole energy." Because this is Emerson, and because we read this admonition in an essay he titled "Art," the entire passage becomes a commentary on our reading of it. But it cannot play its part of commentary until we play our part by reading actively (in this instance, by noticing that in saying "Art" the text names itself). Only certain readings will activate this text. (3) If one juxtaposes Monk's remark ("I'm accompanying you") and the task of reading

called for by an Emerson essay, one gets a new simile for the ongoing activity of an improvised jazz solo. In jazz, the accompaniment – in this case, Monk's playing – is like a text that asks to be read by the soloist, as it were, between the lines. But now it is easy to see how Lacy's picking up and playing one of Monk's lines on his horn could be interpreted as a certain too-literal-mindedness, an attitude towards the accompaniment that is more passive than active, more a dereliction of thinking than an instancing of it. (4) The requisite balance envisioned by Lacy's comments – one in which the soloist who would stick to the point is to feed off of the other musicians' ideas without being devoured in turn by them – is given expression in a sentence from "Self-Reliance" that appears just before Emerson advises the hippie in all of us to do our thing (or our "work," as corrected editions have it). I end this chapter with his words: "It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude" (CW, 2:31).

Chapter 4. Moonstruck and Emersonian Representativeness

> It is natural to believe in great men.... All mythology opens with demigods, and the circumstance is high and poetic; that is, their genius is paramount. In the legends of the Gautama, the first men ate the earth, and found it deliciously sweet.
>
> – Emerson, "Uses of Great Men"

> 'We are not in Paradise,' the young man stubbornly replied. 'Here, in the sublunary world, all things are mortal.'
>
> Paracelsus had risen to his feet.
>
> 'Where are we, then, if not in Paradise?' he asked. 'Do you believe that the deity is able to create a place that is not Paradise? Do you believe that the Fall is something other than not realizing that we are in Paradise?'
>
> – Jorge Luis Borges, "The Rose of Paracelsus"

The consideration of Emerson's literary procedures, which in the previous chapter was carried out in conjunction with a study of the reconception of learning in jazz, now leads us to ask what role, if any, is played in moral perfectionism by the teacher or mentor – beyond, that is, his possibly giving "the right tip," as Wittgenstein suggests of the judge of genuineness (PI, 227h). Here the clarifying illustration will be a Hollywood film.

I begin in section 4.1 by summarizing the story-line of Moonstruck (1987; directed by Norman Jewison, written by John Patrick Shanley) in such a way as to raise

several question about its central dramatic moment, a moment that can be described as perfectionist. In order to explain and motivate my understanding of that moment and its role in a reading of the film, I will locate Moonstruck within a genre of filmmaking – identified by Stanley Cavell as comedies of remarriage – in which a pair of adults are shown to stand as representative for (in Emerson's phrase) the next or higher self of each, and so stand for a certain promise of happiness for each. But serving as representative for another in such cases presents difficulties, ones that are matched in the relation between student and mentor examined in the last chapter, and more generally by the relation between humans and their idols, including movie stars. To sort these difficulties out, I turn in section 4.2 to consider some of Emerson's remarks on one's relation to heroes or human greatness, and to note his coinciding interest in one's relation to the words of a text. I will characterize this relation as one of ambivalence, and will draw on Hegel's discussion of the master-slave relation in The Phenomenology of Spirit to bring out a pattern in the evolution of one's relation to one's idols, a pattern I dub the dynamics of influence. My intent in section 4.3 is to show how the procedures of Moonstruck inherit not only these Emersonian interests, but Emerson's understanding of how the dynamics of influence must be communicated. The unobtrusiveness of Emerson's writing and of Moonstruck's procedures, particularly given the odd combination of popularity and neglect in their reception or misapprehension, raises a version of the literary question: What must these works claim to know about human nature in order to have the effect that they do, when they do? Section 4.4 will address this question in light of one of Emerson's

closing remarks in his essay "Uses of Great Men," the opening essay of Representative Men.

4.1 Moonstruck and Remarriage Comedies

There are any number of reasons for taking an interest in popular films, but what gets us thinking about them, now or ever? That question, however presumptuous, comes easily, thinking of Moonstruck, not only because of the striking absence of thoughtful writing about it since its initial, generally favorable reviews,[1] but because Moonstruck itself seems to raise the question, What gets us thinking about a film? Or more simply: What gets us thinking, and what keeps us from thinking? My aim in what follows is to show that Moonstruck raises some such question. It is not a question every film will raise. That may seem obviously true about what you might call a bad film; it may be equally true about a film that wears its greatness on its sleeve, so that it prompts thought about itself but not yet about the question of what gets thinking going. Consider Werner Herzog's Fitzcarraldo (1982), like Moonstruck a dark romantic comedy inspired by an idea of the Opera. There is no mystery to why we begin thinking about Fitzcarraldo: it is enough to be reminded of its central visual metaphor (art exacts from the artist an exertion as momentous as carrying a ship over a mountain). Herzog's film contains scenes of dialogue that address explicitly philosophical themes, as well as moments of

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[1]Harriet Fraad has written a short essay, "Personal Life as Problematic: A Comparison of Woody Allen's September and Norman Jewison's Moonstruck," Rethinking Marxism 1 (1988): 169-74. But her essay is less an opening for thought into these films than a reminder of the straight-jacketing of thought that late middle-aged Marxism has become.

sublimity – thinking for example of the moment we learn why the aborigines have cut the boat loose – that are nothing if not philosophically sublime.

It is not my intention to compare Fitzcarraldo and its relation to opera to Moonstruck and Moonstruck's. But to see how Moonstruck could be an instance of superior filmmaking it helps to see how a film can have depth without making the explicit concerns of its characters serve (as they do in Fitzcarraldo) as a conduit for the audience to descend to those depths. Moonstruck prompts thinking much the way dreams do, through a structure that conceals as much as it reveals, and by a peculiar juxtaposition of the familiar and the bizarre. In this more-or-less familiar tale of romance, what can strike one as bizarre is, for beginners, the slightly echoing repetition of some of the words ("death," "luck," "cold," "snow," and the question "How long must I wait?") and the offbeat cadence of parts of the dialogue (for instance: "Rose. Rose. Rose. ROSE." –"Who's dead?"). There are also certain visual repetitions: the recurring full moon, naturally, and the gloved hands reaching for and taking hold of one another, first shown on stage at the Met, in the snow scene from La Bohème, and repeated in the cold outside Ronny's apartment, where Ronny offers the warmth of his wooden hand to Loretta. And there are the musical repetitions, from Puccini's opera ("Che gelida manina," "Donde lieta uscì," "O soave fanciulla," "Quando m'en vo'") and from American popular music ("It Must Be Him," "That's Amore"), each heard more than once over the course of the film. Perhaps one does not make anything of these repetitions initially, but one does notice them eventually. They function much the way that repetitions and variations in music do, initiating and advancing their own discourse, establishing their own logic. It is the logic

and the attractiveness or attraction of this film, an attraction that we will see is not unlike the gravitational pull of the moon.

First, though, here is a review of the story-line of Moonstruck. Loretta (Cher), an Italian-American widow from Brooklyn in her late 30s, is engaged to marry Johnny (Danny Aiello), an Italian-American in his mid-40s who is not, we sense, a serious candidate for marriage because of his continuing devotion to his mother. When he calls Loretta from his mother's deathbed in Palermo, he reminds her to call and invite his brother Ronny (Nicolas Cage) to the wedding. Johnny and Ronny have not spoken to each other for five years. Loretta calls Ronny, but he hangs up on her, so she goes to his bakery. There she learns about the accident that maimed him five years ago: he lost his hand in a bread slicer while he was cutting up some bread for Johnny, and shortly thereafter his fiancée left him. Loretta asks Ronny if she can talk with him alone. Up in his apartment she makes him some coffee, cooks him a steak, and (as she puts it) tells him his life – in particular that he is a wolf, and that he is afraid of that part of himself now. He responds by turning the kitchen table over in a fury, kisses her passionately, and takes her to his bed; she yields in a mixture of resignation and desire.

The next morning, awakened by the light of day and still in Ronny's bed, Loretta blames Bad Luck for her succumbing to him and says that they must never see each other again. He tells her that he loves her but that he will leave her alone forever if she will go with him that night to the Opera. It is a surprising invitation coming from a large, young, tattooed baker, and we are only a little less surprised that Loretta accepts. She goes off to church and the confessional, but then she finds herself walking into the Cinderella Beauty

Salon to get her hair done, the grey taken out, nails manicured, eyebrows plucked ... and she buys herself a new evening dress and accoutrements. That evening Loretta and Ronny meet outside the Metropolitan Opera House. They go in and take their seats, and the opera begins. We are shown the moment in Act 3 of La Bohème when Mimi and Rodolpho agree to part. It is winter, and they have met outside the tavern. We see Mimi offer her gloved hand to Rodolpho as she sings "Goodbye, Goodbye – no bitterness!"; here Rodolpho takes her hand and squeezes it. We are shown Loretta moved to tears.

Walking home, Loretta tells Ronny that they are both guilty for what has happened between them; she then finds to her surprise that they have arrived at his apartment. Loretta makes a speech about how she is able now to take control of her life. She tells him that she is going to go home – she says she is freezing to death. Ronny counters with a speech about how love ruins everything, including our ability to take control of our lives. He tells her that he wants her to come upstairs and get in his bed. We see Ronny offer his wooden, gloved hand to Loretta as he says "Come on! Come on"; here Loretta takes his hand and squeezes it. She then follows him into his apartment.

Loretta arrives home the next morning. Shortly thereafter, Ronny arrives – to meet the family. The family and Ronny are seated at the kitchen table when Johnny, who returned from Palermo the night before, comes to call on Loretta. Johnny tells Loretta and everyone assembled two things: (1) His dying mother recovered right after he told her that he was getting married; (2) He cannot marry Loretta because then his mother would die. Ronny then asks Loretta to marry him, and she says Yes, whereupon everyone drinks a toast to the Family.

My outline takes the repetition of the clasped hands as the film's central moment, tied as it is to the scene that Loretta and Ronny saw on stage at the Opera, and framed, there as here, by the snow and the cold of winter. Immediately the scene outside Ronny's apartment raises several questions: What is wrong with Loretta's speech about taking control of her life? What is right about Ronny's speech? Why is Loretta freezing to death? Whose hand gets warmed by whose? How are the speeches and the freezing cold and the warming of hands understandable as the consummation of a night at the Opera? And how do we understand our position as witness both to that scene from the opera and to this consummation of it? In order to begin to answer these questions I want to consider how Moonstruck can be aligned with certain Hollywood film comedies of the 1930s and 40s, those Stanley Cavell calls comedies of remarriage.

The Hollywood films Cavell identifies as comedies of remarriage – including His Girl Friday (1940), The Philadelphia Story (1940), and Adam's Rib (1949) – bear comparison to Shakespearean romantic comedy in their emphasis on the heroine over the hero, particularly in showing her somehow transformed or restored. But these films follow a different track from Shakespeare's comedies in taking as their romantic concern not the joining of a young couple in the first throes of love, but the rejoining of a somewhat older couple who find their familiar love threatened from within, despite themselves. Their problem is not that they have grown apart so much as that their marriage has led them to discover marriage's age-old limitation: its inability, as Cavell

says, to ratify its pairing of the sexual and the social,[2] what could also be called the crossing of nature and convention. To restore the couple's marriage turns out to require conversation, or to require what conversation requires: a willingness (typically the woman's) to be instructed, a willingness (typically the man's) to be seen as a fool, a willingness to exchange active and passive roles, the ability to yield to another without betraying yourself, the ability to make a claim on another without demanding acquiescence. There are other features of the genre's overarching mythos that are either features of these films or in some way compensated for in each film's particular realization of the mythos, features such as the sympathetic, midwifish role of the woman's father, the marked absence of the woman's mother, and the presence and nature of the romantic couple's romantic rivals.

Moonstruck can be located, and in some ways locates itself, as a descendent of these film comedies, meaning first and foremost that it is concerned with the form of conversation that characterizes them – a conversation such as Ronny and Loretta have outside Ronny's apartment, which could be seen as the culmination of Loretta's instruction at Ronny's hands, or hand. But it would be a large undertaking to consider all of the points of similarity and contrast between Moonstruck and these earlier films, as for example (to note a point of similarity) how Johnny, the romantic hero's brother and rival, matches the rival figures in the earlier films by satisfying the woman's half-conscious wish to put her sexual desire to sleep. Or to note a point of contrast, how the not-to-be-expected presence of the woman's mother, Rose (Olympia Dukakis), is compensated for

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[2]Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness, 31.

by her showing herself to be still subject to the threats and joys of marriage, which suggests that she is still justified in imagining she knows what her daughter desires, and so still qualified to serve as a model for her daughter of how best to preserve that desire. We see Rose's vitality in her unwillingness to acquiesce to her husband's avoidance of her, and in her brief but promising fling with Perry, the professor she meets in the restaurant.

There is however one point of comparison that cannot be overlooked if we wish to align Moonstruck with the films of this genre. We can name it by asking why we ought to think of Loretta and Ronny as seeking or requiring remarriage. If we want to claim that the mythos of remarriage offers the best picture of Loretta's and Ronny's relation to each other and to their desire, then we are obligated to show how they already share a life, or that they somehow share a past, as the film begins. There are at least intimations that they do. Parts of the dialogue seem to identify Ronny with Loretta's first husband, as when Ronny asks Loretta why she didn't wait for the right man again, since she waited for him the first time. Loretta answers "You're late," thereby conceding that she was waiting for him, as if in anticipation of his return, but at last could wait no longer. There is also the apparent visual identification of Ronny and Loretta's first husband by means of a bus: the bus that ran over the husband (that he was hit by a bus is virtually all we know of him) with the bus that twice appears in the orientation shot of Ronny's bakery and apartment. One can notice this detail without imagining that the bus counts as an element of this film in the same sense that, for example, Ronny's wooden hand does, however we

come to read the latter's significance. But once you notice it, it is hard not to imagine that the bus is an element of that shot.

More immediately, however, the compensation which the genre predicts, given that Loretta and Ronny begin as strangers, is provided through their alarming, almost clairvoyant knowledge of each other's deepest secrets – the knowledge each expresses by claiming that, at bottom, the other is "a wolf" (or as Ronny says to Loretta, "You run to the wolf in me, that don't make you no lamb"). Any reading of this film must take on itself the task of spelling out what that accusation, both titillating and frightening, amounts to. We begin by recalling, apropos our thinking of Ronny and Loretta as working through a marriage rather than towards one, that we first hear the accusation (that so-and-so is a wolf) entered against an older, married man by his wife. This is the couple who run the Sweetheart Liquor Store where Loretta stops on her way home from the airport, near the beginning of the film. Further, it seems fair to say that we understand that accusation, which we overhear with Loretta as if by chance, to be part of an ageless quarrel, part of the universal but private conversation of marriage.

When the accusation is remembered and repeated by Loretta up in Ronny's apartment, it punctuates an exchange strewn with sexual imagery, specifically with two or three figures for genitalia that the film borrows from Freud, or perhaps from Howard Hawks.[3] I mean the head and the hand (or foot). Moonstruck's play with these

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[3]See Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness, 118; William Rothman, The "I" of the Camera: Essays in Film Criticism, History, and Aesthetics (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 101-102.

associations comes to a head at the culmination of that scene, in the final exchange between Ronny and Loretta before they go off to make love:

Ronny: Why are you marrying Johnny? He's a fool!

Loretta: Because I have no Luck.

Ronny: He ... he made me look the wrong way and I cut off my hand. He could make you look the wrong way, you could lose your whole head!

Loretta: I'm looking where I have to to become a bride.

Ronny: A bride without a head!

Loretta: A wolf without a foot!

