

Contemporary Philosophies and Theories in Education 3

Duck-Joo Kwak

Education for Self-transformation

Essay Form as an Educational Practice

 Springer

Education for Self-transformation

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHIES AND THEORIES IN EDUCATION

Volume 3

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Preface

In *A Secular Age*, Charles Taylor describes something of the massive religious and social change that swept through Europe from the thirteenth century, encompassing the Reformation. The motor for this change was in part a response to the stagnation of the medieval church and in part a hemorrhaging of the social settlement it had established, but one of its major effects was a new emphasis on individuation and self-judgment. Not surprisingly, this change met with some resistance from the established orders, and there was suspicion of what were seen as new forms of inwardness. But they laid the way, nevertheless, for so much that characterizes the modern era, especially for the massive inward turn that, in his earlier *Sources of the Self*, Taylor had described as arising in the eighteenth century, with Rousseau and with Kant's Copernican revolution. Inwardness today, it might be thought, has become a growth industry, with the rise of psychoanalysis in the twentieth century, with the burgeoning of therapy in its multiple forms, and with new genres of confession. It is in this context that individuation has been prey to various forms of commercialization, and too often the privacy of inward self-examination has turned into the public consumption exemplified by confessional TV. By the same lights, therapy has not uncommonly become formulaic and superficial, based on false conceptions of the inner and the outer, and in a range of human practices, meaningful content has been displaced by the imperatives of performativity.

Suspensions of inwardness arise today in newly insidious ways, with an erosion of trust across the range of our culture that is peculiarly prominent in education itself. Take, for example, the now obsessive concern with exhaustive procedures of assessment. No learning is taking place, it is assumed, unless it is manifested in a behavioral outcome; and nothing is to count as teaching unless it is dedicated to this end. Ideas of intelligence and educational development are then cashed in quick-fire critical thinking, such that anything approaching rumination, any meditative relation to things in the world, is dismissed as sentimental self-indulgence. It is in these circumstances, moreover, that the development of creativity, the fostering of the imagination, and the gaining of autonomy have degenerated into parodies of themselves – cosmetically conditioned sets of skills whose purchase on the inner self, or on the personal engagement these terms might otherwise connote, is little more than vestigial.

Token references to “spiritual education” sit unsteadily alongside or within conceptions of religious education, hamstrung, on the one hand, by sensitivities to cultural difference and, on the other, by confusion about what, in any case, religious belief actually amounts to. Such degeneration has reverberated through educational research itself. Shored up in a new empiricism, it pretends to embody a hard-headed response to the imperatives of “what works,” obstructing in the process any more thoughtful, more responsible, pondering of the complex challenges that education truly provides. With its new earnestness about winning the funding necessary to sustain itself, it too often combines its behaviorist confusion with an intellectual philistinism that erects new barriers to responsible thought.

To draw attention to these limitations in educational practice and research is, in a sense, nothing new. What makes this book by Duck-Joo Kwak remarkable is the freshness of its manner of taking up these problems – not by addressing them globally, in broad-brushed and perhaps excusably scathing terms, but through the precise, more modest concentration on a specific form of writing and expression, named somewhat undramatically “essay-form.” This approach may seem oblique, and in a sense it is. But this does nothing to diminish – indeed, I would say, it illustrates – what is at stake here.

One of the most striking and most creative realizations of inwardness in human expressiveness was the development in writing of essay-form, most notably in the work of Montaigne. Montaigne took a topic and used this as a jetty for embarking on an exploration in thought, an exploration whose course could never be fully charted in advance and for which there could be no blue-print. Moving from philosophy conceived as theoretical science to philosophy conceived as the practice of free judgment, his thinking was to be an essay, an attempt, a trying-out of ideas, testing the words as he worked with them and surprising himself sometimes with what those words gave back, to him no less than to his readers. And his topics were indeed various, often surprising and sometimes strange. On sadness. On idleness. On liars. On sleep. On names. On the cannibals. On books. On experience. On educating children. On thumbs. It seems that almost any topic might strike the author and become the occasion for thought – if, that is, thought was given rein and not subjugated to some preconceived purpose. The essay, celebrated in the work of many great writers, from Johnson to Hazlitt to Emerson, from Virginia Woolf to George Orwell, came to be the form in which the author would speak in his or her own words, would speak to others in an appeal to them to see the world as he or she saw it – saying, in effect: “This is how it is, isn’t it? See it like this.” And, more prosaically perhaps, but still sustaining something of this characteristic flexibility, scope, and challenge, the essay became part of the familiar experience of schooling and university, where a topic or choice of topics was prescribed but where there were no strict rules as to how to proceed. That this undoubtedly caused some students to feel a degree of insecurity there is no doubt, but it was one means by which they were required to call upon their own resources, in the process discovering something of themselves.

Contrast this, for a moment, with modes of writing in contemporary schooling, from elementary school to university. For, while the essay-form is far from extinct,

its open-endedness and invitation to unfettered thought are viewed increasingly with a degree of suspicion. First, there will be outcomes to be hit, there will be criteria to meet. Hence, teachers will teach to the test, and learners will quickly learn that they must learn to the test too. Now, there is no doubt that learning will have outcomes, and no doubt that these should be desirable ones, and a practice in which criteria are *not* operative is no less than a contradiction in terms. But what has happened is that these terms – “outcomes” and “criteria” – have acquired a technical sense, which, for teacher and student alike, imposes a bogus behaviorism, restricting the very understanding of what education can be. This usage blocks the development of a more sensitive, nuanced, and accurate conception of the way that criteria run through anything we might aspire to do well, in short through most of what we do. And second, the pressures of this assessment regime will generate new approaches to writing and expression, the better to hold off the risk of failure and to help students to make the grade. Thus, there is now no end of advice as to how to construct and develop a piece of work, even what constructions and phrases to use. Model writing-frames can be readily found on the Internet, and they have become part of the stock-in-trade of teachers of study skills and of learning-how-to-learn. Moreover, in fields of study that have aspirations to some kind of scientific status – most obviously in social science – there will be a preference, at least as far as the research methods textbooks are concerned, for the adoption of an impersonal style (“The researcher found that. . .,” etc., etc.). The drabness of the prose that is then generated will be a further barrier to the excitement of thought that the study of the social world might properly engender, and it will be a frustration of precisely those forms of creative thinking and imagination, that engagement of humanity, that the essay rightly opens up.

Kwak’s exploration in the pages that follow is an attempt to retrieve the essay from its degenerate forms in academic writing, and her own text, in contradistinction to so much writing in educational research, exemplifies what she preaches. In the process, she aims to save a pedagogical possibility in which the first-person voice of the inner struggle of “lived experience” can be articulated and expressed. Hence, this is not just a book about writing methods but one with a sharp existentialist edge. Addressed to the condition of the modern self in its (post-)secular condition, she seeks a philosophical practice that can reduce the experiential rift between knowledge and wisdom. What is at stake here is no less than the expression of self-formation and transformation.

Her journey takes her through writers whose pertinence to her cause cannot be doubted, but whose work is less familiar in this regard than it should be. Hence, we find fascinating discussions of Hans Blumenberg, Søren Kierkegaard, and Georg Lukács, with a major part of the later development of the book influenced by the writings of Stanley Cavell. Cavell’s sense of the importance of voice in philosophy chimes well with Kwak’s characterization and celebration of essay-form, but let it be clear, once again, that what is at issue here is easily misunderstood. To speak of the importance of voice in this sense has little to do with the somewhat fashionable cause of “student voice” or with the now regrettably well-worn politics of recognition; nor is it to be understood in terms of some kind of narcissism, as gratuitous introspection. It is altogether much closer to the bone of that human expressiveness that

is a condition for our life with others, our culture and our politics; and in this, it will connect with the very idea of democracy, with the possibilities of formation and transformation that this rightly occasions for our lives as individuals in relation to the communities we find or found.

There can be no doubt then that *Education for Self-transformation: Essay-Form as an Educational Practice* is a bold endeavor, and it is, in the best Nietzschean sense, an untimely one. This is not the register one encounters most commonly in the philosophy of education, let alone in educational research more generally. And the sentiments and commitments expressed here are, in a sense, more personal and more engaged than scholarly writing usually allows. But there is nothing self-indulgent here, for Kwak's text resolutely follows the argument where it leads. And for the reader ready to be challenged, it will lead in surprising, refreshing ways – living up to the promise and relevance that she claims for the inwardness, judgment and expression that are richly realized in the form of the essay.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Education as Self-transformation and the Essay Form of Writing: Education for a Post-secular Age

We are living in a nihilistic age. The culture that shapes us and the criteria which we live by are *simultaneously* pre-modern, modern, and post-modern in their nature. We often feel *lost*, or *alienated* from ourselves, finding our lives not connected to any meaningful order larger than life, such as Nature or God. However, we are programmed to feel proud of ourselves as empowered agents with a disengaged rational power over “who I am.” Yet, we begin to be highly suspicious of whether this pride can live up to the supposed Enlightenment humanism, longing for something larger than life which can again define “who I am.” The degree to which each of these experiences dominates us may vary depending upon which region of the world or which fate of life we happen to be thrown into. But we cannot deny that we are all more or less subject to this nihilistic and conflicting experience of life, whether aware or not, in today’s ever-globalizing and modernized world.

The nihilistic age brings with it a crisis of fragmentation, and it is not uncommon for people to talk about “the end of education” (Sloterdijk 1987). According to Sloterdijk, schooling in a post-modern era can no longer involve the activity of “education” as traditionally conceived, i.e., induction to knowledge and formation of character, since the terms of these conceptions are now bankrupt. The main characteristic of the post-modern age in which we live can be described in its broadest sense as *self-consciously* modern, meaning suspicious of the past and abandoning the metaphysical, religious, and political certainties of the preceding age. Yet the political revitalization of religion in the most advanced modern societies of the West against this background signals our entry into a so-called *post-secular* age in Habermas’ words, where religion is again high on the public agenda (Habermas 2008). Until recently dominant, the secular humanist culture of public education is for many unsatisfying, leaving them with a need that is now being fulfilled by a turn back to religion. This seems to point to a crisis with the role of (scientific) knowledge as well as that of (secular humanistic) values, in education in general and in schooling in particular.

This book is my intellectual journey as a Western-educated Asian to make sense of the fragmentation of our contemporary life, which has enabled me to develop an

educationally alternative way of responding to the crisis. I would call it a “post-secular” approach to education, in the sense that it stays within the secular humanist model, while bringing students into contact with something akin to the religious, but without religious inflection. There are two key concepts that characterize the post-secular approach: “self-transformation” and “the essay form of writing.” As may be true of most of the educated in the non-Western modernized region of the world, the non-Western part of my identity has always been under the threat of being transformed through the system of modern education. One of the most important *educational* events in this process of transformation is the creation of modern subjectivity; subjectivity as a reflexive power from within, which is usually considered to be the source of modern agency over one’s own actions and character. The moral status of this reflexive power seems to be *ambivalent*. Donald R. Hall says that subjectivity always implies “a degree of thought and self-consciousness about one’s own identity” unique to the modern self, on the one hand, and “at the same time allows a myriad of limitations and often unknowable, unavoidable constraints on our ability to fully comprehend identity,” on the other (2004, p. 3). However, in Asian or non-Western culture, modern subjectivity is often perceived as a sheer evil, representing a *manipulative, artful, and dehumanizing* Machiavellian tendency of the colonial West in the fashioning of human identity. What is considered to be violated by it is our (non-Western) innocence in relation to the world and ourselves.

I think this politically rooted dismissal of modern subjectivity, just like the sweeping post-modern critique of the Enlightenment selfhood as sovereign and self-determining, is educationally unfortunate and even harmful, especially to politically disadvantaged members of society, since in the long run it tends to weaken or misdirect the formation of their political voice. Educators under the modern school system should take seriously the fact that schools are, whether we like it or not, political arenas in the sense that different social forces, whether economical, political, religious, or cultural in its nature, compete with each other to affect the minds of future members of society, yet in such a way that no one force is in a position to take responsibility in shaping their identity and destiny. And the cultivation of modern subjectivity is an integral part of this whole political process in the schooling, since we are living in an era in which we are commonly asked to rethink, express and explain our identities; old norms and traditions, which trapped the individual in a cage of ascription, seem to be breaking down. Thus, the pondering of “I” or “who I am” still *should* be perceived as having a role in, or responsibility for, *creating one’s own selfhood*, despite its denaturalizing violation of our supposedly innocent relation to the world and ourselves, in order to bring us back in touch with the world and ourselves.

Raising a doubt about one’s full control over one’s own identity like a post-modern critic, I am interested in the dangers and limitations of subjectivity as well as in its power and virtue for educational self-(trans)formation. This means that I am concerned with the *extent* to which “subjectivity” as the source of one’s agency can bring about change in the way the individual subject conducts herself and orients her life. By addressing this question, i.e., how we should, and to what

extent we even have an ability to, change society *through* our individual actions and the ways that cultural representation can and cannot abet those changes, I will attempt in this book to reformulate a notion of subjectivity which allows us to make an educationally proper response to the crisis of fragmentation in a post-secular age. And “the essay form of writing” will be proposed and explored as a form of pedagogical practice through which this particular notion of subjectivity is to be cultivated and practiced. Now let me bring out in detail some theoretical backgrounds behind this thesis. This will make clear such key terms as “post-secular age,” “self-transformation,” and “the essay form of writing” in the way I will employ them in this book.

When Richard Rorty makes a critique of epistemology-oriented modern philosophy and announces “the end of Philosophy” in his ground-breaking work *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), both the notion of knowledge as the representation of reality and the notion of Truth as corresponding to reality are called into question. But this crisis with “representational knowledge” also means a crisis with “modern subjectivity” defined by “the disengaged rational self,” which originates in the Cartesian conception of selfhood and culminates in the Kantian conception of selfhood. For the idea of modern subjectivity as an agency that organizes knowledge as its systematic representations is presupposed by the notion of knowledge as the “representation” of the world. Thus, we may say that “the end of Philosophy” timely declared by Rorty anticipates “the end of subjectivity,” both of which tend to lead into the phenomenon of “the end of Education.” The traditional sense of education as knowledge transmission is now bankrupt, since there is no absolute knowledge for the future generation to be inducted into as well as no substance-based character for them to be formed into. With the explosion of the modern myth of knowledge, young people can no longer seek emancipation in schools and universities, as these institutions are increasingly constrained by a new criterion of knowledge as “performativity” in Lyotard’s terms. This is why today we often witness schools and universities losing ground as official *educational* institutes, ground that comes from the integrity of their own practice and purpose as social institutions. In fact, they tend to be engaged more and more in *qualifying*, rather than *educating*, future generations, exclusively with exams and degrees as measures for their performativity. This tendency has seriously undermined the educational authority of today’s schools and universities.

However, just as “the end of Philosophy” does not mean, nor needs to bring about, the end of philosophy per se, “the end of Education” does not mean the end of education as a social practice per se, nor need it bring about the death of our belief in schooling as an educational institution. The term “the end of Education” may demand us to conceive a new paradigm of education or a new culture of schooling that can properly respond to the situation consequent on “the end of Philosophy,” i.e., education and schooling that can be defined by what is more than, or other than, “knowledge transmission.”

This book proposes the idea of “self-transformation” in the place of “knowledge transmission” in pursuit of a new paradigm of education. This proposal can be aligned with what David Cooper (2003, p. 211) calls “a moderate” post-modernist

position. He describes the moderate postmodernist position as that which does not reject the possibility of objective agreement on truth, knowledge and moral norms, but shares the post-modernists' hostility toward "depth" of the true nature of the world and their rejection of the foundationalist account of the truth. Cooper also claims that such a moderate position would be plausible *only when* there is "a comfortable place to occupy between an absolute or foundationalist conception of truth" or value and a whole-hearted "embrace of a playful, anarchic and nihilistic attitude to our beliefs and commitments" (Copper 2003, p. 215). Similarly, I think an alternative concept of education for self-transformation would be plausible *only when* there is a place for the radical reformulation of modern subjectivity between its deconstructionist critique and its modernist defense, which can avoid polar and polemical contemporary discourses on the questions of knowledge and truth. Thus, my overarching concern throughout this book can be described as an attempt to reformulate modern subjectivity in this middle path.

While the post-modern critique of knowledge as representational tends to put into question the textuality of the self as a system of representations, "subjectivity as a critical concept invites us to consider the question of how and from where one's identity arises, to what extent it is understandable, and to what degree it is something over which we have any measure of influence or control" (Hall 2004, pp. 3–4). This philosophical inquiry about subjectivity, which has been one of the central questions that for the last two centuries continental philosophers from Nietzsche and Heidegger to Foucault are interested in, is usually considered to be an intersection of two lines of philosophical inquiry: epistemology as the study of how we know what we know and ontology as the study of the nature of being or existence (Hall 2004, p. 4). This means that the inquiry into subjectivity is associated with a bigger and more general question, such as how our understanding of knowledge relates to and constrains our understanding of our existence, and whether our social and individual existences are determined by the ways that we collectively organize knowledge. The concern that underlies this inquiry is akin to that with which ancient philosophers were concerned when they attempted to integrate "knowledge" and "wisdom," with the expectation that the knowledge of "how things are the way they are" would inform us of the wisdom about "how to conduct one's life." The assumption that knowledge is supposed to be conceptually connected to the question of how we should live derives from the ancient idea that the cosmos as such expresses a human purpose and therefore that the knowledge of cosmos or nature would be part of what it means to be human. This is exactly what Hans Blumenberg, the contemporary German philosopher, means when he says that "since the ancient theory, what theory was supposed to do was not to make life possible but to make it *happy*" (1983, p. 232). In this sense, the inquiry about subjectivity can be described as an attempt to recover this ancient connection between "knowledge" and "wisdom" or "theory" and "happiness of life," the connection that has long been lost in the modern mind.

Then how has the connection been lost in the modern mind? This disconnection is created when, unlike the naïve ancient mind, the *self-conscious* scientific-minded moderns regard the cosmos as *indifferent to* humans; this experience is expressed as the "disenchantment of the nature" in Max Weber's terms. The knowledge of the

cosmos is no longer considered to be the expression of human purpose in the universe, and there is no internal connection between the cosmos and human beings. Thus, according to Simon Critchley (2001), what is distinctive about the modern mind is that there is always a gap between (scientific) knowledge and wisdom or truth and meaning, between causal explanation and existential understanding. But this is not an *explanatory* gap that can be closed by producing a better and more comprehensive theory about the world, but an *experiential* or *felt* gap within the modern self. This means that, even if all epistemic worries about what we know and how we know are to be resolved *empirically* by scientific inquiry, this would be somehow irrelevant to the question of wisdom, i.e., the question of knowing of what exactly a good human life or the meaning of our existence might consist.¹

The paradox of our experiences in this scientific age is that the scientific concept of the world does not close the gap between knowledge and wisdom, but makes us feel the gap all the more acutely. In fact, it is when the force of this paradox begins to be *felt existentially* that the neglected question of the meaning of life or the purpose of our existence comes back with a sense of emptiness and loss, making us feel fragmented, restless, imprisoned, and disintegrated in our everyday lives. Thus, the gap is not something we can reduce through empirical inquiry but something we moderns are forced *to live with*; for our existential anxiety that is the source of this gap seems to be something that cannot simply disappear from our lives, without resorting to drugs or bizarre lifestyles. Thus, our attempt to think about the gap and to bridge or reduce it creates a space for critical reflection in such a way as to bring us *more than* just a personal peace of mind. This is why I think we educators need to pay attention to this gap for educational purposes.