Are we to hear these as warnings or as allegations? Perhaps as both warnings and allegations. But of what? Must we say "Castration"? And having said it, is it obvious what we are to make of it? One way to pursue this is to ask how we should read Ronny's wooden hand when he first reveals it to Loretta and to us (in the bakery oven room scene). It appears to be wooden, but it is nonetheless a hand – he uses it in some of the ways that a hand is usually used. That is why its unveiling, to return to words used above, is both frightening and titillating. This is how the scene in the oven room unfolds: Ronny asks Loretta, "Do you know about me?" A young woman who works at the bakery interrupts him in shock or embarrassment, as if she knows what he is about to reveal or expose. He silences her and says, "Nothing is anybody's fault, but things happen. Look." Then he peels off his white work glove finger by finger, as if doing a striptease. What is he revealing: that he lacks a male organ or that he has one? (What fact about a man is not

anybody's fault exactly? What does he think a woman who would get engaged to his brother Johnny might not know about someone like him – that is, about a man?)

What Ronny is revealing is that he has a wooden hand: his organ is petrified. After he unveils it he says, "It's wood. It's fake." But if a hand is wooden, which already tells us there is no blood coursing through it, what does saying "It's fake" add, and about what? It tells us, it would seem, that the look of wood is deceptive. Ronny is fixated on the moment of his parting from his bride-to-be, a moment he represents to himself as the parting of his male part, which in turn is represented by the severed hand, as when he exclaims, "I lost my hand! I lost my bride!" – the one following the other in accordance with some familiar bit of logic. We see him reliving the moment of parting when he plays a recording for Loretta of the Act 3 parting scene from La Bohème – the very scene Ronny lends further weight to later on at the Met, when he kisses Loretta's hand at the scene's climax. Why is he showing Loretta all this? In order to reveal something and conceal something. What he means to reveal to her, as suggested above, is that his organ is petrified – that is, he has a male organ, but since losing his bride he has become afraid to use it. Loretta interprets what he shows her as an attempt at concealment, reversing his logic when she tells him that first he wished to escape his bride, therefore he dismembered himself – which suggests that his fear of using his male part is as old as the having of it. (Perhaps this is the quintessentially modern male fear; perhaps it is the old fear of forming attachments.) What Ronny attempts to conceal from himself as well as from her, Loretta says, is that he is a wolf. ("You don't see what you are, and I see everything. You're a wolf.") So we ask again: What does that accusation amount to?

There is the suggestion, first of all, that being a wolf is something one tries to conceal from oneself and from others, or pretends not to know – something that shuns publicity. But in fear of what? Dismemberment? And yet here with Ronny we see that the willingness to dismember oneself can be taken as evidence that one is a wolf. Shunning publicity and prompting concealment might suggest that being a wolf is unnatural – something either beyond or below the human. Yet the wife behind the counter in the Sweetheart Liquor Store says, "I seen a wolf in everybody I ever met." So Ronny's concealment is meant to represent a more widespread suppression. Why hesitate to identify being a wolf with having a libido, and the domestication of our wolfishness with the institution of marriage, so that Loretta's picking up the charge and accusing Ronny with it is no more than her expressing her insight into his unnaturally dormant sexual life, as well as an indirect invitation to revive her own, which leads eventually to their finding in one another a fit partner for marriage? I hesitate because that line of thinking, however true it may be to facts about us, seems to me false to an experience of the film. That is not to deny that Moonstruck is about a romantic couple who are at first intent on repressing the sexual – as in Ronny's pretty clear sublimation, and therefore expression, of his sexual desire by (as he says) shoveling stinking bread dough in and out of a hot hole in the wall. But Moonstruck treats the repression of sexual desire as itself an expression or image for something else, for the suppression of something buried no less deeply in the human, like a potential we have but fail to realize.

4.2 Emerson, Hegel, and the Dynamics of Influence

Here I turn back to the thought of Emerson, which Cavell locates behind the genre of remarriage comedy and which I find especially pertinent to the experience of Moonstruck. I have already noted that Emerson's writing is guided by an interest in self-trust or self-reliance, where the self in question is not myself as I now stand, but the one in trusting which, or by trusting which, I remain true to myself. Emerson speaks of this as my next self, my higher self, and my "unattained but attainable self" ("History," CW, 2:5). One image for it is as something to be discovered, like a new world, whose paradigm is an idea of America – what Emerson in "Experience" calls "this new yet unapproachable America I have found in the West" (CW, 3:41). A complementary image is as something to be recovered, like a primal memory, modeled for Emerson in Plato's myths of the nether world and the soul's recollections, modeled for us perhaps in the practice of psychoanalysis. But rather than multiply images, I will once again explicate by negation, setting Emersonian self-trust in opposition to some of its natural and commercial debasements – which urge me, for example, to be all that I can be or to heed my inner child. Emersonian self-trust, in contrast to these, is not a state I might occupy or an attitude I arrive at, as if once and for all; nothing, at least nothing of interest, is to be perfected or settled. "I unsettle all things" is how Emerson says this in the essay "Circles" (CW, 2:188). Nor does self-trust involve a course of action I map out for myself, as if in readiness to take control of my life. That understanding of relying on the self, to anticipate, is one which Loretta in Moonstruck finds she must unlearn. And critically, Emersonian self-trust does not preclude trust in others, at least so long as trusting others means something short of conforming to them. While Emerson recognizes with Thoreau,

and with Plato and Nietzsche, that one's progress away from one's disappointment with oneself may generate a critique of society as it stands, and while that may leave one at a distance from society (as if to get a better look), it does not entail one's repudiation of (all) society. For Emerson, the way to the next self communicates with the selves of others. Ideally this means all others; practically, or for now, it means one's friends, those Aristotle first called another self.

The importance to Emersonian self-trust of friendship for mutual guidance or instruction is reflected in Emerson's nearly life-long preoccupation with prompting his readers to a next self by inviting them to work through their relation to their mentors or teachers, a relation he pictures sometimes as friendship's double, sometimes as its antithesis. Emerson's name for these teachers, who may be living or dead, or texts, or works of art, is typically, "great men." Here are two familiar Emersonian remarks on the relation of humans to human greatness:

> In every work of genius we recognize our own rejected thoughts; they come back to us with a certain alienated majesty. ("Self-Reliance," CW, 2:27)
>
> It is remarkable that involuntarily we always read as superior beings. ("History," CW, 2:4-5)

Notice that between these two sentences the ascription of our attitude or mood towards the greatness of others gets inverted. The sentence from "Self-Reliance" says that the thoughts of genius are no more than our (supposedly common) thoughts estranged and raised; to paraphrase Emerson's conclusion, we read in shame. The sentence from "History" says that the (supposedly superior) thoughts we read, certainly no less here than before our rejected thoughts, raise us and ours. It may not be news to suggest, as I take

this pairing of remarks to suggest, that our relation to our mentors or teachers is best characterized as one of ambivalence. Here the ambivalence is between exhilaration and depression; more generally it will be an ambivalence between attraction and repulsion, love and hate. I want to consider, for the remainder of this section, a particularly compelling example of this, in the ambivalence between reverence and fear that is at work in that section of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit called "Lordship and Bondage."[4]

Hegel in this section portrays two struggles between the bondsman and his master, and consequently two instances of overcoming or becoming. The moment that I wish to rehearse, however, is not the overcoming enacted in the life-and-death struggle, in which the eventual master emerges the victor and causes the other to serve him as slave or bondsman. I want rather to mark the moment which counts as the slave's overcoming of the master's mastery of him, when the slave comes to see himself no longer as a mere thing but as an independent being. Hegel tells us that this moment is prepared by two aspects of the slave's state: one is his experience of absolute fear, the other is his ideal of independence; both of these, neatly enough, are exemplified for him through or by the master. The slave's consummate dread before his master all but undoes him; the slave is "unmanned," and experiences the bone-chilling sense that "everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations" (PS, §194). It is this initial and unequivocal dread that Hegel identifies as the propaedeutic to self-actualization or self-consciousness, what he also calls independence. But the master is in addition the slave's representative, the

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[4]G. W. F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 117-19 (§§194-96), hereafter referred to as PS, followed by section number.

impersonation of that independence which the slave contains within himself implicitly (only). The slave's recognition of his independent nature, a recognition prepared by these two aspects of his relation to the master, is achieved through his work. He fashions the things of the world for use by his master, becoming a sort of peasant-craftsman. But in this work, he both sees an image of his autonomy in the independent shape he forms ("consciousness, qua worker, comes to see in the independent being of the object its own independence" [PS, §195]), and sees himself doing to the thing, and thus to himself, what the lord he fears – who is an image of the lord of death – does to him. He thereby overcomes his master by becoming (like) his master, and is able to check and dissolve his attachment to the shape that things, and he, formerly took.[5]

My interest here is not so much in the outcome of this phase of self-consciousness – it remains an early moment in Hegel's unfolding of Spirit that will take another four hundred pages to complete – but in Hegel's picture of the conditions for the emergence of self-consciousness. I am drawn to his description of what makes it incumbent on the slave to perform his self-transforming labor, and so to the role the master serves in Hegel's dialectical plot: as an image of the lord of death, and as an image of independence or self-mastery. The first of these roles is unmistakably the more important for Hegel: while the independence of the lord is the slave's "truth," the slave's fear before the lord is the seed of that truth within himself (cf. PS, §194). My claim is that Emerson effectively overturns Hegel's ranking or ordering. The transformative power of the slave's fear of the

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[5]My reading of Hegel here and in the following paragraphs owes a debt to Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Hegel's Dialectic of Self-consciousness," in Hegel's Dialectic, trans. P. Christopher Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 54-74.

lord as lord of death, a fear befitting a state of slavery, is displaced by Emerson in favor of the transformative power of the great man as representative, a power befitting a democracy. Having said that, let me try to say how the claim should and should not be read.

It should not be read as endorsing the standard ranking of Hegel and Emerson in philosophic circles nowadays, though it seems to be acknowledging Hegel's superior gravity as against Emerson's cheerfulness, his apparent reticence to articulate the dark side of human existence. Such a reading of my claim is precipitated, I think, not only by the usual condescension that intelligent readers lavish on Emerson, but by a misunderstanding of Hegel's description of the slave's fear before his master, as if that fear – and as if Emerson's optimism – were unproblematic. I have in mind two ways of mis-taking the slave's fear: as something easily or naturally accessible to us, like a birthright, and as something essentially primitive or remote from us, like our infancy.

The first of these fails to account for Hegel's melodramatic turn, or to evidence an authentic response to it. By reading the slave's fear of death as a commonplace, one turns his transformation of consciousness into something either trivial or incomprehensible. Such a reading confuses my occasional bethinking myself of the fact of my mortality for Hegel's picture of a painful intimacy with that fact ("In that experience it has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations"). The slave's fear is not a fear of inevitable death, as of something he needs to prepare for, but of ever-imminent death, death right around the most ordinary corner, death as a personified presence. The best I can do, on the other

hand, or the most I may want to be in a position to do, is to practice becoming more familiar with the completely deniable fact of my fear of my own death – once a common exercise for philosophers, and as old as philosophy itself. Hegel is asking us to imagine some such familiarity bred into the slave with each of his perfectly ordinary and familiar encounters with his lord.

The second, related and equally mistaken way of taking the transformative experience of the slave's fear is to see it as intrinsically beyond, or prior to, anything we could possibly experience, by reading these pages from "Lordship and Bondage" as offering a philosophical reconstruction of the birth of humankind's self-consciousness. This approach understands whatever truth is contained in those pages to be logically or dialectically primitive, or to represent a piece of the work of humankind that has already been done for us. Such an approach is what we are given in Charles Taylor's discussion of the "historical dialectic" in the Phenomenology.[6] The issue for me is where to locate the philosophy in the story of the slave's emerging sense of himself and consequent overcoming of the master. I place my disagreement with Taylor at the point where he counts "Lordship and Bondage" as among "Hegel's most successful historical dialectics," saying that such passages in the Phenomenology "convince the way any good historical account does, because they 'fit' well as an interpretation" of "the events of the period" or of "[c]ertain historical forms of life."[7] But if the slave's story fits well with something we imagine we know about the historical forms of life called the master and the slave, I

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[6]Charles Taylor, Hegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 216-21.

[7]Taylor, Hegel, 217, 216, 218.

would argue that this is because of the philosophically prior fact that it meets our expectations as a story. What that means in the present instance is that the slave's transformation is narratively coherent; one could describe it as rationally, or even logically, coherent. (The story of Cinderella is neither true nor believable, but the motives and action it portrays are not incoherent; in that sense it is true the way a genre-picture is true: true-to-life.)[8] But then there is cause for philosophical pause, if the emergence of self-consciousness can be portrayed convincingly, assuming it is convincing, as (1) the consequence of a desire for recognition or selfhood, (2) growing out of a relationship with another – specifically, with someone who exemplifies and so reveals to the first something the first lacks and also reveres, (3) provoked by a self-shattering fear of the death of oneself, and (4) effected by means of something (an object) on which one works, in which one puts oneself. In other words, it is not essentially or deeply true that "Lordship and Bondage" is coherent because it fits well as an interpretation of some historical event or primitive form of life – picturing, as Taylor says, "men at a raw and undeveloped stage of history" or "men of limited horizons who are low on the scale of development."[9] On the contrary, we imagine that pattern of desire and reverence and fear and work as having a place in history because it interprets us, both essentially and deeply. And is it not apparent to most readers that this section of the Phenomenology sets itself apart from those sections that offer readings of the Greek city-

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[8]Cf. Wittgenstein's remarks about genre-pictures at PI, §522, and PG, III:36-37 (pp. 77-79).

[9]Taylor, Hegel, 153, 155.

state or the Roman Empire or the Enlightenment or the French Revolution? One is inclined to place the struggle and transformation of "Lordship and Bondage" somewhere in prehistory; that is a telling sign that its dialectic is importantly not "historical." But one is not thereby forced to say, following Taylor, that its dialectic is ontological; one may want to say no more than that it is philosophical. It is not for no reason that political philosophers since Marx have found "Lordship and Bondage" to be the most narratively self-contained and excisable of the Phenomenology's more-or-less-political discussions.

The pattern just outlined in my numbered, one-sentence abstraction of "Lordship and Bondage," and which I just summarized as "that pattern of desire and reverence and fear and work," should not, if I am right to highlight its narrative coherence and convincingness, be unique to Hegel's narrative alone. We are perhaps mostly removed from, or numb to, a transformative fear of death, at least at the hands of a lord. But, as I said above, that element of the pattern is compensated for in Emerson and elsewhere by the transformative image of independence of the master or representative. The pattern is present, I believe, in the patient's ambivalent relation to the psychoanalyst, which gets worked out in the revelation and acknowledgment of the analyzed transference.[10] And I note that Cavell at one point suggests that the structure of transference is the best image for or picture of the redemptive powers of reading[11] – as if reading were its own site of

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[10]See Sigmund Freud, "Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis," in Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, 24 vols., ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74), 16:453-55.

[11]Cavell, "The Politics of Interpretation," in Themes Out of School: Effects and Causes (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984), 52-53; cf. Cavell, Conditions

(continued...)

ambivalence and therapy, provoking at its best the reader to work through her attitude towards the text, meaning here especially her dependence on it. In a moment we will have further evidence that a redemptive or transfigurative reading is the particular aim of Emerson's prose, and that it is in sharing this aim that Moonstruck claims the interest of philosophy. But to return to Emerson's interest in prompting his readers to work through their relation to the greatness or influence of others, and relating this interest to the pattern I educe from Hegel's myth of the birth of self-consciousness, I draw the following moral: although Emerson recognizes the dangers of over-influence and the need to recover oneself from the sway of others, he recognizes, with Hegel, the need equally to recover oneself in, or to lose oneself in, others. In his essay "Uses of Great Men," Emerson warns of the threat of over-influence and yet is able to conclude: "A more generous trust is permitted. Serve the great" (CW, 4:17). This is not an endorsement of self-enslavement but a call for self-abandonment. If we are bound, our bond is our abandon.

4.3 Human Greatness and Compensatory Gestures

Emerson's trust in the moment of abandonment, when one gives oneself over to the one who reveals one's aspirations, is pertinent to both the explicit and implicit intentions of Moonstruck. Explicitly, we can identify what Moonstruck calls our wolf-like nature with the human capacity to ravage and abandon one's present self – or as

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[11](...continued)
Handsome and Unhandsome, 57.