But what exactly is this critical reflection on the experiential gap between “knowledge” and “wisdom” supposed to lead us to achieve from the educational perspective? One answer would be that we are expected to shift our concern from the relation between “what we know” and “how we are” into the relation between “*how we know* what we know” and “how we are.” What should be noted here is that the idea of (objective) knowledge of the world as our *immediate* relation to the world is replaced by the idea of *our understanding* of knowledge of the world as a *mediated* relation to the world. The latter is exactly the concern to which the philosophical inquiry about subjectivity demands us to pay attention in pursuit of how our understanding of knowledge relates to and constrains our understanding of our existence or whether our social and individual existences are determined by the ways that we collectively organize knowledge.

¹ An extreme view like “evolutionary epistemology” argues that all the questions can in principle be answered through empirical inquiry or be rejected as spurious (Critchley 2001, p. 5). For example, a philosopher like Daniel C. Dennett thinks that the question of the meaning of life can be answered causally or empirically through Darwinian evolutionary theory, reducing all philosophical questions to epistemological questions, and claiming that all such questions have to be answered with reference to evolutionary dispositions. Refer to his book *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life* (1996, New York: Touchstone). As the reader will discover, I do not accept this extreme view.

The significance of this philosophical inquiry of subjectivity, especially in terms of the educational purpose in schooling, can be fruitfully addressed if we view it in the light of the context of so-called “the post-secular age.” This is the term Jürgen Habermas first coined to describe the characteristics of contemporary political and cultural context. In his recent work *Between Naturalism and Religion* (2008), Habermas draws attention to the recent political revitalization of religion in the United States, where the dynamism of modernism has enjoyed the greatest success. He denies that it is simply a reactionary turn to religion as the source of tradition. In *The Secular Age* (2007), Charles Taylor also thematizes this cultural phenomenon that has occurred in the secularized modern world of the West, by paying attention to the fact that the *disenchanted* modern world of the scientific worldview has not entirely undermined religion, in contrast to what the Enlightenment political liberals had anticipated. Thus, both Habermas and Taylor attempt to reinterpret the historical process of modernization by differentiating between “secularization” and “modernization,” both of which were considered to refer to the same phenomenon. It is now acknowledged that the process of “modernization” is not necessarily accompanied by the process of “secularization.” This acknowledgement allows us to interpret the process of secularization not as a social and historical turning to “anti-religion” but rather as its turning to “the diversity of moral outlooks,” whether secular or not (Taylor 2007). If we take this interpretation seriously, the question of secularization is now seen as the question of how to manage this diversity. This implies that the privilege that the secular scientific worldview has entertained over other religious worldviews in the public domain of modern liberal society is now to be put into question. In other words, the dominant practice of a rigid split between the state and religion as the first principle of the secular liberal state rule is to be challenged in regard to the issue of whether secular humanism should be seen as the *only* official language to justify our political and public motivations and actions.

What does this challenge imply for our educational thinking and practice? In bringing out the question of secularism, Habermas and Taylor are keen to capture what lies behind a deep dissatisfaction that the process of modernization in the age of science has left us with – namely, “a sense of loss in the existential meaning of life,” in Taylor’s terms. In fact, this diagnosis is what leads them to anticipate the post-secular age. This term is used first by Habermas (2008, p. 111) to refer to a kind of social condition that forces us to acknowledge that religion must maintain its position in an increasingly secular environment and that society must anticipate that religious community will continue to exist.² Thus, signaling the advent of this post-secular age when unbelief is considered one option among others, rather than

²This means that a post-secular society is a society where religious communities are given *public* recognition for their fundamental contribution to the reproduction of desirable motives and attitude for the liberal state, giving us a normative insight that political interaction between religious and nonreligious citizens can take each other’s contribution to controversial public debates seriously for *cognitive* reasons. Taylor also refers to this stage of the epistemic condition of our beliefs, whether religious or not, with the term “the secular in the *third* sense,” distinguishing it from two other senses of “the secular” (Taylor 2007, pp. 2–3). I think “the third sense of the secular” in Taylor refers to the same condition as what “the post-secular” refers to in Habermas.

the only and exclusive option, both Taylor and Habermas stress philosophy's *epistemic* openness to religious experiences. This means that they acknowledge, even if in different contexts and for different reasons, that, inasmuch as we are secular humanists of an "exclusive" kind, we moderns have missed something significant that was addressed by religious thinking in the past. It also means that both believers and unbelievers who accept this acknowledgement need to recognize the epistemic condition of their belief or unbelief – i.e. the unavoidability of *subjectively* having faith in one's own worldview, whether secular or religious, while at the same time knowing *objectively* that there are other options that one cannot defeat with good reasoning. This demands that we put an end to the *naive* acknowledgement of the transcendent or the immanent, and turn to *mediated* belief or unbelief through the *reflexivity* of our own outlook. In other words, the post-secular age demands a new kind of non-exclusive sensibility in relation to one's own worldview.

Let me further spell out the nature of the epistemic condition of the post-secular age, in which both Habermas and Taylor are interested, to see its implications for education, especially education for the (trans)formation of the (post)modern individual. According to Habermas, the spread of the scientific worldview encounters an unexpected revitalization of religious communities and their politicization across the world, which can be interpreted as a fundamental critique of the post-metaphysical and nonreligious self-understanding of Western modernity. Criticizing the political culture that polarizes itself irreconcilably along the line of secular versus religious conflicts, Habermas reminds us of the way in which the secularization of the political power of the modern state was created in the first place to ensure that different communities of belief may coexist on the basis of equal rights and mutual tolerance. But what seems to be the main question for Habermas in response to this political polarization and conflict is how to interpret the *secularizing impacts* of the process of cultural and social rationalization *upon* modern individuals' cognitive attitudes, religious or otherwise (Habermas 2008, p. 119). For him, this is a critical matter because the ethos of liberal citizenship cannot be produced and steered merely through the vehicle of public institution, such as law and politics, but through a distinctive cognitive attitude or mentality shared by both secular and religious citizens (Habermas 2008, p. 3). This attitude or mentality "demands both sides should determine the limits of faith and knowledge in a reflexive manner" (Habermas 2008, p. 2).

What does Habermas mean by "*determining* the limits of faith and knowledge in a *reflexive* manner?" What is educationally insightful about this claim is that Habermas seems to consider the way we as moderns make sense of the world, whether religious or secular, to be a historical learning process. For example, he claims that the political virtue of treating each other civilly despite ideological differences in the modern constitutional state is an expression of distinctive cognitive attitudes and that it must *presuppose* that the cognitive attitudes that the state requires from both sides, religious and secular, are the result of historical learning processes. In other words, religious people in the modern state must find a way to reconcile with their faith the epistemological privileges of the socially institutionalized

sciences and the primacy of secular state and universalistic morality. According to Habermas (2008, p. 136), the Western culture has witnessed a transformation of *religious consciousness* since the times of the Reformation and the Enlightenment. Sociologists call this the “modernization” of religious consciousness which was developed as a response to the challenges of religious pluralism and modern science. This means that religious communities or individuals must face epistemic dissonances that do not arise for secular individuals, so as to develop an epistemic stance toward other religions and worldviews. This epistemic stance will reflect the process of their epistemic adjustment as a response to skepticism about their *own* religious view aroused by the sheer existence of secularism or other religions, and this would lead believers to achieve, to some degree, an objective perspective on their religion in the sense of how it would be perceived by unbelievers.

Likewise, for Habermas, non-religious secularist citizens can be expected to demonstrate openness toward the possible rational content of religious contributions with a willingness to engage in the cooperative endeavor of translating these contents from religious idioms into a generally intelligible language. In imposing this demand on non-religious secularists, Habermas calls into question the exclusive secularism of the scientific worldview that tends to insist that the archaic way of thinking of religious doctrines has been completely overtaken by the advances in knowledge of established research. For Habermas, exclusive secularism is still an open question for its universal acceptance that cannot be judged by either the scientific worldview or by constitutional norms. Describing his own position as “fallibilistic but nondefeatist post-metaphysical thought,” differentiated from both positions of exclusive secularists and religious believers by its reflection on its own limits and “its inherent tendency to overstep these limits” (Habermas 2008, p. 6), Habermas tries to keep a distance from science or the idea of revealed truth. But for him, this reflexive overcoming of secularistic consciousness also has an epistemological aspect to be developed, through learning *from religion*. In this sense, Habermas acknowledges that the liberal state depends in the long run upon the development of pre-political mentalities which the state itself cannot produce from its own resources, such as constitutional norms governing law and politics. It needs a public arena for a *learning process* which is mainly based on the reflection on the limits of one’s own worldview by both sides, secular and religious.

What should be noted here is that, in demanding that philosophy be prepared to learn from religion,³ Habermas remains agnostic about the learning process. Philosophy is not to make an apology of faith but rather to “circle the opaque core of religious experience” in reflecting on the intrinsic meaning of faith (Højbraaten 2007, p. 60). This is what Habermas calls the “post-metaphysical mode of thought.” Choosing Kierkegaard as the most important thinker in this post-metaphysical turn, Habermas suggests that the post-metaphysical philosophy can “prevent the offensive

³ Habermas mentions how the translation of the theological doctrine of creation in God’s image into the idea of the equal and unconditional dignity of all human beings constitutes one such conserving translation. He also gives us an example of Walter Benjamin as someone who made the content of biblical concepts available to the general public of unbelievers and members of other faith beyond the boundaries of a particular religious community (2008, p. 110).

self-assertion of reason from turning into narrow-minded self-empowerment” and allow the late-modern self to “learn not to pursue omnipotence, but to take responsibility for a finite life lived under conditions one cannot be in control of” (Høibraaten 2007, p. 61). Here, we can see that Habermas is open to religious thinking and experience as new sources for the reformulation of modern subjectivity.