Ronny says, to ruin ourselves, to make of our present selves ruins, the first task in remaking or upbuilding ourselves. That is what Ronny, struggling to find words, is able to remind Loretta in his speech about how "love ruins everything." Thinking back to the scene in the Sweetheart Liquor Store, where a wife accuses her husband of being a wolf, we might recall that that scene's sinister aspect is dissolved only when the woman's husband says to her, "You know what I see in you, Lotte? The girl I married." He does not deny that he is a wolf. On the contrary, by suggesting that the eyes with which he looks at other women are the eyes with which he looks at her, and that this look has not changed, that it is in fact the same look with which he first gave himself over to her, he is telling Lotte in effect that it is she who brings out and sustains the wolf in him. And Lotte accepts this and is touched by it – as is Loretta, as is anyone who has eyes. Thus Moonstruck joins other remarriage comedies in portraying marriage as an arena for abandonment and recovery, a recovery of the self from something this film calls death. (Loretta pleads with Ronny, "I'm freezing to death"; her mother explains to Perry, "Why do men chase women? ... I think it's because they fear death.")

If proposing such an ideal of marriage is the explicit intention of Moonstruck, its implicit intention is to show that film is itself a potential site for abandonment – not exactly or simply the way art in general might be, but specifically by virtue of film's capacity to project a world of larger-than-life human beings, men and women transfigured by the camera, the forms of life we christen with the exquisite name "movie stars." Our relation to human greatness is one of the natural themes and persistent concerns of film, a special version of film's interest in our relation to film itself. One might put this by

saying that part of the task of explaining our fascination with and attraction to movies is to explain our attraction to and fascination with movie stars. And that requires our coming to understand why movie stars look great on film, where "looking great" identifies conditions and prospects that are distinct from those of looking handsome or beautiful. Howard Hawks, thinking of Walter Brennan, said that the camera likes personalities;[12] Cavell says it creates individualities.[13] The thought is that while you and I may have some of one or the other, chances are neither of us has their looks. But then what the greatness of movie stars teaches is that human greatness is neither predicted by nor precluded by particular traits or features; rather, it insists on human particularity itself, on the expression of an identity.

Moonstruck's interest in the heroic or representative possibilities of film is shown through its insisting not only that its female star declare her identity (as other remarriage comedies do)[14] but that she enact before the camera its transformation of her, beginning at the moment we see Loretta Castorini step into the Cinderella Beauty Salon and ending at the moment we see Cher step out of a cab in front of Lincoln Center. (Tom Hanks enacts a similar transformation in Shanley's Joe Versus the Volcano [1990].) Still, one may feel that this transformation of Loretta Castorini that culminates in the vision of Cher's singular attractiveness has nothing to teach us beyond the fact of our separateness from it,

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[12]Joseph McBride, Hawks on Hawks (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 106.

[13]Cavell, The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film, enl. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 33.

[14]See Cavell, Pursuits of Happiness, 63-64, 105-107.

as from the projected world that creates it. The silver screen screens its world from me, Cavell says;[15] the world I converse with in the city and in the farms is not the world I eye, Emerson almost says. (He says it is not the world I think ["Experience," CW, 3:48].) We sometimes say that movies offer an escape from the world; but that expression fails to capture the otherness of the projected world, and especially the fact that we cannot go there – as we can go, even escape, to Acapulco. That is not to deny the sense in which the projected world is the same as our world; what other world does a film camera film? But then one is not denying that Cher's body is the same as ours – I mean, is human – if one confesses that gazing at her up on the screen is not the same as looking at someone across the breakfast table, even when that someone is Cher. The greatness of movie stars on the screen is in part a function of the otherness of their world. Think of that as an instance of the fact that the greatness of others is in part a function of their otherness, their separateness. (The majesty of our rejected thoughts is a function of their alienatedness.) Then how can some other represent to us our unattained but attainable selves?

Consider as a candidate feature of the best texts and works of art, and so of the best teachers, their care to declare or remind us of their otherness – that we cannot become them, or that they are unattainable, or that the path to a next self leads us not just to them but past them. (That this is a feature of Emerson's prose is argued in the concluding section below.) For a movie to teach this would be something. Moonstruck does, again in Ronny's speech to Loretta, at the part that begins, "We aren't here to make

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[15]Cavell, The World Viewed, 24.

things perfect. The snowflakes are perfect." When now – as we see the first flakes of perfect, cinematic snow, and hear the first notes of "Che gelida manina," and cut to the first and only close-ups of Nicolas Cage in this sequence – when now Ronny continues, "The stars are perfect. Not us. Not us! We are here to ruin ourselves," he is naming the necessary and sufficient distance between those screened images of light (what "Cher" means, what "Nicolas Cage" means) and the one who gazes, the one whose ruins are the only building blocks for any attainable self.

But even if this is correct, what if any difference does it make? The unapproachable distance between our worlds seems to militate against communication. We gaze unaffected. Both invisible and absent to the projected world on the screen, we experience an involuntary skepticism. But then this is only an emblem of the skepticism we live with respect to ourselves as we gaze, or read, or otherwise meet our rejected thoughts and doubt our own majesty, which is to say our freedom. The best that any film or text can do to overcome this distance is to offer some compensatory gesture. Its task is not somehow, fantastically, to eradicate the distance between us; distance or separateness is one of communication's conditions. The task is rather to remove the barrier between ourselves and our viewing, so that we come to think of our viewing as a gazing inward. A good film or text – or as Emerson suggests, any work of art (see above, p. 162) – will try to make us self-conscious, or to recreate self-consciousness, perhaps not by instilling in us an absolute fear of death as Hegel's lord does his bondsman, but by naming us in ways that arrest our thoughts, like an invitation out of the blue. To return to language I used at the beginning of this chapter: the challenge, for a film or text that takes this to be

its challenge, is not so much to make us think as to make it possible for us to be struck by thought – as if thought were essentially an experience, or as if the model for thought were the child's first words (see above, section 2.5). It tries to prepare us for the inception of thought as for a spectacle or revelation.

This is what is at work in the following passage, from Emerson's essay "History":

> These hints, dropped as it were from sleep and night, let us use in broad day. The student is to read history actively and not passively; to esteem his own life the text, and books the commentary. Thus compelled, the muse of history will utter oracles, as never to those who do not respect themselves. I have no expectation that any man will read history aright, who thinks that what was done in a remote age, by men whose names have resounded far, has any deeper sense than what he is doing to-day. (CW, 2:5)

As before, I read "history" as naming "History," the essay we are reading, so that by "the muse of history" Emerson names himself, or rather his muse, what in "Self-Reliance" he calls his genius and Whim (CW, 2:30). Then his way of writing "in broad day" is to indicate beneath or beyond the surface of his words both how he should be read ("actively," that is, by one who "esteem[s] his own life the text, and books the commentary") and why he feels "compelled" to write thus indirectly. And his reason seems to be that he wishes not only to protect and possibly offend those who are not ready or willing to hear what he has to say, but also to address more convincingly and intimately those who are. All of that, and seeing it all, if you will, is the "deeper sense" of "what he is doing to-day," that is, what Emerson's reader is doing here and now, reading "History."

Nothing, of course, compels readers to go along with this, or to imagine that they are reading the utterances of a muse. But then such is the etiquette or logic of an

invitation, especially of one to esteem one's life a text and so regard the transfiguration of a word ("history" into "History") as commentary on the transfigurative possibilities of one's reading, of oneself in reading. Emerson is not averse to argument, philosophy's preferred mode of persuasion. But one can no more argue for an experience of conversion than one can demand it. So like Plato and Augustine before him, Emerson takes another tack, endeavoring to animate the reader's conversion to a new mode of life not only by representing it somehow in the work of writing but by founding it in the act of reading. When such writing succeeds, reading becomes not only a means to knowledge but a form of knowing. If this is an instance, and perhaps a measure, of philosophy, it suggests that the experience of reading certain philosophical texts is as integral to (at least one rendering of) philosophy's aspirations as the experience of a performance is to the aspirations of music and the theater, or the experience of a screening to the aspirations of film.

To recognize the comparable, invitatory moment in Moonstruck requires seeing that one of the film's images for itself, the image for its serving as a site of abandonment, is the recurring full moon, that heavenly body at which wolves are known to howl. But to see the full significance of this image requires more than noticing the similarities between moonbeams and screened images, between reflected and projected light. It requires seeing that – as the Old Man, Loretta's grandfather (Feodor Chaliapin), says in conversation over a grave – "the moon brings the woman to the man, capisce?"; seeing, that is, how the film declares through this image its ability to transport us.

The place to look is again at the scene outside Ronny's apartment which culminates in Ronny's offering his hand to Loretta, a gesture that repeats Mimi's offer of her hand to Rodolpho in the Act 3 scene from La Bohème that we see on stage at the Met. Although one hand echoes the other here, the music gets displaced: instead of Mimi's melodramatic aria of parting, "Donde lieta uscì," we hear Rodolpho's Act 1 aria of courtship, "Che gelida manina." The tenor enters as Ronny first commands, then invites Loretta, who says she is freezing to death, in from the cold. The words to Rodolpho's aria run like this:

Che gelida manina,	What a frozen little hand,
se la lasci riscaldar.	let me give it back its warmth.
Cercar che giova?	What's the use of looking?
Al buio non si trova.	In the dark we'll find nothing.
Ma per fortuna	But by good luck
è una notte di luna,	it's a night of the moon [it's a moonlit night]
e qui la luna	and here the moon
l'abbiamo vicina.	is a near neighbor.[16]

Putting aside certain themes or figures that are taken up by the film (being frozen; having luck; finding a near neighbor), I mention only that Loretta takes Ronny's proffered hand at the precise moment we hear Rodolpho sing his first "luna" ("moon"). It is Ronny's wooden or petrified or frozen hand, and so the hand that is missing – call this the hand that guides the plot, the hand that made these images and this film. A moment earlier we saw this hand raised and extended more or less towards us, intercut with a close-up of Loretta looking at it pensively. When Loretta reaches for this hand, her hand comes from

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[16]Giacomo Puccini, La Bohème, libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, English translation modified from that of Peggie Cochrane, accompanying booklet for Giacomo Puccini, La Bohème, London OSA 1299.

our direction. And after her hand takes his, she seems virtually to step into the film, as if accepting the invitation for us, as if enacting our conversion.

Moonstruck seems to acknowledge the impotency of this gesture, its inability to compel the viewer, through the detail of casting Ronny's petrified member as stand-in for the film's makers. But having said that, we ought to add that its makers claim to be masters at making the petrified or emulsified "look better than they did in real life." That is the implication of these opening words of the film spoken by an undertaker ("I am a genius!") as he exits what we might call the wake room of his funeral home, a kind of theater, where the corpse he has embalmed is on display before an admiring crowd of mourners. If the mourners, whom we hear but who are not visible, fairly represent our condition as viewers as the film begins, then Moonstruck's culminating scene is meant to show how we are represented no less by the visible, transfigured shades up on the screen, and so how we might not only learn to mourn ourselves but undertake our abandonment.

4.4 The Ground of Emerson's Writing

Before leaving Emerson, we must return to a version of the literary question, specifically to the question of what one must know about human nature in order to know what one's writing can achieve. In Part 1 we found that for Wittgenstein the answer rests on an understanding of human language as presupposing an ability or interest to be struck by aspects, an interest which may distinguish us in our separate occasions of being struck, and which in any event it is natural for humans to grow out of or become blind to. That, together with the recognition – a recognition easier to name than to have – of the extent of

human agreement in judgment, is what we can relevantly know about human nature in considering the form that philosophical writing should take. Wittgenstein notes the possibility of limits to mutual intelligibility, both in speaking in general and in philosophical writing in particular; but more cannot be said. If Emerson does not have a more systematic answer to the question of human nature, then what does his faith in his writing's ability to educate the reader rest on? In this section I will give sense to the answer that Emerson's faith rests on his writing itself: the fact that he can write the way he does is ground enough to assume the transformative potential of any given reader. As I choose to put it, there is a presumption of parity in Emerson's understanding of human nature. The importance of this answer will be apparent when we consider Leo Strauss's apparently incompatible claim, despite his comparable understanding of the role of philosophical writing, that there is an unbridgeable gulf between the careful and the careless reader.

Let us return to the idea that one is saved from the threat of over-influence by the fact of one's separateness from or otherness to one's mentors – something we can hardly imagine denying yet are not immune from forgetting. The thought, broached towards the end of Emerson's "Uses of Great Men," is that I am free to embrace greatness in others because I am reminded at last that they <u>are</u> other, even when they are flesh of my flesh; that their words are not mine, even while their words are not simply (i.e. exclusively) theirs:

> There is however a speedy limit to the use of heroes. Every genius is defended from approach by quantities of unavailableness. They are very

> attractive, and seem at a distance our own: but we are hindered on all sides from approach. The more we are drawn, the more we are repelled.
>
> There is somewhat deceptive about the intercourse of minds. The boundaries are invisible, but they are never crossed. There is such goodwill to impart, and such goodwill to receive, that each threatens to become the other; but the law of individuality collects its secret strength; you are you, and I am I, and so we remain.
>
> We need not fear excessive influence. A more generous trust is permitted. Serve the great. (CW, 4:16-17)

If serving the great comes naturally to us anyway, whether it takes the form of copying the mannerisms of an exemplary jazz improviser or idolizing the transfigured humans on the movie screen, then we do not need Emerson's advice or permission to get us started. But that is not his aim, and he is not in any event giving advice. Emerson's remark summarizes a late stage in the dynamics of influence, when the fact of otherness makes itself felt, not as a mere fact, but as something more like a hard fact, a lesson if not a teaching. Emerson is observing that our constitutional differences – our being distinct from one another not like pairs of identical shoes but more like snowflakes – are what beget the logic of this pattern, are its necessary condition. If we could become as like the other as we desire, if that were sufficient for us, then the positions of master and bondsman would have no dialectical meaning; self-consciousness would not arise; history would end.

In saying "A more generous trust is permitted," however, Emerson is granting permission equally to himself to trust in what he is doing, in this case authorizing his writing's attractiveness in its service to his greater readership. It is self-encouragement for his continued writing in the face of the possibility of his reader's idolization or

canonization of him. Emerson is then emboldening himself no less than us when he says, casting the writer as parent, that children "shed their own abundant beauty on the objects they behold. Therefore they are not at the mercy of such poor educators as we adults" (CW, 4:17). "A more generous trust is permitted" is a declaration that Emerson both trusts himself to his reader and entrusts his reader to his writing's trust or care. My question, in the face of my earlier discussion of Wittgenstein and the limits of philosophy's communicability, concerns Emerson's grounds for his attitude or posture of trust.

If one realizes the possibility of idolization of oneself and fears it, sees one's attractiveness as a threat to others, as something to which and for which one is liable, is trust a sufficiently responsible response? It might seem more circumspect to try by various means to veil or distance oneself from one's charms, e.g. through irony (as Plato's Socrates does)[17] or through considerations of therapeutic technique (as Freud's ideal analyst does).[18] These are not evidently bad strategies; and they prompt deliberation whether Emerson is being just or fair in taking the position – not exactly original – that trust is sufficient. Is he trying to veil his ignorance? What Emerson knows is apparently what anyone can know: the fact of our constitutional differences. But while humans are, naturally, different, they are not thereby precluded from living in obedience to another's thinking. What is needed is a method or procedure for exposing the reader's differences

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[17]Compare the climactic moment at the exact center of Alcibiades' speech in Plato's Symposium (218c-19e).