There are a few points to be noted about Habermas’ position described so far. First, he seems to associate the persisting presence of religions in the modern liberal society with modern believers’ *motivational* need for making sense of the world, motivation that is drawn from their ethical life-worlds based on their religious worldview, while functioning as the pre-political source of their civic mentality in the liberal state. Second, this shows that Habermas admits the ambivalent nature of modernity in terms of secularization and even raises the question of whether this ambivalence will achieve stability on the basis of the secular resources of (communicative) reason alone. Third, however, Habermas refuses to go all the way to a critique of reason as such. This means that he still privileges “secular” reasons over “religious” reasons as the official language for the liberal state, although acknowledging that human reasons are also working in religious traditions. This leads us to wonder where or how modern unbelievers would find what is equivalent to modern believers’ religious worldviews as a source to meet their *motivational*, not intellectual, needs, especially when Habermas claims that “the cognitive approach does not go far enough” since “a solidarity among citizens develops only when the principle of justice becomes woven into the more finely spun web of cultural values” (2008, p. 106).

What sort of “cultural values” or cultural forms of life, then, can be the source of our ethical life-worlds for modern unbelievers? Could the idea of democracy as a way of life, for example, be an answer? As Habermas acknowledges (2008, p. 107), while the democratic state depends upon democratic solidarity, the latter is not something that the state can enforce. And an uncontrolled modernization of society as a whole, especially in the face of the politically uncontrollable dynamics of the global economy and global society, tends to corrode democratic bonds among secular citizens, making them into isolated, self-interested monads who use their individual freedom exclusively against one another like weapons. Habermas’ emphasis on a mutual learning process between secular and devout citizens, which involves reflecting on the limits of their own worldviews *reflexively* and meeting *certain cognitive conditions*, still sounds *unrealistic* to motivate narcissistic, apathetic, and nihilistic secular individuals on the one hand, and aggressive and militant fundamentalist religious believers on the other, to engage in the civil learning. I think that many ordinary individuals on both sides are *not rational enough* to take seriously the cognitive conditions of their own beliefs, secular or religious, when challenged by the worldview of the other side.

In his recent book *The Secular Age* (2007), Charles Taylor seems to anticipate this problem when he depicts the post-secular condition as *mutually fragilizing*, rather than as mutual fertilizing, the condition where belief or unbelief is one option among others. He says that “the salient feature of Western societies is not so much a decline of religious faith and practice...but rather a mutual fragilization of different religious positions, as well as of the outlooks both of belief and unbelief” (2007, p. 595). Taylor describes believers and unbelievers as suffering from “cross-pressures” from each

other's worldviews when the belief in God is considered an option among others (2007, p. 594). The cross-pressures are pressures between "the draw of narratives of closed immanence on one side, and the sense of their inadequacy on the other, strengthened by encounter with existing milieus of religious practice, or just by some intimations of the transcendent" (2007, p. 595). As Taylor rightly says, the salient phenomenon of a multiplicity of faiths would have little effect as long as it is neutralized by the sense that "being like others is not really an option for me." If the alternative is too strange and weird, then choosing it would be really inconceivable for me, so as not to affect my embedding in my faith. But the condition of our belief under the cross-pressure in the post-secular age is quite the opposite: under the cross-pressure through increased contact, interchange and even intermarriage, we tend to be sensitive to our differences and ask ourselves, "why my way?" or "why her way?." This leads us to become more and more like each other. Through this process of mutual fragilization, the culture we live in tends to become more homogeneous.

Against this cultural homogenization, and as a way of recovering cultural and religious pluralism and making it flourishing, Taylor attempts to describe "the conditions of our belief" in the post-secular age in terms of different kinds of *lived-experiences*, as opposed to different forms of *cognitive conditions* as in Habermas, involved in understanding one's life in one way or another (2007, pp. 3–5). Taylor's attention to *lived experiences* emphasizes the ways in which believers and non-believers understand their own lives, especially *from the inside*. How might this description help work against the cultural homogenization that Taylor is concerned about? For Taylor, the mutual learning between secular and religious citizens that Habermas emphasizes can become feasible only when two different cultures, secular and religious, are ensured the freedom to flourish without the danger of mutual fragilization. And, Taylor continues, this insurance can in turn be secured only when we as unbelievers are allowed to understand religion not in terms of believers' epistemological or cognitive conditions but their lived experiences. This is why Taylor proposes that we, even as unbelievers, should adopt the *non-exclusive* secular humanism, which is more open to religious beliefs and experiences, while abandoning "exclusive secular humanism" that privileges the scientific worldview in the name of Truth. In this proposal, Taylor's criticism of "exclusive secular humanism" goes much deeper than Habermas'. For Habermas, secular language is still regarded as privileged over other religious languages in the public domain. But, for Taylor, even secular language is to be only one of the public languages in competition with other religious languages. Let me reconstruct in detail one thread of the arguments Taylor makes in *the Secular Age* (2007), which is relevant to my main concern here, namely, the reformulation of modern subjectivity.

Taylor starts his argument with the question of why our sense of the world as God-forsaken or meaning-forsaken does not necessarily lead, either *logically* or *psychologically*, into the exclusive take on immanence, the belief that there is nothing beyond the scientifically decodable natural order, as evidenced in the presence of so many believers today (2007, p. 553). For Taylor, our common confusion between the phenomenon of "disenchantment" and the end of religion, predominant in the secularized mind-set, needs to be explained away in order for us to get a plausible answer

to this question. The phenomenon of “disenchantment” is the dissolution of the “enchanted” world, the world of spirits, demons, meaningful causal forces, and moral forces that our pre-modern predecessors naively acknowledged and inhabited. What is distinctive about this enchanted world is that meanings and values are considered to reside *in things*, not in the human mind. But in the modern worldview, they are regarded to be *in the human mind* in the sense that things only have the meanings they do insofar as they awaken a certain response from us. This means that creatures with feelings, desires, and aversions like us are beings endowed with minds in the broadest sense. But in the enchanted world, meanings and values are considered to be *in the world* or in various kinds of extra-human but intra-cosmic subjects like God or Nature. And these things, God or cosmic order charged with meanings, are considered to possess two interconnected powers. One is the power to impose a certain meaning on human minds about the world and the place of humans in the world. The other is the causal power that brings about physical outcomes proportionate to their meanings. Thus, in the enchanted world, people are supposed to orient their everyday lives to this order of the world for their preservation, which is the very way that endows their lives with the meanings of their lives. Therefore, according to Taylor (2007, p. 32), in the enchanted world, there is no line to be drawn between personal agency and impersonal force.

But the scientific worldview liberates us from this enchanted world by taking a route to the mechanization of the world-picture. The world is now a mechanically arranged impersonal order which is nothing to do with a humanly meaningful order, but an order which humans can unpack through their own empirical inquiry. This disenchantment from the old order imposes on us a materialistic worldview, which makes it possible for people to adopt an instrumental stance toward the world. Now the world is viewed as a vast field of mutually affecting parts, the principles of which humans attempt to discover, manipulate and control for their own purposes through disengaged scientific inquiry. Here, human purposes are *extrinsic* in the sense that we cannot understand things in terms of supposedly normative patterns at work in them. What moves us now is no longer a sense of being in tune with nature, but rather a sense of our own intrinsic worth as humans. Taylor calls this “a new ethic of rational control” (2007, p. 134), which contributes towards the creation of the new identity of the modern self as “the disengaged rational agent.” The disengaged rational agent no longer fears demons, spirits, and magical forces; he or she rather disciplines himself or herself in such a way as to be utterly unmoved by desire. This is the beginning of the modern self, which Taylor calls “the buffered self” (2007, p. 136).⁴

⁴“The buffered self” in Taylor’s terms depicts an image of the modern self as not open and vulnerable to the spirits and powers of the enchanted world. But it involves more than “disenchantment.” To be the buffered self, it is also necessary to have confidence in one’s own power of moral ordering with a new sense of her place in the cosmos, the power of taking a disengaged and disciplined stance toward the self and society. This stance, in Taylor’s view, leads to our drawing of boundaries between the self and the world as well as our withdrawal from certain modes of intimacies with the world, while allowing us a strong sense of self-possession or of a secure inner mental realm. See pp. 38, 262 and 300–307 of Taylor’s book (2007) for the detailed development of this concept.

It seems that enchantment is essential to some forms of religion. But, in Taylor's view, this is not the case with modern Reformed Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant (2007, p. 553). While being disenchanting from the world of spirits and demons as the causal power over us, modern believers under the influence of modern Reformed Christianity still believe in God, the power of the transcendent. The "disenchantment" of the scientific worldview has not brought about the decline of religion in the West. This shows, according to Taylor, that Christianity in the West changed its function in the modern world and played a role different from that which it used to play in the pre-modern enchanted world, i.e., the role of charging things with meanings and purposes. This means that we should not regard "religion" as synonymous with "enchantment" and "disenchantment" as "the loss of religion". This is why we currently witness people living in the scientific world of disenchantment without experiencing epistemological impediments to a belief in God.⁵

So what kind of a role does religion, i.e., Christianity, play for people today? Or why are people still drawn to religion while living in the disenchanting and instrumental world of science? Taylor's answer is: religion provides a fuller and richer meaning for the lives of modern individuals and makes them go beyond the goals of human flourishing by mediating their personal relation to God, or something transcendent (Taylor 2007, p. 20). I think this answer makes the impact of religion upon our everyday lives understandable, especially when something transcendent is not available from within us. Interpreting the die-hard persistence of religion today in terms of this new role or function it plays in the modern world, Taylor draws our attention to an existential desire deep inside us, to which secular humanism under the framework of scientific worldview often fails to respond.

However, religious beliefs are still perceived as problematic to most of us scientifically-minded moderns. Yet, interestingly enough, for Taylor, what makes religious beliefs look problematic is not simply our belief in science as we secular humanists tend to presume; there is something else involved here. In Taylor's view, the reason we moderns are so attracted to (anti-religious) secularism is not necessarily due to the belief that science represents *True* knowledge of the world. Even our attraction to materialism cannot be fully explained as coming from the validity of scientific facts; that is, there is no necessary connection between secularism and the scientific worldview. The attraction can rather be explained in terms of a certain package uniting materialism with a *moral* vision of modernity, especially a certain construal of agency based on a universal morality of human rights and equality between human beings. In other words, it has to do with the idea of modern individuals as autonomous in the sense of being potentially in control of history and their own identities (Taylor 2007, p. 573).