[18]Compare Freud, "Observations on Transference-Love," in Standard Edition, 12:160-61.

or distinctions – and hence, supposedly, her potential for independent thought – more conspicuously, something we might agree to call "a natural guide to intuition," as John Rawls characterizes his theoretical notion of the original position.[19] "A natural guide to intuition" is a fair description of Emerson's understanding of his writing: Emerson mirrors in his method of writing his trust that the reader's potential for independent thought is one with the fact of her constitutional differences. If his faith is well-placed, then it follows that any method or procedure in the writing of philosophy that would (suggest that we) veil our constitutional differences, our partiality – for example, Rawls's original position – would to that extent undermine the importance of independent thought; and so to that extent, would undermine the place of philosophy in the polity.

But what is the ground of Emerson's thought that each of us has the capacity for independent thought? It would seem to be nothing other than his representativeness, "representativeness" here understood in its sense of unexceptionalness, as signaling the recognition that the degree of one's freedom from or enslavement to another's thinking is not the result of any talent or disability, and is not caused by anything peculiar to oneself alone or to a few exclusively. Recognition of one's unexceptionalness need not be in conflict with one's progress towards independent thought if, as is likely, the ongoing discovery of one's unexceptionalness is conjoined with the discovery that one's idols are unexceptional. Hence the oft-noted "conflictual structure" of Emerson's essays, particularly in Representative Men, where each representative man – Plato, Montaigne,

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[19]John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 139.

Napoleon, etc. – is first praised, then pummeled, found to be an inadequate or incomplete model for the human.[20] To trust in humanity's potential for independent thought, and on that basis to trust yourself to the reader in the face of the possibility of the reader's idolization, thus requires nothing short of trust in yourself, in the reader you are, in the unexceptionality and the commendability of your thoughts. These are the two sides of Emerson's notion of representativeness – akin to the double requirement Kant identifies in his Critique of Judgment, that in offering a judgment of taste we must be understood as claiming "a title to subjective universality" (CJ, §6).

If self-trust is the precondition of Emerson's trusting himself to his reader, then it is achieved, where it is, only with and in each word, as the conditions of a convincing musical performance are achieved, when they are, in each intonation and silence. That is why we read, in "Self-Reliance":

> Why then do we prate of self-reliance? Inasmuch as the soul is present, there will be power not confident but agent. To talk of reliance, is a poor external way of speaking. Speak rather of that which relies, because it works and is. (CW, 2:40)

(It is both characteristic of Emerson and to the present point that he would incorporate this moment of self-deprecation in an essay on self-reliance.) What is poor and external about speaking of "reliance" is that it can give the illusion not only that reliance is a property but that the writer has become its master or proprietor, as if the task of writing about reliance were somehow free and clear of its charges and obligations, which tax

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[20]Cf. Julie Ellison, Emerson's Romantic Style (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Robert Weisbuch, Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), especially chapter 10.

every word. But that which relies works and is: Emerson's work, his labor to re-create himself, is his writing. Writing, understood as a self-transfiguring act, serves for Emerson the function of the transformative work of Hegel's bondsman. The difference is that this work is, in Emerson's hands, never over. The transfiguring act of writing – particularly a writing which, as described in the previous chapter, shows its commitments through a transfiguration of figures which name the reader – is where Emerson's trust in the reader rests. If "the law of individuality" is the ground of that trust, then Emerson's writing is the ground of that ground.[21]

But why, then, the imperative? ("A more generous trust is permitted. Serve the great.") Emerson's writing contains an imperative to the extent that it claims for itself a moral seriousness and urgency which is not to be contravened. But it participates in or discovers the democratic form of the imperative, taking the command to be the tyrannical form: we might call the former the inviting or invitatory imperative. It is democratic insofar as there is no position from which Emerson can claim authority for making it beyond the position each of us occupies as human. And Emerson's imperative is invitatory (and not, following Kant, hypothetical or categorical) since it has the disposition not of a command but of an invitation, and since the way we respond to it (thoughtfully or not, responsibly or not) is more telling than the end we imagine our response to serve, even if it is as an end in itself. Disregarding Emerson's invitatory

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[21]Here it is germane to notice with Cavell that "ground" – think of the plane of the page – is one of Emerson's words for writing, as it appears to be in the following passage from "The American Scholar": "The main enterprise of the world for splendor, for extent, is the upbuilding of a man. Here are the materials strown along the ground" (CW, 1:65).

imperative has its consequences. But these are not, as for Kant, that one fails to act as a fully rational being, as if one were a legislating member in the kingdom of ends, the source of universal law, but rather that one fails to act fully as a partial being according to one's genius, as if one could establish "a more illustrious monarchy" ("The American Scholar," CW, 1:66), the origin or beginning of a representative self.[22] As I read Emerson, the end of writing which aspires to the transfiguration of reading is not simply to move the reader, as if the seductions of reading were an end, but to show or stand for what lies beyond seduction, as if true friendship or full marriage could be had in a day. They cannot; that is why Emerson writes more than one essay, more than a single period.

In speaking of "a more generous trust" Emerson is stating the ground of his faith in the potential for originality of anyone who comes to his text. The ground is nothing short of his writing itself. Because this writing awaits the reader's acknowledging its invitatory imperative, Emerson calls its trust "generous," not required but "permitted". Thinking back to the central image in Moonstruck, I am reminded that "generous" can suggest the image of an open hand. If one looks in "Uses of Great Men" at a pair of sentences that speak of the palm plant and its unfolding or opening –

> Man is that noble endogenous plant, which grows, like the palm, from within outward.
>
> Man is endogenous, and education is his unfolding. (CW, 4:4, 6)

– it can seem that Emerson is here matching a figure for the growth of the human with an image of the form of teaching that complements that growth; that is, matching the

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[22]Cf. Cavell, Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome, 45.

growing plant with the unfolding or opening palm, the inviting hand, as if the end of this writing at this moment is to be revealed as itself such a proffered hand. It need not seem this way; and my suggesting that it does can give the impression, on the other hand, that the philosophical seriousness of Emerson's prose lies in his having found clever ways to make his readers self-conscious, reading. Can one decide between these possibilities? Why would one hope for a means of settling this question, of grounding one's opinion, beyond what reading can establish?

PART 3. STRAUSS AND THE LITERARY QUESTION

Chapter 5. Leo Strauss's "Exoteric Teaching"

> The starting point is this:
>
> The unphilosophic man expects truth from seeing, & from hearing:
>
> The unphilosophic man prefers ἔργα to λόγοι.
>
> The unphilosophic man judges, however, the ἔργα told by an author, in the light of the λόγοι of the author – for the unphilosophic man expects the truth from hearing, from listening to an authority....
>
> The exoteric writer is an authority which destroys authority; i.e. he is a teacher of independence.
>
> – Leo Strauss, undated note, Box 12, Folder 2, Leo Strauss Papers, Department of Special Collections, Joseph Regenstein Library, University of Chicago

Leo Strauss's posthumously published essay "Exoteric Teaching"[1] should be required reading for all students of the literary question – the question of the relation between philosophical writing and its society or culture. Generally overlooked since its publication in 1986, it is the most mature and developed of Strauss's essays on how philosophy ought to address its readers, on philosophy's supposedly inherent esotericism.

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[1]Leo Strauss, "Exoteric Teaching," Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy 14 (1986): 51-59; reprinted in The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: Essays and Lectures by Leo Strauss, selected and introduced by Thomas L. Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), hereafter referred to as "ET" (page citations are to the original publication in Interpretation and [in brackets] as reprinted in The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism).

Its maturity can be measured by its success at being itself written in accordance with esoteric procedures, a success which the present chapter will make explicit.

As I show in the argument of the first three sections (5.1-5.3), a reading of Strauss's essay informed by its esoteric procedures reveals that its esoteric claim is identical with the mythical claim or "noble lie" of Plato's Republic, Book 3: there is a natural order of rank among human beings. The esotericism of this claim lies not simply in its being hidden (for it is also an explicit claim of Strauss's writings) but in the requirement, discussed in section 5.4, that the reader confirm its truth as it relates to herself – that she see that hers is the superior, the philosophic soul – through an experience of discovering that claim between the lines of the text. There is a presumption, in other words, that the textual discoveries of the careful reader prove her superiority. I name this presumption the "self-understanding" of Strauss's esoteric teaching, and argue that while the cathartic or conversion experience on which it rests is undeniable – one can relate it to the transformative experience of Emerson's prose – this self-understanding is not required by that experience of reading between the lines.

Indeed, I will argue that it is a mistaken understanding of that experience, for two reasons. First, as I claim in section 5.5, the careful reader's experience of discovery excludes no one: the only coherent model of the careless or unphilosophic reader is not some other person or class of persons, but the careful reader's own former, careless self. Thus, no conclusion about a natural order of rank amounts to a "discovery." And second, such an understanding may overlook the danger of that experience that we examined in the previous chapter, the danger that the careful reader will proceed from accepting the

invitation to philosophy to identifying philosophy with his or her guide to philosophy – in this case, with Strauss – becoming not a philosopher but (say) a Straussian. Emerson, the great guide of Strauss's great guide Nietzsche, describes this danger in "Uses of Great Men" as follows:

> Our delight in Reason degenerates into idolatry of the herald. Especially when a mind of powerful method has instructed men, we find the examples of oppression. The dominion of Aristotle, the Ptolemaic astronomy, the credit of Luther, of Bacon, of Locke,—in religion, the history of hierarchies, of saints, and the sects which have taken the name of each founder, are in point. (CW, 4:11)

In section 5.6, we will see that Strauss does, in fact, address this danger of his work in "Exoteric Teaching," and calls for the reader's non-discipleship. But he does so only esoterically (and characteristically, in a single, central, terse footnote), where other writers, including Emerson and Nietzsche, are more forceful and explicit. In the end I believe that the literary question requires, contrary to Strauss's exoteric if not his esoteric teaching, what I have identified in Emerson's name as the presumption of parity.

5.1 Strauss (on) Writing Between the Lines

Can there be such a thing as an exoteric teaching, a public or popular teaching, in philosophy? And if one believes that there cannot be, as Leo Strauss is thought to have believed, then what can be the teaching of his essay "Exoteric Teaching"?

The case against philosophy's possessing a public or popular teaching could be made as follows. Philosophy, as the love of truth, can be conceived as the fight against dogma; but dogma is of necessity the condition of society or the political world; consequently, philosophy cannot speak publicly without betraying itself, and possibly

even endangering itself. Leo Strauss claims famously that when the state has threatened philosophy's autonomy, philosophers have written esoterically – that is, they have hidden their meaning between the lines of a text, which is written in such a way as to appear innocuous to most readers. This understanding of philosophy is formed by, and in turn forms, Strauss's reading of the works of Spinoza, Maimonides, al-Fārābī, and Plato among others. If in fact dogma is of necessity the condition of society or the political world, then since society is where the philosopher must live, esotericism must be the condition of philosophy. This would be true even for us: dogma, or say the religious and national beliefs of a people, is only slightly less important in a modern secular democracy than it was in the ancient and medieval worlds, and so the need for esotericism is only slightly less pronounced for the would-be philosopher here and now than in ancient and medieval times. If it seems to us that philosophical writing nowadays is less in need of esotericism, that is not because we know that society has become more tolerant of philosophy, but because we are aware of the near-total neglect of philosophy by the society that produces it; and perhaps because we neglect to consider the reaction to those manifestations of philosophy that catch society's eye and ire. (Think of the general public's sympathy for Allan Bloom's warning against higher education's teaching of moral relativism, or "Nihilism, American Style," in his wildly but not inexplicably popular The Closing of the American Mind.[2] That a book by a sort of student of Strauss should elicit such sympathy has its degree of irony.) As a result of this implication of Strauss's

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[2]Allan Bloom, The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 139 ff.

teaching, several commentators on Strauss, not only so-called Straussians but those unsympathetic to what they take to be Strauss's political commitments, have suspected that Strauss himself must have written in accordance with esoteric procedures. But they have not typically produced readings of Strauss's work that present a convincing explanation of his dense, dry, and difficult prose.

I will mention an instance of this. In an oft-cited critical essay[3] that appeared in 1985, Myles Burnyeat took special note of the chapter layout of Strauss's last book, Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy. This would seem to be a reasonable thing to do when approaching one of Strauss's works, since the importance of chapter placement within a book, as of paragraphs within a chapter, is emphasized by Strauss as an element of esoteric procedures. In the case of Strauss's last book there is also corroborating evidence: Strauss outlined the proper order of these articles (few if any of which were written as chapters for a book) before he died, and his outline even included a couple of pieces that were never completed. Burnyeat, pointing out that the central chapter in the never-realized plan for Strauss's last book is Strauss's breathtaking, seventeen-page study, "Note on the Plan of Nietzsche's Beyond Good and Evil," concludes, rightly I believe, that this essay on Nietzsche holds the key to the plan and intent of Strauss's book. But what is that key? Interpreting the significance of Strauss's essay according to the legendary animosity of Strauss for Nietzsche's thought, Burnyeat decides that the "deeper meaning" or "unobvious meaning" we grasp from the locational highlighting of the essay

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[3]M. F. Burnyeat, "Sphinx Without a Secret," review of Studies of Platonic Political Philosophy, by Leo Strauss, The New York Review of Books 32 (30 May 1985): 30-36, hereafter referred to as "SWS."

is that "Nietzsche is Respected Enemy Number One" ("SWS," 34). Thus, having purloined one of the secrets of Straussian hermeneutics, Burnyeat casts its light onto Strauss's own text to reveal – something he already knew. But then how could this be the "unobvious" or "deeper" meaning? Why bother counting chapters in Strauss's books, if the telling significance turns out to be something that every superficial reader of Strauss already believes? The answer would seem to be that it is easier to count than to read, since even a casual reading of Strauss's central essay on Nietzsche would discover that it is not the work of an enemy of Nietzsche, respecting or otherwise.

By way of interpretive contrast, consider Laurence Lampert's book Leo Strauss and Nietzsche.[4] Lampert's interpretive acumen, revealed in a leisurely, 92-page commentary on this same 17-page essay by Strauss on Nietzsche, distinguishes itself through the following claims: (1) Strauss is Nietzsche's best pupil: Strauss found in Nietzsche, whose writings he consumed "furtively" as a teenager, an early uncoverer of the distinction between esoteric and exoteric teaching, a modern unmasker of Plato's thought, and a critic of modernism as the fruit of the Enlightenment. (2) Strauss, at least in his Nietzsche essay, does in fact write for the type of reader he himself was, one who reads between the lines. But (3) Strauss is a cowardly Nietzschean for choosing to whisper what Nietzsche says out loud – call this whatever lies on the other side of nihilism – and Strauss's whispering reflects not simply a difference in temperament between the two men, but a difference in their understanding of the political times in

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[4]Laurence Lampert, Leo Strauss and Nietzsche (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), hereafter referred to as LSN.

which they live and of what the times demand. Alongside this argument I believe Lampert claims quietly to be himself a better or more true disciple of Nietzsche precisely by exposing Strauss's esotericism, or as he says, by "throw[ing] light" on this "old swindler" (LSN, 21).

Lampert's charge that Strauss is a swindler, if understood not as invective but as a philosophical term of criticism, rests on the same requirement as Strauss's discovery of philosophy's esotericism: for each, it needs to be shown that the volume or tone in which a philosophical truth is stated can change the nature of that truth, even to the extent of turning truth into falsehood or vice versa. The claim that the volume or tone of an utterance figures in what some would call its truth value is defended in the quite different philosophical world of Wittgenstein and Austin. I refer to the thought that what a given sentence means, and so its truth conditions, are a function of its being uttered by this person, in this context, for this reason. Strauss is, in this regard, in fraternity with ordinary language philosophers: he believes that the relation between speakers and their utterances is far from simple, at least among the wise, and that how something is said and to whom it is said plays a role in determining what is said, and so in determining whether the speaker holds the utterance as true. That is supposedly what the rediscovery of the procedures of esoteric writing itself discovers. But does that make Strauss an old swindler? Or does it show him more attuned to the relation between truth and utterance, better schooled in the science of rhetoric, than either Lampert or Nietzsche? My claim will be that if Strauss is indeed cowardly in his soft-spokenness, it is at what I would like to call a more intimate level than Lampert considers, less at the level of the political than

of the personal, which is to say more at the level of the philosophical than not. What demands consideration is Strauss's implicit claim that the truth can only be whispered, and would cease to be true if spoken out loud, i.e. if spoken indiscriminately, or say democratically.