If we look at modernity as "a moral outlook" among others which we historically construct to understand ourselves, not as a wholesale refusal of the past nor as a

⁵ Here, Taylor claims that there could be many unexplored epistemological roads that can make belief in God and the scientific worldview compatible; this is a cognitive game that is not yet completely over as exclusive secular humanists tend to think (Taylor 2007, pp. 25–29). As discussed earlier, Habermas would also agree with this point of Taylor's.

moral outlook that is superior to all others in its privileged relation to Truth, it allows us to accept the possibility that there could be many ways of *living* the scientific world in terms of the way we experience our lives *from within*. This means that we can live in the scientific worldview while having a moral outlook that differs from the modern secular outlook by finding meanings and values in spirituality or religion. This possibility leads us into the social conditions of pluralist moral outlooks where, as Taylor recommends, “we all need to learn how to navigate between two standpoints: an ‘engaged’ standpoint in which we live as best we can the reality that our standpoint opens to us; a ‘disengaged’ standpoint in which we are able to see ourselves as occupying one standpoint among a range of possible ones, with which we have in various ways to coexist” (Taylor 2007, p. 12). This is exactly the conclusion that Taylor reaches through the detailed historical description of different kinds of “lived-experience” that both believers and unbelievers tend to encounter, while living in the same material world of scientific framework.

What should be noteworthy here is that Taylor’s interpretation of secularization in the modern world merely as *one* of many moral outlooks is not meant to diminish the achievement of modern thought and history. Unlike other anti-modernist theorists who tend to view the development of modernity as a mere secularization of the eschatological pattern set up by the Jewish and Christian religion,⁶ Taylor takes modernity as a really *new* invention in the history of human thought. Thus, for him, the moral vision of modernity in general, and a certain construal of agency within it in particular, are what we should sustain, while minimizing modernism’s distinctive malaises.⁷ By “modern malaises,” Taylor is referring to the nihilistic culture prevalent today that often forces us to feel empty, lost, fragmented and endlessly restless without a sense of the point of one’s life, sometimes despite the humanly flourishing life. This is the same culture that has shaped the very conditions of our belief as “the buffered self” on the basis of exclusive secular humanism in which it is so hard or virtually impossible to believe in God. In other words, Taylor seems to be committed to the critique of “the buffered self” in modernity without undermining the distinctively modern construal of agency underlying it as well as its accompanying moral outlook.⁸

We may need to ask now where the two thinkers, Taylor and Habermas, diverge in responding to the “post-secular” condition. As mentioned earlier, Taylor acknowledges that the modern moral outlook underlying the universal morality of human

⁶ Karl Lowith, the German intellectual historian, is a case in point. Lowith describes in his book *Meaning in History* (1949) the central modern phenomenon “Progress” as the products of secularization of Christian ideas. According to Robert Wallace in his introduction to the English version of Blumenberg’s *The Legitimacy of Modern Age* (1983, pp. xiii–xv), it diminishes the importance of modernity in human intellectual history.

⁷ Hans Blumenberg takes a similar stance to the modern process of secularization. Taylor’s emphasis on the modern construal of agency as part of the modern moral outlook looks similar to Blumenberg’s emphasis on “human self-assertion” as one of main features of modernity that legitimates the modern age (1983, p. xxii). See pp. 741–2 of the same book for detailed argument.

⁸ It means that Taylor takes a middle path between orthodox religion on one hand and hard-line materialistic atheism on the other hand, accepting that even the *moral* version of the ‘death of God’ is more plausible or unavoidable in the modern world.

rights, equality between human beings and so on, is a uniquely modern liberal achievement, with which I think Habermas would find agreement. The difference, then, lies in their views on how to regard religious languages and justifications in the *public* sphere. For Habermas, the secularization of the state power is the hard core of the whole secularization process as a liberal achievement. Thus, it should not be lost in disputes among world religions. When Habermas claims that secular unbelievers should be more open to religious beliefs and experiences in public discourse, he does not mean to blur the distinction between secular and religious reasons. For him, there is a difference *in kind* between the two kinds of reasons, and therefore the distinction between them is to be kept firm in the public sphere. His openness to religious beliefs and experiences in the public sphere is meant to narrow the gap between secular and religious reasons in such a way as to develop more *inclusive* justifications to be shared by *all sides*, whether believers or not; the secular reason does not require membership. In other words, for Habermas, believers' religious motivations and experiences may be appreciated even in the public sphere. What is not amenable to being shared in the public sphere is believers' religious reasons that are based on cultic experiences with references to inherently non-discursive authority. They should be translated into secular reasons in neutral discursive language. This is why Habermas states that he "never counts on progress in the complex dimension of *the good life*" (SSRC 2009, p. 5), differentiating the development of justice-questions from existential, ethical, and religious questions.

On the other hand, for Taylor, Habermas' liberal policy that privileges secular reasons as the public language is exactly what causes "mutual fragilization" and cultural homogenization between religious and secular cultures. Taylor holds that secularity (or religion) should *not* be considered a special case, either with regard to political discourse or with regard to reason and argumentation in general. In other words, it should be regarded "simply as one instance of the more general challenge of diversity, including diversity and comprehensive views of the good life" (SSRC 2009, p. 1). From Taylor's point of view, Habermas' claim to privilege secular over religious reasons sounds unfair because it produces the very incapacity among secular citizens to share or accept religious justifications that are based on revealed truth and exclusive membership in a particular religious community. For Habermas, there are differences *in kind* between religious and secular reasons. There might be difficulties in making Kantians and Heideggerians talk to each other or people of different nationalities talk to each other. Yet, for Habermas, with the varieties of problems that emerge from this sort of differences could there be *in principle* discursive resolutions to be found, whereas this is not the case with problems from religious differences. However, for Taylor, religious differences should be taken as the *same kind* as cultural, ethnic or philosophical differences. The differences are all considered to derive from different concepts of the good life underlying them. Therefore, it can be said that they are differences from which it is impossible to abstract deep commitments or comprehensive worldviews, whether religiously grounded or not. Taylor seems to presuppose that we cannot abstract enough to carry on the discourse and to settle things discursively from any of these kinds of deep constitutive commitments.

Taylor gives us an example (SSRC 2009, p. 3). According to him, we can make references to Kant or Bentham in public discourse to justify our actions, just as religious persons can make references to Genesis to do the same thing. But just as the latter references really touch upon certain people's spiritual lives and not others', the former can appeal only to those who are committed to a Kantian or Utilitarian view of the good life. Taylor asks us to see why some people become excited by certain things which do not excite us. This indicates that the key question is not why we have to exclude religious references for the purposes of fairness and universality, but why the references had to be treated specially. There seems to be no plausible ground for the special treatment of religious references. In other words, Taylor disagrees with the liberal assumption that religion is a special case "because they belong to some kind of different domain" (SSRC 2009, pp. 3–4). Likewise, for Taylor, the secular view is also *one* comprehensive view of the good life among others and therefore should also not be treated specially. It is true that there seems to be a kind of incapacity in general on the part of every party to find fully discursive resolutions or justifications if we try to understand each party from the perspective of their deep commitment to their own comprehensive view of the good life. For Taylor, the acknowledgement of this incapacity seems to be the very condition for any meaningful public discourse.

Given the argument outlined so far, the difference between Habermas and Taylor in their response to the post-secular condition has to do with their different views about the *epistemological* status of "secular" reasons in relation to human good. Habermas is interested in making progress in our *public justification* on the question of justice, which can be inclusive enough to be shared by everyone. In his attempt at this justification, Habermas privileges secular reasons over religious reasons. On the other hand, Taylor is concerned with the understanding and cultivation of *our subjective existential experience* in relation to the question of the good life and happiness. In his aspiration towards this understanding and cultivation, Taylor deprives secular reasons of their supposed epistemological privilege. For Habermas, the question of justice is distinct from the question of the good life or personal salvation, whereas, for Taylor, the two questions are inseparable. We can also say that Habermas' primary concern is with how the process of secularization can get us *collectively* to achieve a better way of learning how to live together, whereas Taylor's is with how the same process has affected the way in which we have *individually* experienced the existential meaning of our lives.

I agree with Taylor in saying that the question of justice should be inseparable from the question of the good life or even from the question of self-salvation, at least in the source of our motivation for both ideals. In his book *The Secular Age* (2007), Taylor successfully makes a case for this claim by describing how the historical process of secularization in modernity has affected our "lived experiences" in pursuit of our ideals. However, Taylor fails to show how religious believers' pursuit of the good life or self-salvation in their personal life can turn them into *public* citizens who can respond properly to the question of justice in relation to non-believers in the post-secular condition. Of course, he proposes that religious citizens should adopt a reflexive manner, i.e., avoiding embracing their religious beliefs

naively but navigating between two standpoints, engaged in and disengaged from their religious view. But this suggestion falls short of providing us with an adequate account of how exactly the “disengaged” perspective is supposed to make believers move toward others from different religious or non-religious communities over political conflicts, apart from passively allowing the differences between them to coexist. It seems that Taylor’s religious believers would suffer the lack of inner source to be shared by all that is required for more solid citizenship in the liberal state, since the source lies in something *transcendent* that belongs to a particular religious community or language. Thus, Taylor’s defense of cultural pluralism from the perspective of our “lived experiences” can leave us with an excuse for a minimum civil interaction of “neutral” language between secular and religious citizens in the public domain.