Strauss expresses the opposition between truth and the political, between philosophy and society, differently in the two major essays he devotes exclusively to the topic: "Persecution and the Art of Writing"[5] and "Exoteric Teaching." I might name that difference as a difference in characterizing the motivations that give rise to writing between the lines, together with a difference in Strauss's willingness to announce these motives to any but the few who choose to dwell over his text. Let me offer a synopsis of Strauss's essays concerned exclusively with esotericism.

"Persecution and the Art of Writing" appeared in Social Research in November of 1941. Strauss observes in the essay that the historical interest raised by his discovery of writing under persecution must give way, if in fact it is a discovery, to our philosophical interest in philosophy's subsequent forgetfulness. If up until the end of the eighteenth century philosophers recognized that philosophical writing was necessarily esoteric writing, how did philosophy suddenly come not only to adopt a new mode of writing but to forget the old one? The answer is to be found in "some habits produced by, or related to, a comparatively recent progress in historical research" ("PAW," 26), traceable to the post-Enlightenment assumption of a kinship between the goals of society and philosophy.

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[5]Strauss, "Persecution and the Art of Writing," in Persecution and the Art of Writing (New York: Free Press, 1952; reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), hereafter referred to as "PAW" (page citations are to the 1988 reprint).

Strauss knew that his claim for a tradition of esoteric writing would be controversial both among historians, whose reading of historical texts was antithetical to that mode of reading which alone could uncover the evidence for esotericism, and among philosophers, whose methods of proof were antithetical to questions of tone and placement. A short piece from 1954, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," is Strauss's reply to two such critics.[6] He takes care to explain that this reply is prompted by the difficulties of his own students ("OFKW," 221), appearing thereby to grant his critics a genuine interest while charging them with a neophyte's misunderstanding. I have little to say about this essay except to note that Strauss's main defense against the objections raised by one such critic (George Sabine) consists in showing, through a few examples of the latter's interpretation of Strauss's text, that this particular critic is a careless reader. The conclusion Strauss asks us to draw is that his critic is one of those for whom esoteric writers, and Strauss himself, write esoterically – that is, one of those for whom they write so as not to be understood.

"Exoteric Teaching," as mentioned above, was not published during Strauss's lifetime. Kenneth Hart Green, who prepared the essay for publication for the journal Interpretation in 1986, discovered both rough and final versions of it in the Leo Strauss Papers at the University of Chicago.[7] The first page of the rough copy shows the date 1

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[6]Strauss, "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," Chicago Review 8, no. 1 (1954): 64-75; reprinted in What is Political Philosophy? and Other Studies (New York: Free Press, 1959; reprint, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), hereafter referred to as "OFKW" (page citations are to the 1988 reprint).

[7]Kenneth Hart Green, prefatory note to "ET" in Interpretation, 51; hereafter "ET" (Green).

December 1939.[8] While that would make "Exoteric Teaching" the earliest of Strauss's writings on "writing between the lines," we should not necessarily conclude that his thinking there is less advanced than in the two aforementioned essays. Indeed, I find "Exoteric Teaching" in many ways superior to, certainly a more dense and enigmatic essay than, "Persecution and the Art of Writing." Even if one accepts that "Exoteric Teaching" dates from 1939, one is led to ask why Strauss withheld its publication during his lifetime.

Here we begin to be drawn into the essay itself, in particular to that part of it which Strauss would highlight in his own exegesis of texts, the material hidden away in the footnotes. In a footnote attached to a textual reference to Leibniz, Strauss recalls a remark attributed to Lessing. The footnote reads in full:

> In a private conversation, published only after his death, Lessing said to F. H. Jacobi about Leibniz: "Es ist bei dem grössten Scharfsinn oft sehr schwer, seine eigentliche Meinung zu entdecken." Werke, XXIV, 173.[9]

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[8]The date appears in what looks to be the same handwriting and ink as the manuscript itself. Curiously, however, the cataloger of the collection, Hildegard Korth, in her 1978 "Guide to the Leo Strauss Papers" (available in the Library's Department of Special Collections), lists the date as questionable, guessing it to be 1935 ("Guide," 26). Elsewhere in the "Guide" she explains, "Only a few [lectures and essays] were dated by Leo Strauss himself. For the others dates were established approximately, by dates occasionally on the paper used or in the text" ("Guide," 11). The rough copy is written on letterhead sheets from Union College in Schenectady, New York. Strauss never taught there, but he did teach in New York City – first at Columbia, then at the New School for Social Research – between 1937 and 1948.

[9]"ET," 54 n. 16 [275 n. 9]. Strauss does not provide an English translation of Lessing's remark: "Even for the most penetrating, it is often very difficult to discover his true meaning."

What might draw us to this footnote, beyond the immediate context of arguing for Leibniz's esotericism, is a parenthetical remark Strauss makes as much as three pages later, at what I find to be the climax of the essay, where in the course of upbraiding Schleiermacher for his misinterpretation of Plato's "secret teaching," he writes:

> Nor does he [i.e. Schleiermacher], in that context, as much as allude to Lessing's dialogues ("Ernst und Falk" and Lessing's conversation with F. H. Jacobi) which probably come closer to the spirit of Platonic dialogues and their technique than any other modern work in the German language. ("ET," 57 [69])

Strauss here mentions two of "Lessing's dialogues," one of which he discusses in the course of his essay, while the other he himself merely "alludes to" in the footnote just noted. The first of these dialogues, "Ernst und Falk,"[10] is a series of five conversations Lessing composed on the "secrets" of the Freemasons, who are to be identified with the wise or the men of contemplation. It is a dialogue in the sense that the Platonic dialogues are dialogues: ironic, concerned with the question of philosophical wisdom, and most significantly if most obviously, composed. In contrast, what Strauss refers to as "Lessing's conversation with F. H. Jacobi" is not exactly, or not simply, composed. It is rather the account, recorded and later published by Jacobi, of a conversation the latter had with Lessing in 1780 at Wolfenbüttel. Strauss's referring to it as one of "Lessing's dialogues" is innocuous enough, but for the fact that it is not clear in what sense it is Lessing's and not (also?) Jacobi's; or how, together with Ernst und Falk, it manages to "come closer to the spirit of Platonic dialogues and their technique than any other modern work in the German language" (my emphasis). This was not the only occasion on which

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[10]See "Lessing's Ernst and Falk, Dialogues for Freemasons: A Translation with Notes," trans. Chaninah Maschler, Interpretation 14 (1986): 1-49.

Strauss referred to the conversation between Lessing and Jacobi as one of Lessing's "works." In "A Giving of Accounts,"[11] itself a live dialogue near the end of Strauss's life in which he gives an account of his intellectual upbringing, Strauss takes pains to mention his admiration for Lessing, whom he acknowledges "had said everything I had found out about the distinction between exoteric and esoteric speech and its grounds." He then adds, "Incidentally, Lessing is also the author of the only improvised live dialogue on a philosophic subject known to me" ("AGA," 462). This aside can refer only to Lessing's conversation with Jacobi.[12] Before we are through we will need to account for Strauss's ascribing authorship of this conversation to Lessing. For now I simply mention that the purview of this conversation was one of the most disputed questions among German intellectuals at the close of the 18th century, drawing in no less a personage than Kant, and engendering, in the opinion of at least one commentator, "as great an impact upon nineteenth-century philosophy as Kant's first Kritik."[13] Yet most of Strauss's audience, not necessarily schooled in 18th century German philosophical disputes, will not know what "Lessing's conversation with F. H. Jacobi" refers to unless they pause in their

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[11]Leo Strauss and Jacob Klein, "A Giving of Accounts," The College (St. John's College, Annapolis, Md.) 22 (April 1970): 1-5; reprinted in Strauss, Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity: Essays and Lectures in Modern Jewish Thought, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 457-66; hereafter referred to as "AGA" (page citations are to the 1997 reprint).

[12]Strauss's familiarity with the context and subtext of Lessing's conversation with Jacobi and the so-called pantheism controversy dates at least from his work in the early 1930s coediting two volumes of Moses Mendelssohn's Gesammelte Schriften; see below, p. 256.

[13]Frederick C. Beiser, The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 44.

reading three pages back to look up footnote 16 and its mention of what Lessing once said to Jacobi. Whatever relation that posthumous or withheld remark of Lessing's has to his own writing, its role in Strauss's posthumous or withheld essay bears examining.

I want to claim not only that "Exoteric Teaching" is the more mature and developed of Strauss's essays on modes of addressing the reader, but that it teaches the esoteric implications of his later and better-known "Persecution and the Art of Writing." Further, Strauss's withholding of the essay from publication is a significant feature of its meaning – more so, I would say, than Wittgenstein's withholding of his late writings from publication is significant to their meaning (thinking, as detailed in Part 1, of the confluence of Wittgenstein's interest in aspect-blindness, or the failure to see something in a certain light, and his conviction that his later thoughts will be misunderstood, greeted by blind eyes). Ever the student of Nietzsche, Strauss believed both that some men are born posthumously and that it is a mark of prudence if some of their writings are as well.

5.2 What Does an Exoteric Writing Say to Most Readers?

I began the previous section by asking whether there was such a thing as an exoteric teaching in philosophy, and I mentioned that Strauss shares with ordinary language philosophy an appreciation of the role which volume or tone play in the meaning, hence truth, of utterances. Let me focus the question by asking: To what extent is what is said exoterically meant? Or better: Is it right to speak of the exoteric meaning as something said, uttered? Does an exoteric writing really say anything to an inattentive reader? It is hard to find in Strauss's corpus a single answer to this question. Much of his

writing on esotericism is not concerned with generalities but with explicating the thought of a particular major text. And since, as one might well imagine, the motives behind an author's esotericism and the subsequent procedures he adopts can differ significantly from another author's motives and procedures, esoteric writing is better viewed as having a history rather than a system or method. Still, at least the younger Strauss found it helpful to try to characterize the motives and methods of esotericism; and the later Strauss, who found his efforts better spent on the rough ground of particular texts, nevertheless did have something to say on occasion about the writer's relation to his explicit or outer utterances.

But as one looks over Strauss's remarks on esotericism across his career, two facts or tendencies emerge. First, even within a single essay, Strauss is often less than consistent in characterizing the writer's relation to his explicit statements. We have two options in interpreting this inconsistency. We might decide that it indicates Strauss's indifference to the question of exoteric meaning. And if what the writer explicitly says to the majority of his readers simply does not matter to him, that in itself would indicate Strauss's understanding of the writer's relation to his explicit statements. A corollary of this discovery would be that I was asking the wrong question of Strauss's text. And yet among Strauss's guidelines for exoteric reading there is the following: "Only such reading between the lines as starts from an exact consideration of the explicit statements of the author is legitimate." And he follows this rule immediately by saying, "The context in which a statement occurs, and the literary character of the whole work as well as its plan, must be perfectly understood before an interpretation of the statement can reasonably

claim to be adequate or even correct" ("PAW," 30). If one can hear in this latter guideline its suggesting an approach to a life's work no less than to a single work, then one can say that a second way of interpreting Strauss's inconsistency, a way which his own study of esoteric procedures would seem to warrant, is to understand the inconsistency as a provocation to more reading and rereading of Strauss's texts.

When I follow that provocation, a second fact or tendency emerges: the vagueness and inconsistency in Strauss's early and late published essays regarding the exoteric teaching of esoteric writers disappears in Strauss's posthumous essay "Exoteric Teaching." Again, we have two options in interpreting this difference. We can decide that the relative clarity of "Exoteric Teaching" is a product of its relative youthfulness and its singular focus on the esoteric procedures of Lessing. There seems to be in "Exoteric Teaching" little consideration of the complications that arise when Strauss examines other, and particularly the ancient, esoteric writers. But this impression diminishes when one considers the discussion of Plato in "Exoteric Teaching," as I do below. The interpretive option I would like to urge for the moment is that the clarity of "Exoteric Teaching" is explained by, and in turn accounts for, its appearing in print only after Strauss is dead. Strauss himself proposes this possibility at the conclusion of "On a Forgotten Kind of Writing," where in response to Alexandre Kojève's observation that Strauss's method cannot, like that of a detective, lead up to the confession of the criminal, he explains: "I know of cases where the criminal confessed posthumously after having made sure that the detective would not condemn him" ("OFKW," 231-32). We should examine, in any event, the evidence for the two tendencies I have just summarized.

I turn first to Strauss's essay "Persecution and the Art of Writing." Early in that essay Strauss says that esoteric writing means to say nothing to most readers: "That literature [in which the truth about all crucial things is presented exclusively between the lines] is addressed, not to all readers, but to trustworthy and intelligent readers only." Such a writer is "silent to the majority of his readers" ("PAW," 25, my emphasis). By the end of the essay, this silence seems to be forgotten. The penultimate paragraph begins:

> An exoteric book contains then two teachings: a popular teaching of an edifying character, which is in the foreground; and a philosophic teaching concerning the most important subject, which is indicated only between the lines. ("PAW," 36)

But Strauss then removes the implication that there are two teachings that are equally intended, when he continues:

> Those to whom such books are truly addressed are, however, neither the unphilosophic majority nor the perfect philosopher as such, but the young men who might become philosophers: the potential philosophers are to be led step by step from the popular views which are indispensable for all practical and political purposes to the truth which is merely and purely theoretical.... ("PAW," 36)

If "Persecution and the Art of Writing" expresses a single view about what is said exoterically, that view would seem to be that an exoteric book teaches a popular teaching of an edifying character which it does not in some sense say or claim, or in which the claim to this teaching is as a claim to silence. The suggestion is that the difference between being silent and being edifying to the majority of one's readers is not a difference with any significance; both are accurate descriptions of what any exoteric text teaches exoterically.

Seven years later, in Strauss's On Tyranny, one finds the following sentence: "The superficial understanding [of Odysseus by the common people, of Homer by the

rhapsodes, of Xenophon's Hiero by most readers] is not simply wrong, since it grasps the obvious meaning which is as much intended by the author as is the deeper meaning."[14] My difficulty in being instructed by this remark lies with the notoriously slippery word "intention." That the obvious or exoteric meaning of a text is as much "intended" by an author as the deeper meaning does not help determine whether the obvious meaning is meant: one can intend to deceive the majority of one's readers, in which case one does not mean what one says to them (though of course, one did mean to say it). In addition, Strauss's saying "The superficial understanding is not simply wrong" is ambiguous between the claim that the superficial understanding is not really wrong (it contains at least a shred of truth) and the claim that it is more than just wrong (it is, in addition, wrong in exactly the way the author intended – without meaning a word of it).

Consider next Strauss's 1962 Page-Barbour Lecture "On Plato's Republic," later published as chapter 2 of The City and Man.[15] Again, as in the early pages of "Persecution and the Art of Writing," Strauss identifies the task of the esoteric writer as one of speaking to some while being silent to others:

> Writings are essentially defective ... because they do not know to whom to talk and to whom to be silent.... The proper work of a writing is to talk to some readers and to be silent to others. But does not every writing admittedly talk to all readers? ("OPR," 52-53)

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[14]Strauss, On Tyranny (1948; reprint, revised and expanded edition, including the Strauss-Kojève correspondence, eds. Victor Gourevitch and Michael S. Roth, New York: Free Press, 1991), 47.

[15]Strauss, "On Plato's Republic," in The City and Man (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); hereafter "OPR."