In this respect, Habermas’ emphasis on *secular* language as a common language between religious and non-religious citizens makes more sense for public discourse. For him, “ethical projections are projections for lives, individual and collective lives, within history, not going beyond the limits of what we can identify as integral events in states” (SSRC 2009, p. 2). Here, Habermas seems to hold that the inner source of our ethical motivations should be something *immanent*. But Habermas restricts secular language only to *discursive* language of *justificatory* reasons. In other words, his interest in regard to the political disagreements among citizens is directed to the question of how to reach agreement or convergence, rather than to deeper understanding and self-transformation based on it. Without being preceded by the latter, either our incapacity to share justification on the one hand, or our tendency to conformist cultural homogenization on the other hand, between religious and secular citizens, would persist. The deeper understanding and self-transformation are exactly what Taylor is concerned with to prevent our incapacity to share and our tendency to conformist cultural homogenization.

I set my task for this book as reformulating an alternative notion of subjectivity which allows us to make an educationally proper response to the post-secular condition. And I think that an educationally proper response is a response that takes a middle path between Habermas’ and Taylor’s positions. It is “middle” in the sense that it privileges the tradition of secular humanism as in Habermas, yet adopts something from Taylor’s concern with the significance of *religious experiences* sought after by modern individuals in the form of “lived-experiences of fullness.” This middle path will be the very response that would allow us to conceive a new secular-humanist way of coping with the taken-for-granted *liberal* tension within the modern individual, i.e., tension between one’s civil orientation in the public realm and his or her pursuit of the good life in the personal realm, notoriously celebrated by Richard Rorty as “the public-and-private split” (1989, p. xiii). I think this is a kind of tension that is inherent in modern subjectivity, analogous to the tension from the “felt gap” between knowledge and wisdom described earlier by Critchley.

As both Rorty and Critchley claim, it is a gap that cannot be closed by our aspirations towards theoretical progress or conceptual sophistication. I think it is rather a gap we should live with. But Taylor’s concern with “lived experiences,” our existential desire to make sense of our lives, and the idea of “self-transformation” unique to

religious experience, give us an insight about how to *reduce*, if not remove, the gap by way of *living through* it with critical reflection on it. This idea of reducing the felt gap within the modern individual through critical reflection on it will be central to my discussions on a new notion of subjectivity. The idea will be addressed, sometimes in the form of what I call “the existential question,” i.e., how our understanding of knowledge relates to and constrains our understanding of our existence, and at other times in the form of what I call “the moral question,” i.e., to what degree I am responsible for who and how I am.

On the other hand, the discussion on a new notion of subjectivity cannot be fully addressed unless another question of how it can be cultivated for educational purposes is addressed. In other words, the reformulation of a new notion of subjectivity requires us to explore a form of philosophical practice as an activity of self-(trans)formation. When Rorty (1989) claims that the post-epistemological practice of philosophy should be something closer to “literature” than to “science” in its nature, and characterizes the role of philosophy as newly describing how things hang together, he makes us attentive to the idea of philosophy as a form of writing. He opens up the possibility that philosophical writing in the form of logical argumentation may give way to philosophical writing in the form of literary description. The shift in the nature of philosophical practice from something of “science” to something of “literature” may be seen as going hand-in-hand with another shift in the nature of educational practice from “knowledge-transmission” to “self-(trans)formation.” In other words, a new form of philosophical practice is inseparable from a new form of educational practice.

As a new form of philosophical practice for self-(trans)formation, the idea of “the essay form,” which was invented by Michel de Montaigne French Renaissance humanistic philosopher in the sixteenth century, will be explored. “The essay,” as conceived by Montaigne to be a new form of writing for the modern individual, means “self-try-out” or “self-study.” Thus, more specifically, it will be explored whether this idea of the essay can be reclaimed as a form of philosophical practice as well as that of educational writing, in which our inner struggle to live with the gap between knowledge and wisdom, lacking in our scientific mind-set, is allowed to be experimentally tried out and critically investigated. I hope to reclaim the idea of the essay from its standardized form in academic writing, formal and discursive as this is, in order to save a pedagogical possibility in which the first-person voice of the inner struggle as “lived experience” may be articulated and expressed.

Therefore, my book consists of two parts which deal with two main questions, respectively, as follows:

1. How can we develop the idea of philosophical practice, conducive to the reduction of the experiential gap between knowledge and wisdom within the modern self in the post-secular condition?
2. How can we describe the essay form of writing as a pedagogical practice for this philosophical practice, in which self-(trans)formation can be practiced and expressed?

I will attempt to address these questions not by developing a series of formal arguments but by reading different yet thematically related philosophical texts. This means that I will deal with different texts in each chapter with a series of relatively independent questions to pursue. But this reading series will gradually be shaped into a more or less coherent set of answers to the questions posed. George Lukács (1885–1971), the Hungarian Marxist philosopher and literary critic in the early twentieth century,⁹ and Stanley Cavell, the contemporary Wittgensteinian American philosopher, are two main thinkers who inspired and led me to formulate sub-questions for the two divided parts. I shall discuss Hans Blumenberg, Søren Kierkegaard, and Georg Lukács in the first part of the book, and Stanley Cavell alone in the second part, albeit a different set of texts for each chapter. Now, let me briefly outline each chapter's discussion.

In the second chapter, I shall address one of Lukács' main questions, the question about a problematic relation between philosophy and life (in education), which Lukács thinks is best exemplified in Socrates' soul-searching life. As a way of addressing this question, I shall try to explain the nature of the experiential gap within the modern self between "knowledge" and "wisdom" or between "theory" and "happiness (flourishing)" by reconstructing the historical origin of the gap in the modern mind in the way the well-known German philosopher, Hans Blumenberg, describes it. This will be a good starting point for my discussion about whether the classical connection between philosophical knowledge and a happy (flourishing) human life can be recovered even in the culturally nihilistic and religiously pluralistic society like ours today.

In the third chapter, I shall pose another Lukácsian question about a problematic relation between "being educated" and "being ethical" in the modern world. As a way of addressing this question, I will examine Kierkegaard's notion of "subjectivity" and his concept of "indirect communication" as one exemplary response to a spiritual crisis in modernity. Here, a very unique kind of modernist response which is *religious yet epistemologically* sound will be explored in detail to see whether it can be a plausible educational response to the problem of the *experiential* gap within the modern self. The discussion will also show how Kierkegaard's (post)modern sense of subjectivity as "inwardness" can allow us to conceive of philosophy not as an intellectual practice for a systematic body of knowledge but as a spiritual practice for *a certain mode of life* in which we inhabit a space between reason and faith.

In the fourth chapter, my discussion on the themes introduced in the first two chapters will be further developed and culminated by touching upon Lukács' rich ideas on the relation between philosophical practice, life-form, and the essay-form of writing. I shall especially bring in his view of "the essay" by anticipating Montaigne's conception of the essay, and further articulate its main characteristics and the spirit underlying it. Here, the idea is proposed that the essay-form is a form of philosophical practice in which self-edification as "self-attempt" or "self-study" is practiced and expressed in such a way to *transform* one's own (or the readers') *sensibility*.

⁹Lukács' work that I am concerned with in this book comes from before the time when he became a full-blown Marxist.

In the fifth chapter, I shall introduce Stanley Cavell's ordinary language philosophy as *an example* of the essay-form of philosophical practice by examining its underlying methodology and aspiration to see if it can be developed into a humanistic approach to teacher education. In doing this, I will show that Cavell's ordinary language philosophy is a form of philosophical practice that "strikes us dumb" only to lead us to become aware of what we already know through our *lived experience* of it. I will also show that the practice of ordinary language philosophy is supposed to *challenge* our power to use language at all, by making us confront the gap between the words we say and what we mean by them, only to lead us to *see* the language-game in which we live, i.e., its limitation as well as its possibility. This limits-experience makes the philosophical practice a *personalized* form of practice, showing how Cavell's ordinary language philosophy can be employed to cultivate our ability to reflect on our relation to ourselves as well as to the world, as a way of transforming our (or others') sensibility.

In the sixth chapter, taking Cavell's personalized writing style as an exemplary form of essay writing, I shall unpack its underlying structure to draw out from it some important educational elements. These elements are: "voice" as a philosophical method to self-knowledge in a first-person manifestation, and "text" as an independent quasi-autonomous entity by which our voice is to be drawn out and to which it is to respond. In Cavell's writings, the presence of these two elements is widespread and the dialectical interaction between them is distinctively audible. Attributing these characteristics of Cavell's writing style to the essay-form, I shall try to compare and associate Cavell's writing style with Montaigne's to see if their writing styles as the essay-form can be formulated as a practically adoptable pedagogical form of writing in which young students can experiment with their subjectivity as an act of "self-attempt" or "self-study" in the original sense of "the essay."

In the seventh chapter, I shall examine whether Cavell's ordinary language philosopher portrayed as an essay is more likely to be equipped with a political sensibility that is needed in a post-secular society. I shall discuss first that liberal citizens of a post-secular society in which political, cultural, and religious pluralism is salient need to have a kind of political sensibility that can live up to the tension derived from "the private-and-public split" in Rorty's terms, especially against the cruel necessity of power. I shall then attempt to show how *critical rationality* would help Cavell's ordinary language philosopher as a *private* essay to live up to the tension by making his or her social and political subversions thinkable as a *political* citizen. I shall conclude by holding that *reflective sensibility* that tends to be cultivated in the practice of Cavell's ordinary language philosophy is the very sensibility that we need as citizens of a post-secular society, since it enables us to create a space between being private essay and being subversive political citizens.

In the concluding chapter, I shall finally flesh out the specific characteristics of the essay writing as a pedagogical practice and the kind of subjectivity that this essay writing tends to cultivate through its practice. Then readers will finally be in a position to judge whether my intellectual journey in this book is worth accompanying or not; this judgment is fully in the readers' hands.