Recognizing the problem of public writing and speaking – the need to speak differently to different audiences – and noting that "the model for the good writing is the good conversation" ("OPR," 54), Strauss looks to Xenophon for Socrates' solution to the problem in the domain of speech. The source of the problem, one might say, is that audiences do not come ready-marked: the potential philosophers show themselves not by their looks, but by their responses to one's words. Xenophon tells us that when Socrates was contradicted by one of those listening to him, he would proceed by going back to the underlying assumption to the dispute through raising a "What is...?" question, and thereby render the truth manifest to the one who contradicted him. But if no one offered to contradict him, and his audience simply listened without responding, he would proceed by appealing to common opinion and move from there towards agreement. This, Strauss tells us, is the method Homer ascribes to Odysseus when he calls him "a safe speaker." The former method is the philosophic; the latter Strauss calls "salutary." (The root of "salutary" [salus] is related to the root of "safe" [salvus].) Strauss concludes:

> It would not be strange if Socrates had tried to lead those who are able to think toward the truth and to lead the others toward agreement in salutary opinions or to confirm them in such opinions...: the proper work of a writing is truly to talk, or to reveal the truth, to some while leading others to salutary opinions; the proper work of a writing is to arouse to thinking those who are by nature fit for it.... ("OPR," 53-54)

Once more Strauss seems unwilling to say whether philosophy, properly speaking, does any work for the unphilosophic majority. (Compare his very different ways of finishing the repeated phrase, "the proper work of a writing is..." – either, to speak the truth to some while also leading others to salutary opinions, or, primarily, to arouse the thinking few.)

He also seems reticent to declare what any such work would entail. Does one lead the majority toward a new salutary opinion, or does one merely confirm a majority opinion already in place? The claim of central importance would seem to be, in any event, that the exoteric teaching is a lie; which particular lie is not, for Strauss, the crucial issue. And how could it be, if no lie is closer to the truth than any other?

Further evidence for the kind of address, or lack of address, to the unphilosophic majority that is at work in esoteric writing can be gleaned by following Strauss in noting what kind of people populate Plato's dialogues. He observes that

> The Platonic Socrates ... converses in deed ... only with people who are not common people – who belong in one way or the other to an elite.... In the Platonic dialogues we find two Socratic reports about conversations which he had with famous women (Diotima and Aspasia) but on the stage we see and hear only one woman, and her only once: his wife Xanthippe. Above all, Plato presents no Socratic conversation between Socrates and men of the demos.... It is above all through this selection of conversations, apart from the titles, that we hear Plato himself as distinguished from his characters. ("OPR," 57)

Thus, while the Platonic Socrates speaks "about shoemakers and the like ... we never see or hear him speak to shoemakers or the like." My concern at present is not whether this is a true characterization of the Platonic dialogues. It may be true on the whole, though I wonder why Strauss fails to mention the most evident exception to his characterization: Socrates' conversation with the slave boy in Meno. (The omission is particularly worth remarking, given that Strauss's lifelong friend Jacob Klein was preparing a commentary on the Meno during the time that Strauss was writing his commentary on the Republic.) The still usable lesson Strauss wants his reader to draw is that the Platonic Socrates is never concerned to address any but potential philosophers, even though he may, on

occasion, find himself conversing with nonphilosophers. Strauss is asking his reader to recognize that, except when forced to speak out of necessity (as in the Apology), the Platonic Socrates has nothing to say to the unphilosophic majority. The solution to the problem of writing, at least as suggested in Strauss's "On Plato's Republic," is to disown every word of one's exoteric "teaching."

A very different picture, however, emerges from the essay "Exoteric Teaching." In it one reads that "The distinction between exoteric and esoteric speech ... is an outcome of prudence" ("ET," 53 [65]). Writing prudently does not here imply the dissimulating option of silence, nor a speech which might as well be silence, as we found in "Persecution and the Art of Writing," On Tyranny, and "On Plato's Republic." That is because silence is not a significant option in Lessing's "dialogues," and Lessing is the protagonist of "Exoteric Teaching." Here is Strauss on Lessing's understanding of the philosopher's exotericism:

> ... a philosopher who makes an exoteric statement asserts, not a fact, but what Lessing chooses to call "a mere possibility": he does not, strictly speaking, believe in the truth of that statement (e.g., the statement [found in Leibniz's defense of the orthodox doctrine of eternal damnation] that there is such a thing as eternally increasing wickedness of human beings which would justify eternally increasing punishments). This is indicated by Lessing in the following remark introducing a quotation from the final part of Plato's Gorgias: "Socrates himself believed in such eternal punishments quite seriously; he believed in them at least to the extent that he considered it expedient to teach such punishments in terms which do not in any way arouse suspicion and which are most explicit." ("ET," 54 [66])[16]

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[16]Cf. "How to Study Spinoza's Theologico-Political Treatise," in Persecution and the Art of Writing, 182. Two years after "Exoteric Teaching" Strauss makes an intriguing allusion to this passage from Lessing when he writes the first sentence of "Persecution and the Art of Writing":

(continued...)

The lesson which Lessing learns from Leibniz among others, and which Strauss in turn learns from Lessing among others, is not that the expediency of teaching eternal damnation makes it in some sense true, but that the truth makes the teaching of eternal damnation in some way expedient. But that means that not just any old lie will do. As Strauss, in the context of summarizing Lessing's claims for exoteric teaching, goes on to say, "Some exoteric statements are addressed to morally inferior people, who ought to be frightened by such statements" ("ET," 54 [66]). That pretty unambiguously undermines the claim that the philosopher has nothing to say to the majority of his readers. But while it is unambiguous, it could be described (at least Strauss would describe it) as somewhat hidden in his text. The reasons Strauss would cite, beyond the fact that it occurs in an essay that was withheld during the author's lifetime, are that (1) it occurs in the relatively safe context of summarizing the thought of another writer, which is the commentator's natural cover or alibi; and (2) it is the fourth of seven numbered sentences summarizing Lessing's view of exoteric teaching, and so occupies the least exposed and most easily overlooked position in that list. One reason to hide the claim, "Some exoteric statements are addressed to morally inferior people, who ought to be frightened by such statements"

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[16](...continued)

> In a considerable number of countries which, for about a hundred years, have enjoyed a practically complete freedom of public discussion, that freedom is now suppressed and replaced by a compulsion to coordinate speech with such views as the government believes to be expedient, or holds in all seriousness. ("PAW," 22)

Apparently, "expediency" and "seriousness" are mutually clarificatory, taking Lessing's remark and Strauss's allusion together. Strauss's allusion may be meant ironically, placing as it does totalitarian governments in the grammatical place occupied by Socrates in Lessing's remark. On the other hand, it may be meant in all seriousness, interpreting with Lessing the meaning of Socrates' (totalitarian) expediency.

is that the distinction between higher and lower types is here characterized not as a distinction in intellect or mental capacities but as a moral distinction, and so one with immediate consequences for action. Strauss will have occasion to say more about this later in the essay. Of greater interest to us now is that Strauss's summary of Lessing's claim seems to imply an order of rank among lies: some are harmful, others merely innocuous, but some are useful. The dissimulation of the exoteric writing now seems to be something said, something "addressed," something meant; it is no longer simply innocent.

5.3 Strauss on Plato's 'Noble Lie'

This shift in understanding is brought out even more clearly in noting a further measure of the difference between the teaching of "Persecution and the Art of Writing" and "Exoteric Teaching": their discussions of the Platonic "noble lie." Broadly stated, "Persecution and the Art of Writing" understands the motive for dissimulation as arising primarily from the threat of harm that explicitness would bring upon the author; whereas "Exoteric Teaching" emphasizes rather the threat, broadly conceived, to the well-being of society.

I turn first to "Persecution and the Art of Writing." In its second paragraph Strauss observes that young people, more than their elders, are prone to accept the propaganda of a state-sponsored press, alluding here in 1941 to those countries which had replaced a long tradition of free public discussion with censorship. A footnote directs our attention to Book 3 of Plato's Republic, where Socrates wonders aloud whether one could

persuade the citizens of the "city in speech" to believe "a single noble lie." To recall its details: each citizen has been born from the earth; each contains in his soul only one of a natural rank of metals; the first task of the guardians or rulers of the republic is to determine which metal is mixed in the soul of each citizen; the oracle has predicted the destruction of the city if it should ever be ruled by a citizen of inferior metal. To Socrates' question, whether the citizens could be convinced to believe these falsehoods, Glaucon responds, as Strauss records it: "By no means, as far as they themselves are concerned, but I know how it could be done as regards their sons and their descendants and the people of a later age generally speaking. Socrates: ... I understand, more or less, what you mean."[17] Glaucon's understanding of the noble lie reflects that his concern at this moment in the dialogue is with the interests not of the majority, but of those in power – namely, the philosophers, or more specifically Socrates (and to a lesser extent himself and Adeimantus). Treating Socrates as an authority – the last thing Socrates wants from him – Glaucon trusts that Socrates' proposal is noble, a unique requirement of the best city-state. And yet nowhere does Socrates attempt to justify the noble lie. Instead, we see a rare if not singular instance in the Platonic dialogues in which Socrates rather than his interlocutor admits to being ashamed, "and for good reason" (πάνυ εἰκότως) he says.

This understanding of the noble lie is not withdrawn in "Exoteric Teaching." But there Strauss discusses the noble lie in the context of noting the difference between "the beginner" and "the philosopher" – specifically the difference between "the morality of the beginners" and "the morality of the philosopher" ("ET," 56 [68]). The noble lie is

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[17]Plato Republic 415d; cf. "PAW," 22 n. 2.

required, according to Strauss, because of this difference, not in order to support some given form of the state but to maintain the state in any form, since "opinion" – i.e. the assumptions underlying any given society, the political lie – "is the element of society" ("OFKW," 221-22). Thus, unlike "Persecution and the Art of Writing," "Exoteric Teaching" emphasizes the advantage which the noble lie confers on society, whatever that lie should happen to be. One could characterize the difference further by saying that "Persecution and the Art of Writing" speaks about a philosopher writing under watch of an aggressive tyranny, while "Exoteric Teaching" speaks more from the position of a philosopher writing in relative freedom, or under a less brutish and more subtle tyranny, writing perhaps in a liberal democracy subject as ever to the tyranny of the herd. It should not be surprising if the justification of esoteric procedures should differ between these two circumstances. One might catch a glimpse here of the difference for Strauss between 1939 (taking that as the date of "Exoteric Teaching") and 1941 (the year "Persecution and the Art of Writing" appeared), or between the outlook of someone newly arrived in the United States – and so perhaps feeling acutely free, or forced, to bury himself in old books – and someone feeling more removed from, and so better able to explicitly consider, the extremes of persecution occurring in Europe in his own time, particularly to those he might have called his people. (Green mentions that "Exoteric Teaching" may be the closest thing we have to an essay on Lessing which Strauss, as late as 1971, said he had meant to write since 1937 and which he wanted to call "Taking Leave of Germany" ["ET" (Green), 51]. There will be occasion to assess this wish below, in section 5.6.)

Strauss's remarks in "Exoteric Teaching" on the noble lie occur in the context of his critique of Schleiermacher's understanding of Plato. The critique hinges on the question whether Plato had two teachings or only one; so I must explain how Strauss understands this question. To say with Schleiermacher that Plato had but one teaching is to say not only that "the Platonic teaching" is "the teaching presented in the dialogues" – as opposed, for example, to a secret oral teaching whose prerequisite was some lost rite of initiation – but that the esoteric teachings of the dialogues do not oppose, let alone contradict, their exoteric teachings. On this view, what the beginning reader of Plato reads and understands – about the benefits of justice, say – is part of the perfectly trained student's understanding of Plato. The latter understands that teaching better or more adequately, not some teaching opposed to it, and in particular not one which asserts the exoteric teaching to be a lie. But Strauss claims that "the difference between the beginner and the philosopher ... is a difference not of degree but of kind." Noting Plato's "well known" dictum that "virtue is knowledge or science," Strauss concludes that the morality of the attentive reader, the philosopher, is superior to the morality of the inattentive reader or beginner: "their virtue is not genuine virtue, but vulgar or political virtue only, a virtue based not on insight, but on customs or laws" ("ET," 56 [68]).

It is at this point that Strauss invokes the context and the motive of Plato's noble lie:

> We may say, the morality of the beginners is the morality of the "auxiliaries" of the Republic, but not yet the morality of the "guardians." Now, the "auxiliaries," the best among whom are the beginners, must believe "noble lies" (Republic 414b4ff.; see also Laws 663d6ff.), i.e., statements which, while being useful for the political community, are nevertheless lies. And there is a difference not of

> degree but of kind between truth and lie (or untruth). And what holds true of the difference between truth and lies holds equally true of the difference between esoteric and exoteric teaching; for Plato's exoteric teaching is identical with his "noble lies." This connection of considerations, which is more or less familiar to every reader of Plato, if not duly emphasized by all students of Plato, is not even mentioned by Schleiermacher ... [who] failed to pay any attention to the difference between the morality of the beginner and the morality of the philosopher, i.e. to the difference which is at the bottom of the difference between exoteric and esoteric teaching. ("ET," 56-57 [68-69])

Strauss's brief against Schleiermacher's claim that Plato had one teaching and not two is, then, twofold: Schleiermacher overlooked ("failed to pay any attention to") a difference (viz. the difference between two types or sources of morality), and he overlooked ("does not even mention") an identity (viz. the identity that holds between Plato's "exoteric teaching" and Plato's "noble lies"). It is the nature of the connection between that difference and that identity which Strauss has hidden in "Exoteric Teaching." Throughout Strauss's writings, but especially here, the sense of the phrase "exoteric teaching" is ambiguous. "Exoteric teaching" can refer either to the outer, public teaching or to a method of teaching, viz. one of hiding the truth behind falsity by means of intentional errors, buried footnotes, etc. that are noticeable only to the careful reader. Even more easily recognizable is that an "exoteric writing" is not typically opposed to an "esoteric writing": both are names for a text which operates doubly or ironically. An exoteric writing is typically opposed, rather, to a non-exoteric writing, a writing which makes no distinctions or compensations for the different kinds of reader. Thus the question "Did Plato have two teachings or one?", which Strauss calls, at the exact center of his essay, "the crucial question" ("ET," 55 [67]) is, so to speak, mirrored in the ambiguity of the question, "What is Plato's exoteric teaching?" And we have just seen

Strauss's answer to this latter question: "Plato's exoteric teaching is identical with his 'noble lies.'" If the phrase "exoteric teaching" has two senses, it is at least reasonable to suppose that the claim "Plato's exoteric teaching is identical with his 'noble lies'" has two senses.

There is a lie, or more like a fib, a lie of omission, in Strauss's argument presented above. Immediately after distinguishing the morality of the auxiliaries (or beginners) from that of the guardians (or philosophers), Strauss proceeds by noting that "the 'auxiliaries' ... must believe 'noble lies,'" citing Republic 414b.[18] The missing but implied premise is that the philosopher-rulers do not or need not believe noble lies. That premise is both suggested by and lends support to the claim that the two kinds of citizens have two different kinds of morality. But what Socrates asks for in the Republic is a scheme to attempt to convince "even the rulers,"[19] and a bit later he says, "I'll attempt to persuade first the rulers and the soldiers, then the rest of the city."[20] Within the "city in speech" itself, belief in the noble lie is, ideally, universal; "even the rulers" must be convinced that it is true. Thus the missing premise is simply false – as Strauss knows, and intends the careful reader to notice. As he says elsewhere, the unasserted and false premise that everyone tacitly accepts is meant to catch the attention of the intended readers (cf. "PAW," 31).

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[18]Strauss asks us to examine as well Laws 663d6ff.

[19]Plato Republic (trans. Allan Bloom) 414b.

[20]Ibid., 414d.

What does one learn by considering the truth which this false premise brings to one's attention? What is the significance of the fact that everyone who lives within the "city in speech" will ideally, but perhaps only after time,[21] believe noble lies? Most obviously, it means that they will not call the myths or stories "lies," but will simply regard them as true. Only the founders of the republic call the myth a noble lie; and the founders are Socrates and Plato's brothers, Glaucon and Adeimantus. But that is not quite true. Readers of the Republic also call the myth a noble lie; Plato's readers are also founders of the "city in speech." But who are Plato's readers? Strauss says at the end of an argument which, as we have seen, relies on our familiarity with the noble lie but also on our overlooking the missing and false premise, that "this connection of considerations ... is more or less familiar to every reader of Plato." But a connection more or less familiar to every reader is one that admits of degrees, that is still somehow in the region of lie or dissimulation, not yet understood in its truth. Thus if most readers of the Republic believe that it contains a noble lie, the suggestion is that there is something false about their understanding of it. And if even the best citizens in the best city are imagined by design to believe something to be true, the suggestion is that there is something true in what they believe.

To understand Plato's noble lie, on the reading Strauss presents in his own manner, is to understand it as both singular and plural. When Strauss writes, "there is a difference not of degree but of kind between truth and lie or untruth," it is the only occasion in "Exoteric Teaching" in which he adopts Plato's singular "lie"; everywhere else

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[21]Cf. Plato Republic 415d.

he speaks of "(noble) lies." There is a distinction in this difference. When, as in the passage just cited, a lie is set alongside the truth, then it is just a lie, and not the concern or interest of the philosopher, who desires only the clarity of truth. But that does not mean that the philosopher is the enemy of all lies. For as we have seen, lies admit of degrees; some are more expedient than others. When Strauss speaks of Plato's "noble lies," when he substitutes the plural for the singular noble lie of the Republic, he is indicating that Plato's noble lie itself admits of degrees, or of better and worse understandings. Strauss's assertion that there are two Platonic teachings, together with his claim that "Plato's exoteric teaching is identical with his 'noble lies,'" thus suggests that Plato's so-called noble lie points to the truth. We might name it by saying: the metallurgical differences among souls is a metaphor for the natural differences among humans. The hidden truth of Strauss's "Exoteric Teaching" is that there is in nature an order of rank among human beings, with the genuine philosopher as the true guardian, the guardian of the truth.

5.4 Demonstrating the Truth of "Exoteric Teaching"

I believe that I have just stated the esoteric meaning of Strauss's "Exoteric Teaching." (It looks very much like his exoteric meaning, too; I speak to this shortly.) The noble lie, as Plato intended it and Strauss quietly exposes it, should be taken as true: there is a natural – which means, on Strauss's gloss on Plato's text (cf. "OPR," 102-103), a divinely-sanctioned if not divinely-created – order of rank among human beings. I believe I have shown, in addition, the sense in which there is, for Strauss, an exoteric

teaching in philosophy. What is this sense? – a teaching, meant for the majority of readers of a philosopher who writes between the lines, which is ideally not equivalent to silence, and not simply a mouthing of received dogma, but instead the source of new dogma, or a new way of justifying received dogma, as one might find in Plato's or in Leibniz's justifications of eternal divine retribution. This exoteric teaching is beneficial to the philosopher not only because it forestalls suspicion of his activities (which only the discerning reader, the potential philosopher, can discover) but also because it encourages the order and civility of society, and the absence of that unrest and revolution which would destroy the philosopher's solitude and his communion with fellow philosophers, and which would make his work even more difficult if not impossible. "This always difficult but always pleasant work" as Strauss puts it ("PAW," 37) – the work of recovering the truth of all things, which is accomplished first and foremost by discarding the dogma in one's own thinking – is attractive to only the very few, and only the very few can carry it out. As it happens (cf. "PAW," 25), these few are exactly and only the careful readers of an exoteric text who are also, exactly and only, those who live by a morality whose basis is essentially different, different in kind, from the morality of the majority of citizens. Thus, as I read Strauss, the exoteric text functions as a kind of perfect security scanner, like those man-size units that guard the exits of libraries: it lets pass exactly and only those books which are, on account of their virtues, selected to transgress the customs or laws of electromagnetic conformity; and it is exactly and only those same books which, upon crossing, experience a new bookly life – the life of being read, of reading and contemplation – whose basis is different in kind from that of the poor

volumes stacked side by side on dusty shelves, powerless to penetrate the guiding principle, the hidden meaning, of the recondite scanner.

But if Strauss's texts are themselves recondite, they are also full of bald assertions. And some of these, as casual readers of Strauss will recognize, seem identical to the esoteric claims I have just extracted from "Exoteric Teaching." It is not news, for instance, that Strauss claims under various commentatorial guises that there is an order of rank among humans with the philosopher alone guided by genuine virtue. So much is explicitly said, though somewhat buried, in "Exoteric Teaching" itself. So my earlier objection to Myles Burnyeat returns, and turns back on me: how can I claim to have read between the lines of Strauss's essay if the esoteric teaching I discover is roughly equivalent to the public teaching, so that there is but one teaching after all?

My answer is that for Strauss, as for some among his great teachers from the past, the esoteric teaching is not in fact conveyed by stating the esoteric teaching. Consider again Strauss's criticism of Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher's error in thinking about the teaching of the Platonic dialogues is that he

> tacitly assumes that the way from the beginning to the end [that is, "from the extremely inattentive reader to the extremely attentive reader"] is continuous, whereas, according to Plato, philosophy presupposes a real conversion, i.e., a total break with the attitude of the beginner.... ("ET," 56 [68])

A page later, addressing the question of how Lessing was able to see what Schleiermacher had missed, namely that "all the ancient philosophers" had distinguished their exoteric from their esoteric teaching, Strauss writes:

> If I am not mistaken, he [Lessing] rediscovered the bearing of that distinction by his own exertion after having undergone his conversion, i.e., after having had the

> experience of what philosophy is and what sacrifices it requires. For it is that experience which leads in a straight way to the distinction between the two groups of men, the philosophic men and the unphilosophic men, and therewith to the distinction between the two ways of presenting the truth. ("ET," 57 [69])

I mention in passing that the vision of philosophy as a private exertion demanded by a conversion, in particular one brought on by an experience both of insight and of sacrifice, is a fair description of Wittgenstein's vision of philosophy as discussed at the end of chapter 2. (Wittgenstein's admiration for Lessing, if not identical to Strauss's, was equally unwavering.)[22] I offer two observations on these two passages. (1) The chasm which separates the two groups of humans is here characterized not in terms of natural differences (though they may be understood to lie in the background) but as a chasm created by the presence or absence of an experience, a "conversion." In support of this claim Strauss, in a footnote, cites four passages from the works of Plato. In the last of these, from Plato's Phaedo, the word which occupies the place of the word "conversion" is κάθαρσις. Both Strauss and his readers know that κάθαρσις occupies the central place

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[22]See Rhees, Recollections of Wittgenstein, 134, 221-22; Brian McGuinness, Wittgenstein, A Life: Young Ludwig, 1889-1921 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 33-34. In comparing Wittgenstein's and Strauss's admiration for Lessing, consider the passage from Lessing that Wittgenstein quotes in CV, 8d:

> I have been reading Lessing (on the Bible): 'Add to this the verbal clothing and the style..., absolutely full of tautologies, but of a kind to exercise one's wits by seeming sometimes to say something different while really saying the same thing and at other times seeming to say the same thing while at bottom meaning, or being capable of meaning, something different.'

The quoted passage is from "The Education of the Human Race," one of Lessing's last and most esoterically written prose essays. Not uninterestingly, it is written, like the Investigations, as a series of numbered remarks. See Lessing's Theological Writings, trans. Henry Chadwick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1956), 82-98.

in Aristotle's definition of "tragedy" in the Poetics, naming the almost physiological effect on the viewer of the dramatic enactment on stage. Does Strauss mean to suggest that the would-be-philosopher's conversion is itself sparked by something akin to an experience of dramatic poetry, perhaps by an experience of reading a well-wrought text?

(2) At the end of the second passage, Strauss speaks of the distinction between "the two ways of presenting the truth," which he identifies as the unphilosophic and the philosophic, or stating the truth explicitly and stating it sotto voce. Can one characterize these two ways further as the prosaic and the poetic, and so again connect the cathartic-like experience of discovering the esoteric meaning of a text to the would-be-philosopher's conversion, which Strauss glosses as "the experience of what philosophy is and what sacrifices it requires"? If one can, that would explain why the class of true philosophers is perfectly commensurate with the class of attentive readers, since then the conversion in one's way of life would follow "in a straight way" from the experience of discovering the conversion or hidden meaning of a text. It would also suggest a certain kinship between the procedures of esoteric writing and of Emerson's prose; to that extent – i.e. insofar as the perceptive reader is concerned – Strauss and Emerson share an understanding of human nature.

Let me return to the specific claim of what I am calling Strauss's esoteric teaching.

To be told that there is an order of rank among humans is of course not the same as to know that there is. But neither is it so much as to learn or to be taught that there is, any more than to be told that Shakespeare is the greatest English poet counts as instruction in Shakespeare (except for someone who has no use for him, or for poetry).

So it might seem that Strauss neither proves the truth of his esoteric teaching (i.e., the truth behind Plato's noble lie) nor so much as offers instruction in how one might come to discover its truth. But I think that he thinks he does, and to say that he thinks he does is part of what I mean in saying that for Strauss the esoteric teaching is not in fact conveyed by stating the esoteric teaching. Strauss's distinction between "the two ways of presenting the truth" amounts to a distinction in epistemic value, or between ways of making the truth one's own. To know the truth of Strauss's esoteric teaching, to know not only that there are natural inequalities but a natural order of rank among human beings which is authorized, as it were, by the superiority of the philosophic soul, one needs to discover it – that is, between the lines. For that experience of reading and all that it presumes – above all, a care for the words of one's language, a care which manifests itself through reading characterized by backtracking, getting stuck, noticing contradictions and omissions, treating these as clues to the author's meaning rather than as signs of his inferiority, tracing sources, and, typically though not of necessity, falling in love with the author – is for Strauss the best evidence of one's fitness for "what philosophy is and what sacrifices it requires," hence of the truth of the distinction between oneself and "the unphilosophic men." Strauss's "Exoteric Teaching" is constructed in such a way that reading it is a means of demonstrating its truth, almost like a literary version of a performative utterance: to discover its esoteric teaching about the order of rank among human beings, to find that teaching spoken between the lines at some moment of one's reading, is to become oneself an exemplar of it. To experience the esoteric teaching is to know it to be true.

5.5 The Self-Understanding of Strauss's Esotericism

Here we arrive at the first of two problems I find in what I choose to call the self-understanding of Strauss's esoteric teaching. For if my care in reading teaches me my fitness for philosophy, whose careless reading teaches me their unfitness for it? Is my guiding model anyone other than my former, careless self, my own recent failure to read? That I have been a careless reader is a logical or grammatical requirement, and not just a local fact about me. Unless I begin by reading carelessly, or say casually – in a manner roughly equivalent to what Wittgenstein calls (merely) regarding a picture as the object it depicts – no subsequent experience of mine with the written word will be cathartic in the required sense, and no act of reading between the lines will produce in me what Strauss calls a "conversion." That is not to deny that there may be differences here, between my careless reading and another's, as incontrovertible as that the two of us are separate, two distinct. But if my guiding model of "the unphilosophic men" is not to be a self-deception (of the order of my former, off-handed certainty that I was reading well); if, that is to say, my model is not something or someone I just happen to know, but is my own former self, what kind of model of a difference from me is that?

> Strauss almost acknowledges this point in "On Plato's Republic." He writes:
>
> > If the good writing must imitate the good conversation, it would seem that it must be addressed primarily to one or more men known to the author; the primary addressee would then act as a representative of that type of reader whom the author wishes to reach above all. ("OPR," 54)

It seems, however, that no one of the author's acquaintance is needed, or able, to act as representative of the casual reader. Is this because Strauss does not know any casual

readers, or knows of them only on good authority? I suspect that the absence of a representative of the casual reader reflects the natural uncertainty, which Strauss also almost acknowledges, in distinguishing between "the beginners" (the would-be-philosophers) and "the unphilosophic men." That uncertainty necessitates for Strauss, as it did for Plato, a third moral category: one reads in "Exoteric Teaching" that

> the morality of the beginners is the morality of the 'auxiliaries' of the Republic, but not yet the morality of the 'guardians'. Now the 'auxiliaries', the best among whom are the beginners.... ("ET," 56 [68-69])

The best among the auxiliaries, on Strauss's reading of the Republic, exist in a kind of identity limbo between unphilosophic and philosophic men, though most auxiliaries turn out to be unphilosophic, to fail ever to exhibit a virtue based "on insight" rather than "on customs or laws" ("ET," 56 [68]).

For an author to have a model of the inferior auxiliary would be for him to have in mind someone who with respect to the most important things is unteachable. According to Strauss, a fundamental disagreement between the ancients and the moderns is that the ancients took the gulf between the teachable and the unteachable to be a basic fact of human nature; moderns on the other hand, still children of the Enlightenment, are more optimistic ("PAW," 34). My contribution to this disagreement at present is to observe that, insofar as I have evidence for some other's unteachability, that evidence has a basis essentially different from the basis on which my natural nobility rests; it is a difference, in Strauss's phrase, not of degree but of kind. To say it in a word: I cannot discover that some other is unteachable (whereas I must discover, cannot merely be told, that I am a careful reader). For unless I just assume that there are unteachable others, or take it on

good authority, I must know someone who I find unteachable. But I cannot know such a person; for insofar as I cannot teach him, that is not (yet?) a fact about him any more or less than it is a fact about me. It is, in all exactness, a fact about us. My response to this fact may be that I decide this person is unteachable, just as my response to your inability to hear the tension and intention in Tristano's solo discussed above (chapter 3) may be that I decide you are aspect-deaf, or deaf to jazz; I may even hang an iron or bronze metal around your neck. Perhaps that is all that Plato's guardians can do in fulfilling their "first and most pressing duty" of separating the potential philosopher from the non-philosopher.[23] Or perhaps Plato, like Strauss, imagines that this duty can be carried out from knowledge. While I cannot show that it cannot be carried out from knowledge any more than Strauss can show that it can – since what would authorize anyone's act of distinguishing philosophical from unphilosophical men is nothing beyond the distinction itself – I want to say that the distinction is no more than the self-understanding of Strauss's esotericism. It is not necessary to the success of esoteric writing insofar as it aims at persuading careful readers of their potential for philosophy. My judging someone "unphilosophical" may not, at least not obviously, make my discovery of my natural nobility any less of a discovery, but neither does it make my judgment of him any more than a judgment, or say a sentence. It is not a discovery, privileged or otherwise.

There is a further consideration that follows from what I am calling the discovery of one's natural nobility. It should be evident that knowing one's fitness for philosophy is not the same as seeking the truth or loving wisdom. For one thing, knowing my fitness

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[23]Plato Republic (trans. Raymond Larson) 415b.

for philosophy is not an activity; for another, knowing my fitness for philosophy does not necessarily lead me to search for the truth or love wisdom, least of all once this knowledge loses its cachet as a self-discovery and becomes simply a fact about me. Strauss, naturally, does not claim that the end of philosophy is simply the recognition that the careful reader is naturally noble. He pictures philosophy, as we have said, as the pursuit of freedom from dogma, dogmas which help to maintain the state but which also constrict one's thinking. A central understanding of Strauss's explicit teaching about philosophy is that the beliefs of the vulgar are seductive. Philosophy must be concerned with the political not only because the state maintains peace and order, and so provides the outer conditions for practicing philosophy, but also because the state, or say society, is the first teacher (cf. "GA," 466). But the first teacher, as has been observed from Plato to Freud, is the most seductive, and the most difficult from which to break free. Philosophy as esoteric writing and exoteric teaching presupposes this first teacher, because philosophy's task is, essentially, to set itself against it. (It could not be the first teacher, not only not practically but also, one must see again, not logically or grammatically.)