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Part I

George Lukács: Practice of Philosophy for Existential Fulfillment

As part of a long intellectual journey into the discovery of conceptual tools for a new notion of subjectivity adequate for a post-secular age, the first half of the book will deal with the first question set up in the introduction: How can we develop the idea of philosophical practice, conducive to the reduction of an experiential gap between knowledge and wisdom within the modern self in a “post-secular” approach? Young Lukács, whose work I introduce in Chap. 4 on a fuller scale, plays a key role in leading the discussion in this section. In fact, the main idea for my whole project in this book originated in my encounter with Lukács’ book *Soul and Form* (1971), a collection of Lukács’ early essays on some literary authors of his day before he became a full-fledged Marxist. What unites this otherwise unrelated collection of essays is the idea of a “quest for life-forms”; we are *ceaselessly* forced to seek something *unknown about ourselves*, namely human destiny, knowing that the pursuit never reaches the destination. In other words, young Lukács attempts to explore whether the essay-form can be a literary form in which the existential/meta-physical quest for fundamental life-problems, such as who I am, how should I live, what is the meaning of life and so on, is explored and expressed by way of talking about others’ works of art. When young Lukács conceives the essay-form as a literary genre for our existential struggle, the struggle in the essay-form seems to be inevitably *personalized*, and thus any life-form explored and expressed in the essay can be seen as a form of *individuation*.

What is so fascinating about this idea of individuation in young Lukács is its underlying notion of selfhood, to which one’s *tragic* aspiration after a unifying modern (or “authentic”) self is core; it is *tragic* because one aspires after what she knows as a myth or an illusion, just as post-modern critics often point out. And, above all, throughout the whole project of young Lukács’, a new notion of philosophy is presupposed: philosophy that is different both from philosophy as a *theory*, with its principles ready-made for application to practice, and from philosophy as a *discipline*, with its own systematic and cognitive set of concepts and methods for conceptualizing the world. In other words, Lukács’ attempt to explore a new kind and form of essay can be understood as an attempt to explore a new mode of philosophy. Thus, in the first part of the book, I formulate a series of questions in the

Lukácian spirit, and examine Blumenberg's, Kierkegaard's and Lukács' writings in such a way as to respond to them in order to *make sense of* a new mode of doing philosophy which can be responsive to educational problems in a post-secular age, i.e., the experiential gap between knowledge and wisdom.

Chapter 2

A Reflection on the Relation Between Philosophy and Life; Through Hans Blumenberg's Work

Introduction: Knowledge and Existential Anxiety, What Is Their Connection?

Young Lukács throws to us a fascinatingly profound philosophical question as follows:

Time and again I have met people who played an instrument exceedingly well and even composed after a fashion, yet afterwards, in ordinary life, were perfect strangers to their music. Is that not odd?"..... how people behave "in ordinary life", how art and life confront each other, how each shapes and transforms the other and how a higher organism grows out of the two—or why it does not. Is style a matter of a person's whole life? If so, how and wherein does style a matter of a person's whole life?Does a great life's work make a great man of its author, and where, in art, does it become apparent if the artist is a great man, made all of a piece? (1971, p. 19)

What is his question all about? I think it is about our often-experienced odd and embarrassing relation between the (art)work we create and the ordinary life we live. What is the nature of this oddity or embarrassment? Are we supposed to live in accordance with the work we create? If so, what is the reason? If not, what went wrong with us? What is the connection between art and life that Lukács seems to presuppose? Above all, why is his question so appealing to us, especially when we are living in the condition from which his concern sounds far removed?¹

Susan A. Bordo sums up a picture of us as susceptible to contemporary post-modern intellectual climate as follows:

Surrounded by "ism" and barraged by openly competing frameworks of explanation, students exhibit an anxiety psychologically akin to the contemporary philosophical

¹What should be noted here is that young Lukács as an enthusiastic follower of Nietzsche's views that 'art' replaces 'philosophy' from olden days in its function for modern individuals, as if it already foreboded the contemporary post-modern turning of philosophy as closer to art than to science.

insecurity described so well by Richard Rorty: Can we ever know anything at all, they wonder, if all “knowledge” is a matter of human construction and social convention? (1987, p. 2)

The insights I gain from the above citation are, first of all, that it puts a finger on the fact that philosophical insecurity causes our psychological insecurity, and, secondly, that it notes the deep association of both kinds of sense of insecurity with a matter of knowledge. What troubles me so much in suffering Bordo’s sense of psychological insecurity is twofold: What is the nature of this anxiety and what kind of knowledge is it with which I am so concerned here?

On a superficial level, it can be said that, when it is acknowledged that “all knowledge is a matter of human construction and social convention,” the psychological anxiety is groundless and should be gone, because our obsession with the universal Truth which was supposed to cause the anxiety turned out to originate from the Enlightenment dogmatic belief in the Truth. In other words, since there is no True knowledge in the first place why worry about not knowing anything at all? But this quick answer does not seem to fully relieve my anxiety. For my anxiety does not appear to derive merely from epistemological contingency² but from existential contingency, acutely expressed in the seventeenth century French philosopher Pascal’s distressful self-confession:

When I consider the brief span of my time absorbed into an eternity which comes before and after. . . the small space I occupy and which I see swallowed up in the infinite immensity of spaces of which I know nothing of me, I take fright and am amazed to see myself here rather than there: there is no reason for me to be here rather than there, now rather than then. Who puts me here? By whose command and act were this time and place allotted to me? (1966, p. 19)

While this existential anxiety seems to me more fundamental and disturbing than the epistemological one, any attempt to dissolve it appears to be doomed to failure in the light of our modern mind-set since the anxiety looks basically unsettling. Yet, Han Blumenberg’s extraordinarily enriched intellectual story of the history of Western philosophy shown in his book *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age* (1983) exhibits how pre-modern thoughts confronted the anxiety.

According to Blumenberg, one way of looking at the history of Western philosophy is to interpret it in terms of how each of the philosophical traditions has been formulated as a response to the existential anxiety as the same fundamental problem that it inherits from the previous epoch.³ What underlies this approach is Blumenberg’s belief that since ancient times theory was supposed to make life happy (1983, p. 232). Thus, he deals with how each of the philosophical traditions attempted to relate theoretical curiosity to human happiness within its own worldview.

²By epistemological contingency, I refer to the fact that *who I am* is historically and culturally specific. In this sense, Rorty’s ethnocentrism and communitarianism are strongly appealing to me.

³One thing I need to note as to Blumenberg’s view of history is that he thinks every new historical age starts with a new set of answers to the same questions inherited from a previous age. In other words, he views history as a continuity of problems rather than of solutions, of questions rather than of answers.

What is so beneficial about this scheme of Blumenberg's is that it makes it possible for me to develop the insights from Bordo, addressed in the opening paragraph, insights as to the relation of three factors: psychological anxiety; philosophical inquiry; and a matter of knowledge (of the world).

In Blumenberg's view, the modern break with medieval tradition can be characterized as separating theoretical curiosity from existential fulfillment as an ideal of the Modern Age by dropping from the scene or repressing the existential anxiety. It means that modern science is designed to deal with the anxiety not by responding to it one way or the other but by deliberately disregarding it as a business outside human affairs. I think this fact partly explains why any existential issue sounds too mysterious, fussy and anachronistic to us, the so-called *disillusioned* Enlightenment descendants.

In this chapter, I will follow Blumenberg's journey through history, mainly focusing on Plato, Augustine, Bacon and Descartes in respect of each of their views of the relation between philosophical (theoretical) pursuit and existential fulfillment. My journey here, guided by Blumenberg's, is aimed at showing not only how the matter of existential anxiety was dismissed by modern science attempting to disenchant the world from the metaphysically enchanted world but also what we moderns have lost at the hand of modern science. And I will also briefly explore a possible way to deal with the anxiety in an appropriate way (a post-modern way?) by going back to Nominalistic wisdom, implicated in the concern for self-knowledge as *acknowledgment*.

A Way to the Loss of Existential Fulfillment: From Plato to Bacon

According to Blumenberg, ancient Greek philosophy emancipates itself from the mythical relation to the world with the discovery of the discrepancy between appearance and truth. And this discovery happens in the Greek thinkers' transfer of the motivation of their cognitive drive outward into the pressing character of the given itself. When the philosophers were amazed at and admired the world in observing the heavens, they were convinced that there exists the authentic truth behind these appearances which awakens their philosophical appetite for knowledge. Thus, it can be said that cognitive curiosity plays a justifying function in the Greek distinction between appearance and truth.

A more important characteristic of the ancient Greek world view is that the cognitive attitude is regarded as *natural*, so that the human cognitive appetite itself is conceived as constituting part of the world order as the cosmos of the authentic truth. The naturalness of human appetite for knowledge implies both that man's theoretical relation to reality is teleological as a piece of this order and that an elemental affinity between the substance of the objects and that of man's knowledge is taken for granted. In other words, the authentic world order of the cosmos is supposed to be transparently known to men's cognition. Thus, for the Greeks, when the

cosmos is shown by men their existential fulfillment is guaranteed, since what is planned to go together does come together.

I think this picture of the ancient Greek cosmology comes to be integrated into one great system in Plato's doctrine of Ideas. For Plato, Ideas are a cosmic order which subsumes not only human affairs but also the natural world. And reason is a human power to *contemplate* this order and to be ruled by this reason is to be ruled by a correct vision of the order. In this system of Plato's, man's existential fulfillment is obtained by means of theoretical pursuit of seeing the Forms of objects behind their appearances, and philosophers are those who seek and love the eternal cosmic order; here, we see a complete and paradigmatic system in which the three factors are *logically* connected with each other: *existential fulfillment* through *philosophical inquiry* in the pursuit of *the true knowledge* of the world.

What is unique about Plato's doctrine of Ideas is its linking true knowledge with moral virtue. For Plato, philosophers who possess the true knowledge of things are necessarily morally good, since Ideas, that is the Forms of "the Good," are universal order. It means the knowledge of the natural world is not only part of moral knowledge but also implicated in the human postulate of self-knowledge. Blumenberg summarizes this point as follows:

The unfolding of the Platonic doctrine of Ideas no longer allows one to continue to draw an essential distinction between what essentially concerns man and what in the guise of nature appears only to stimulate his curiosity: When the agent conforms to the normative Ideas of the moral virtues, in reality he only integrates himself into the universal obedience in which nature—as the sum total of images—stands to its originals (1983, p. 254).