But it ought to be evident, as I argued in chapter 4 in discussing the dynamics of influence, that every teaching can be seductive, the last as well as the first, philosophy's as well as society's. In speaking of a teaching's "seductiveness" I mean not only to indicate its ability to attract us by the wrong thing, or for the wrong reason, but also – giving a different name to the dynamics of influence – to remind us of the vicissitudes which noble desires no less than natural undergo. Freud famously catalogues four vicissitudes of the sexual instincts: an instinct may undergo reversal into its opposite (as from active

to passive), or turn upon the subject's own self, or be repressed, or suffer sublimation.[24] While no one to my knowledge has been as successful at cataloging the vicissitudes of philosophical desire (though Emerson and Hegel, and perhaps Plato,[25] show the way), at least two of the four modes of alteration that Freud identifies might be reclaimed for such a catalog: namely (1) some form of reversal – from our loving knowledge to our loving and wanting love from the giver or facilitator of knowledge (call this the natural, inverted sequel to Diotima's description of the ascent of ἔρος in Plato's Symposium, a sequel which Alcibiades' speech and life enacts) – and (2) various forms of sublimating philosophical desire – as when we transform philosophy's pleasures into the pleasures of logic or historical scholarship, or – let me not suppress it – the pleasures of literature. Surely if philosophy is the pursuit of freedom from dogma, particularly from the ruts of one's own thinking, then no small part of its concern should be the study of the vicissitudes of its own activity.

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[24]See Freud, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," in Standard Edition, 14:126ff.

[25]If Plato's Republic is the soul writ large, then "the vicissitudes of the philosophic soul" names the subject of Books 8 and 9, where Plato describes the four regimes that follow upon the degeneration of the regime ruled by the philosopher-king, or say by philosophical desire. Though I am not prepared to do so here, it could be argued that Books 8 and 9 are the heart of Plato's literary theory, and in particular his theory of the reception of the Republic itself, as if he were there detailing his book's own inefficacy, warning against not its being misread (since, if Strauss is right, this is intended) but against its becoming more than it is – a school rather than a teacher, a prescription rather than a vehicle for a cure.

5.6 Strauss's Posthumous Teaching

If Strauss was a good teacher, as we are told he was,[26] and so was serious about inoculating his best students from philosophy's vicissitudes and degenerations, why should he have acquired, and continue to acquire, more disciples than students, more Straussians than readers of Strauss? Perhaps he has not; perhaps the number of his good readers is something one cannot know. But one should in any event be able to discover where, or if, he instructs his readers how not to become Straussians (that is, rather than philosophers). I believe that Strauss provides this instruction in "Exoteric Teaching." If I am right, that would be further reason, perhaps the best reason, to consider this posthumous essay an important addition to Strauss's published work. It might also explain, or complicate, the reason that Strauss chose to withhold publishing the essay during his lifetime.

Let me return to the footnote from "Exoteric Teaching" that I discussed briefly earlier:

> In a private conversation, published only after his death, Lessing said to F. H. Jacobi about Leibniz: "Es ist bei dem grössten Scharfsinn oft sehr schwer, seine eigentliche Meinung zu entdecken." Werke, XXIV, 173. ["Even for the most penetrating, it is often very difficult to discover his true meaning."]

I begin again by simply mentioning, not wanting to insist on its significance, that this is the sixteenth of thirty-seven footnotes, attached to the fifth of eight paragraphs occuring on the fourth of seven and one-half pages (of the manuscript), and so appearing roughly

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[26]See, for example, the tributes of Ted A. Blanton and Laurence Berns, "Memorials to Leo Strauss," The College (St. John's College, Annapolis, Md.) 25 (January 1974): 3-5.

in the middle of Strauss's essay. Recall that this footnote is further significant by serving as the only indication within the essay itself of where one might look to discover one of only two works which "probably come closer to the spirit of Platonic dialogues and their technique than any other modern work in the German language." What Strauss understands by the technique of the Platonic dialogues, as he is intent on explaining in "Exoteric Teaching" and elsewhere, is that they conceal the true teaching through various methods, one of which is to allow the truth to be spoken in an unlikely place by an unlikely character (cf. "PAW," 25, 36). Strauss's footnote contains, let me say, two parts: there are Strauss's own words introducing the quoted passage – naming the speaker and the conditions under which he spoke – and there is the quoted passage itself. From Strauss's introductory words we learn the following: (1) The words in quotation marks were spoken in private conversation between two men of perhaps comparable genius. Thus it is likely, if not undeniable, that they represent the speaker's true thoughts. (2) The words in quotation marks were published only after the speaker was dead. To know the larger context of the conversation is to know that it could not have been published until after the speaker was dead. (I discuss this larger context below.) (3) The speaker of the words in quotation marks is Lessing, who Strauss calls "the last writer who revealed, while hiding [them],[27] the reasons compelling wise men to hide the truth" ("ET," 52 [64]). A few pages later we learn that Lessing "implicitly denies that writers on philosophical topics who reject exotericism deserve the name of philosophers" ("ET," 55 [67]). In other

[27]The word "them" appears in Strauss's typescript and in the original published version in Interpretation, but is inexplicably absent as reprinted in The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism.

words, the speaker is, according to the calculus of Strauss's remarks, the last philosopher – the last, at least, to write philosophically about philosophy itself. (4) The speaker is speaking about Leibniz, i.e. a dead philosopher, and so someone safe from whatever censure Lessing's words might otherwise bring on him. Despite Strauss's introductory words, however, Lessing's words can be understood only by placing them back in their original context. Providing us with volume and page numbers, Strauss encourages us, at least according to his own methods of literary encouragement, to examine that context.

Just prior to the passage cited by Strauss, Lessing had explained to Jacobi that Leibniz "was himself a Spinozist at heart." There was a conventional way of understanding such a remark in 1780 when the conversation took place: to call someone a Spinozist was tantamount to calling him an atheist. This was a dangerous thing to have said about one. Lessing's subsequent remarks, while they do not exactly deny the conventional sense of his claim, are made with the intention of superseding that conventional understanding. Here is a portion of those remarks, which includes the passage quoted by Strauss (I rely on a somewhat different translation here):

> Leibniz' concepts of truth were so constituted that he could not bear it if it were set too narrow limits. Many of his assertions can be traced to that way of thinking; and even if we summon up our greatest acumen it is often very difficult to discover what he actually meant. This is precisely why I esteem him so highly. I mean to say: it was not because of any one of his opinions he seemed to hold or perhaps really did hold; it was because of the grand manner of his thinking.[28]

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[28]Gérard Vallée, ed., The Spinoza Conversations between Lessing and Jacobi: Text with Excerpts from the Ensuing Controversy, trans. G. Vallée, J. B. Lawson, and C. G. Chapple (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988), 90-91. Vallée's text is a translation of significant portions of H. Scholz, ed., Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn (The main writings relative to the

(continued...)

To paraphrase: what Lessing means by Leibniz's "Spinozism" is not that Leibniz was Spinoza's disciple but rather that, in his writings as in his life, he was a true teacher of philosophy, or "independence,"[29] which is to say that his most valued teaching, his most genuinely philosophical teaching, is not contained in the opinions he held, or anyway seemed to hold, but is rather revealed in his grand manner of thinking.

But our interest in the context of Lessing's remark cited by Strauss does not end here. Lessing's conversation with Jacobi is the occasion on which Lessing is said to have revealed that he himself is a Spinozist. ("If I am to call myself by anybody's name, then I know none better"; "There is no other philosophy but the philosophy of Spinoza.")[30] It is this posthumously published claim which ignited an often heated, sometimes scandalous, and in any event prolonged dispute between Jacobi and Moses Mendelssohn – the so-called pantheism controversy.[31] The immediate issue between them, and the only issue of importance for us at the moment, is whether Lessing should be described as a Spinozist – in which case Mendelssohn and his friends feared for Lessing's reputation – or whether,

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[28](...continued)
pantheism debate between Jacobi and Mendelssohn) (Berlin: Reuther and Reichard, 1916). The cited passage appeared originally in Jacobi's little book, Über die Lehre des Spinoza, in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn (1785); see F. H. Jacobi, Werke, ed. Friedrich von Roth and Friedrich Köppen, vol. 4, pts. 1-2 (Leipzig: G. Fleischer, 1819). Strauss, not insignificantly, chose to cite Lessing's collected works, where Jacobi's report of his conversation with Lessing is reproduced.

[29]See the motto from Strauss's Nachlass at the beginning of the present chapter.

[30]Vallée, The Spinoza Conversations, 85, 86. Strauss cites the second of Lessing's remarks in his 1948 essay "How to Study Spinoza's Theologico-Political Treatise," Persecution and the Art of Writing, 182.

[31]See Beiser, The Fate of Reason, 44-108, and below, n. 33.

even in this private conversation, Lessing was being ironical with the younger Jacobi, who he was meeting for the first time. The dispute, conducted first through private letters, became public in 1785 with the almost simultaneous appearance of Jacobi's Über die Lehre des Spinoza (including Jacobi's conversation with Lessing) and Mendelssohn's Morgenstunden[32] – a work which Strauss later edited and for which he wrote an introduction, giving an account of the controversy.[33] We need not consider the reasons for the principles' deep disagreements, for the popular interest in the controversy at the time, or for its undeniable importance to the development of German philosophy in the 19th century. My only concern here is to suggest that the controversy amounts to a misunderstanding of Lessing by both sides, and that Strauss recognized this. For it seems clear that one is to interpret Lessing's declaration of his Spinozism along the lines that Lessing interprets for us Leibniz's Spinozism, as I have just recounted and paraphrased it. (As one reads in Jacobi's account, Lessing first declares his Spinozism to Jacobi; he then returns the following day, noting that Jacobi had seemed shocked by his declaration, and

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[32]Moses Mendelssohn, Morgenstunden oder Vorlesungen über das Daseyn Gottes (1785); see Moses Mendelssohn Gesammelte Schriften: Jubiläumsausgabe, vol. 3, pt. 2, "Schriften zur Philosophie und Ästhetik," ed. Leo Strauss (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag [Gunther Holzboog], 1974). Portions of Lectures 14 and 15 of the Morgenstunden appear in translation in Vallée, The Spinoza Conversations, 64-77.

[33]See Strauss, "Einleitung," in Moses Mendelssohn Gesammelte Schriften, vol. 3, pt. 2. Beiser relies in part on Strauss's "Einleitung" for his own account of the pantheism controversy; see The Fate of Reason, 335 n. 12. I do not know when Strauss wrote his "Einleitung"; while it was not published until 1974 (see previous note), Strauss's familiarity with Mendelssohn's relationship to Lessing dates at least from the early 1930s, when he coedited Volume 2 (1931) and Volume 3, Part 1 (1932) of Moses Mendelssohn Gesammelte Schriften, several years before he wrote "Exoteric Teaching." Cf. "ET" (Green), 51.

proceeds to discuss with Jacobi the finer points of Spinoza's and Leibniz's teachings, in the course of which he explains what he means by "Leibniz's Spinozism.")

I can summarize the significance of this episode for our reading of Strauss's footnote as follows. Lessing, in posthumously published remarks, identifies himself with someone he calls, in effect, the only philosopher (viz. Spinoza). The point of the identification, which one learns only later through his remark about another philosopher who he identifies as a Spinozist (viz. Leibniz), is to say: What I mean to teach are not my opinions, which are often very difficult to discover; I mean to teach only a manner of thinking. Strauss is able to call Lessing "the author" of this conversation with Jacobi, this "dialogue," because he understands that Lessing has explained, in a conversation recorded by Jacobi, and despite Jacobi's failure to understand him, exactly in what sense he is a Spinozist. As one commentator has written, thinking particularly about the Spinoza conversations, "All of Lessing's productions show the mark of the theatrical element and of its dialectical quality."[34]

All that remains in order to discover Strauss's instruction to his readers is for me to describe his mode of authorship in a way that parallels my description of Lessing's own, as follows. Strauss, in a central, terse footnote of his posthumously published "Exoteric Teaching," an essay that deals with a man he calls, in effect, the last philosopher (viz. Lessing), clarifies his claim for Lessing that Leibniz should be included with "all the ancient philosophers" in making use of something Strauss names "exoteric teaching." The point of Strauss's clarifying footnote, which one comes to discover only

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[34]Vallée, The Spinoza Conversations, 62.

later through his parenthetical highlighting of Lessing's "dialogues," is to say: What I mean to teach are not my opinions, which are often very difficult to discover; I mean to teach a manner of thinking.

I do not deny that this reading of Strauss's highlighted citation of Lessing on Leibniz's Spinozism is a bit involved, certainly a bit Straussian, though I do not think it is far-fetched. So let me make my point as uncontroversially as I can: If anywhere Strauss warns against the danger of discipleship in a manner that would be understood by only the most careful reader, which is to say by the reader most susceptible to Strauss's attractiveness, then he does so here, in this central, terse footnote in his posthumously published essay "Exoteric Teaching." It is possible that he does so elsewhere, and more explicitly. But I know of no other work where he does so, either explicitly or between the lines. That brings me to the second and final problem with the self-understanding of Strauss's esoteric teaching. I can state it in words similar to those Laurence Lampert uses to indict Strauss in Leo Strauss and Nietzsche: Strauss whispers something – in this case, the danger of discipleship, and specifically the danger of his writing's attractiveness – which he could have and should have said out loud. Are there good reasons for writing his warning between the lines? Yes, naturally: for his most careful readers, the difference is as great as the difference between being told by an authority that something is true and discovering that it is. Are there good reasons for warning his readers only between the lines? That seems more problematic; Strauss's great teacher Nietzsche, for one,[35] and

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[35]See e.g. Friedrich Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer as Educator," Untimely Meditations, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983),

(continued...)

Nietzsche's great teacher Emerson, for another (see above, p. 216), wrote explicitly as well as artfully about the danger of discipleship. Does that make Leo Strauss cowardly? It seems to render his warning, if it is there, less effective, more taciturn. Are there, finally, good reasons for Strauss to withhold his esoteric warning until after his death? Perhaps not good ones. But if it is easy to imagine his reasons for not discouraging discipleship explicitly in his published writings, still one cannot presume to know them. (And I do not know what he might have said in private.) We are nowhere more esoteric, or more attractive, than where we choose to be silent.

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[35](...continued)
136: "I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example."

Conclusion. Communities of Knowing

We are now in a position to recognize that the natural anxiety or unease of aspect-dawning judgments, which I identified in Part 1, is – as I first worded it – the anxiety or unease of philosophizing. When philosophy is conceived as a way of life, or as a way of thinking – which can include, even mean, "thinking logically," when that is meant as an ideal and not a mere skill – then what is conceived is a practice or discipline of willingness to rethink one's inherited convictions in the face of nothing more than the pressure of thought. And that in itself can produce anxiety, even before one takes the further step of giving voice to a new conviction or passing fancy, or announcing that one is foregoing a popular conviction or passing fad. Having or failing to have a tolerance for the anxiety of philosophizing is the distinction Strauss identifies as leading to a natural order of rank. But I have meant to argue that the choice between Strauss's natural order of rank and Emerson's presumption of parity is not a choice that the experience and consequences of finding oneself named by their texts compels one to make in Strauss's favor. In any event, if Strauss's lower rank is identified with an unwillingness to suffer philosophical unease, then it will include much of the present activity of philosophy, and many of its active practitioners. For if the argument of Part 1 is correct, then the ongoing

efforts in philosophy to secure grounds for our understanding one another, or to establish a logical or grammatical framework to which one might appeal at moments of uncertainty or conflict, are carried out not in recognition of philosophical unease but in reaction against it. For Wittgenstein, to recognize my philosophical unease is to ask what the ground of my words are, to locate my answer in a description, not an explanation, and to continue to find expressive common ground with (at most, at least) some others. Strauss, on the other hand, expresses a different sort of unease in going beyond a description of some other's present unteachability by me, or strangeness to me, to asserting an order of rank among humans – thereby turning my present relation with some other into a fact about her, rather than a present, perhaps passing, fact about us. It is just such a view of the reader – as fixed, as if by nature, in her way of reading – that causes Emerson unease; and his response to that unease is to allow himself to imagine that human nature may be otherwise, and to continue to model "that which relies" in his writing, to continue to become he who writes.

Wittgenstein suggests a way of understanding why our written and aural communications about the most important things will catch only some eyes and ears, not all; Emerson and Strauss present differing attitudes that one can take in response to that understanding. I cannot say, to counter Strauss, that there are no unphilosophic souls, no persons who cannot read in the texts of philosophy the model for their unactualized promise to independence. Nevertheless, if we presume the representativeness of each of us, something may come of it – but, of course, there is no guarantee.

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