The above passage shows how the anthropocentric teleology of nature, the view that nature is supposed to be in favor of humans, is systematically and doubtlessly formulated in Plato's doctrine; the single highest end of man is to achieve his well-being within the cosmos, and existential fulfillment comes only through the possession of true knowledge of the cosmos.

Blumenberg puts Hellenistic Skepticism in an important logical middle stage between Plato's and Augustine's views as preparing room for the medieval faith. According to Blumenberg, Sceptics doubt an unquestioned assumption of the Greeks of *natural access* to truth, when they witness the increase of essential distance between man and truth. And the doubt brings them to a conclusion that philosophy needs to give up the claim to human happiness since existential fulfillment through the possession of truth seems to be impossible.

According to Blumenberg, what should be noted here is that, even though Skepticism is a logical rebellion against the absolute truth of Platonic Ideas, the radicalization of Skepticism is not primarily motivated by logical and systematic consistency or by epistemological resignation but rather by the precedence of existential fulfillment over every other human interest. For it is hard to think that the Sceptics didn't notice that their skeptical claim, as a single truth, that truth is inaccessible, was self-contradictory. In other words, it can be said that the primary concern for existential pretension is presupposed in the Sceptics' resignation of true knowledge. And Augustine inherits the existential pretension from Skepticism and transposes it into a concern for salvation in his theological picture of the world.

One of the distinctive differences between the ancient Greek teleology and the medieval theology concerns the relation of man to nature. In the theological view, the Greek immediate and natural encounter between man and nature is inconceivable. While the Platonic cosmos is already in existence in the form of the ideal reality of an independent objective sphere, the theological nature is a work of God's creation, so that the path to nature is possible only through God. Blumenberg puts it this way:

...the basic Greek idea of the things *showing themselves* no longer governs but rather the idea of their *being shown*. The God Who, in the beginning, creates light, is the one Who shows. Through its new correlation with God's allowing things to be seen, ancient theory loses an implication: It loses the 'naturalness' of access to things and acquires a voluntaristic aspect on which their admissibility depends (1983, pp. 286–287).

Thus, it seems to be impossible for the self-confident and reposeful attitude of the Greek onlookers of the world to be maintained in the theological world. The seeing is not accomplished at a theoretical distance from the object but rather needs pathos, passive condition of surrender to the object or assimilation to its metaphysical quality which is determined by spiritual divinity. I think we can easily see how this attitude toward the world is associated with Augustine's emphasis on inwardness. For Augustine, what matters is man's authentic relation to his spiritual origin or to his transcendent contingency, the relation which can be achieved only when he is concerned with his own thought, in Augustine's term, *memoria*, in pursuit of his own spiritual essence.

Augustine contrasts theoretical curiosity as outwardness with the *memoria* as inwardness which implies one's existential concern for salvation, and puts the former in the list of human vices. For Augustine, since nature is not set free as the final authority on which human relation to reality can be based, human curiosity toward natural regularities always has a danger of leading man into impious self-pride for his achievement by forgetting his original sin and God's original Authorship of nature. Thus, Augustine sees that, while the basic character of the world should remain merely as the instrumentality for salvation, a fulfilled and fulfilling existential relation is only to be expected from the enjoyment directed at God. In this sense, for Augustine, any theoretical curiosity stands against human happiness.

According to Blumenberg, a concept of knowledge that neither related nor could be made to relate to the capacity of the individual and her existential fulfillment was, to both the ancient and Middle Ages, still unfamiliar and remote. The basic idea of teleological or theological serviceability of natural objects which can be singled out from the whole excluded any possibility of the emergence of such a knowledge which enables man to assert himself in his personal existence both against and by means of nature. In both Ages, human happiness or existential fulfillment as the highest goal for each individual was inconceivable without the harmonious relation with or the entire trust in nature within a larger order to which both man and nature belong. Only a metaphysical suspicion that nature could function without regard to man in its lawful regulated processes makes urgent and necessary a knowledge of nature that can examine each phenomenon merely for the *potential* relevance to man.

According to Blumenberg, the metaphysical suspicion arises in the late medieval age on the side of so-called Nominalism. The suspicion is motivated by one's realization of the uncertainty of self-salvation, affected by the theological assumption of divine grace or predestination. For Nominalists, human thought is not capable of penetrating God's sovereign dispositions, so that the real nature of the world seems to be hidden from us. In the face of the hidden God, the Nominalists resign theological curiosity and start to turn to constructing a *human* theory of objects in a system of his own concepts.

Blumenberg brings to our attention the difference between Augustine's and the Nominalists' resignation of theological curiosity. According to him, Augustine renounces the theological curiosity for a *moral and religious* reason with an apprehension that it could lead man to be impious, but he did not deny in principle the human capability of appreciating the divine order. On the other hand, the Nominalistic resignation of theological curiosity is enforced for an *epistemological* reason; that is to say, the Nominalists' resignation comes from their recognition of man's limited capability. What is crucial here, I think, is that the recognition of self-limitation leads them just to renounce *the human pretension of knowing spirit*, but not to renounce *the pre-given ideality* possessing transcendent authority.

However, I wonder why the Nominalistic resignation did not go to the extent of throwing away the medieval theological absolutism once it turned out to be out of human reach; Blumenberg answers by pointing out Nominalists' "theologically motivated lack of courage" (1983, p. 348). Although Nominalists regard human reason as useful for a theory of the world, they treat this human theory as far short of a divine standard of exactitude. This means that the Nominalists restrict the theory, constructed by man, to explaining the phenomena by means of hypotheses and give up its claim to the ideal of precise adequacy in its conception and standard of measurement.

According to Blumenberg, Nominalists were still under the spell of the ideal accuracy of the Aristotelian knowledge of essence or of theological ideality, so that they could not help comparing the inaccurate human theory with the divine standard. Nominalists seem to have been willing to accept the ambivalent and unstable human status when they wanted to keep an element of piety with emphatic confession of the provisional character of human and earthly existence, even after their recognition of self-limitation for the divine knowledge.

The Nominalistic realization that theological nature is no longer related to man's point of view takes an epochal turn when Bacon rejects the teleological view of nature and the Aristotelian concept of science, a decisive rejection which Nominalism did not make. For Bacon, there is no longer the hidden and incomprehensible sovereign God of nature who denies man insight and intervention in nature, but it is rather the historical indolence of man himself who fails to recognize the goal of his interaction with nature. Thus, Bacon goes so far as to hold that "Mankind's pretension to science is grounded in a divinely bestowed legal title" (1983, p. 384). Here, we can see that Bacon renounces the idea of a hidden God or that of a pre-given ideality which Nominalists were too hesitant to throw away, and starts to make a claim to human assertion; in fact, Bacon is using theology for the legitimatization of the human assertion.

On the other hand, Bacon's criticism of the human spirit's historical indolence and unwillingness to progress presupposes an altered concept of knowledge, which is no longer the restful bliss-conferring contemplation of things that present themselves, but rather is understood as work and a test for power. This changed concept of *knowledge* is based on a completely different concept of reality, different from that of reality as evidence in the present. Now, reality means experimental consistency in which the true nature of things shows itself only when we alter the natural reality of things and put it into an artificial condition. What underlies this notion of reality is the modern ambition for man's mastery of reality. Thus, a new concept of the *purity* of theory is formed, one which no longer has anything to do with the ancient ideal of contemplative purity of theoretical pursuit, but rather points to what we nowadays call *a basic research*. In this research, we exclude predefined purposes but certainly do assume that the theoretical results themselves give rise to possible goals and open up the path to applications.

The new concept of knowledge functions only as a power for the benefit and relief of the state and society of man. The long traditional link of knowledge to existential fulfillment finally comes to be broken. For Bacon, nature, liberated from the teleological and theological veil over it, is what needs to be dominated by means of knowledge for the purpose of human interest. In his view, this is the right way to recover the fallen Biblical paradise.

Descartes attempts to give the new concept of knowledge a teleological character, united by the Method as procedural reasoning, which presupposes the perfection of *factual* knowledge. According to Blumenberg, this ambition of Descartes deprives the term "theoretical curiosity" of any personal pathos but gives it the professional quality of the scholar, who is characterized more by the methodologically secured and attainable possession of knowledge than by the essential and existential need for knowledge.

This objectivization of theoretical curiosity as its disappearance into the logic of the methodical process of scientific cognition makes it possible for knowledge, that is, scientific knowledge, to transcend individuals in respect to both their life times and their vital interests and to make the individuals as the functionaries of the knowledge. Blumenberg adds:

While they (individuals) do provide for the happiness of a mankind that is to be brought to its definitive morality, they can never lay claim for themselves, or for the time in which they live, to fulfillment of life through knowledge. The equality of men is postulated as not the equality of their claim to justice and happiness but the reduction of both individual motives and individual prospects to their functional share in the overarching process. In this way inquiry takes on the characteristics of a professional office, the character of work, which is also always a form of justification as long as the suspicion of mere enjoyment does not fit into the picture of an obligation to serve a higher purpose (1983, p. 404).

What is meant by "a higher purpose" here? I think it means the happiness of the whole of mankind, which sounds so vague that we don't know how the noble modern universal morality can be connected with my own personal life and happiness. It seems that a supreme priority of scientific knowledge is legitimized in the name of the happiness of mankind or the progress of human history.

I think that what is said above in regard to the supremacy of scientific knowledge provides a historical account of a disconcerting fact we moderns often witness, that what has been achieved in the way of theoretical insight into reality does not mesh with what can be transmitted to the individual for her use in orienting herself in her world; modern science seems to be self-driven to keep itself going forward as an anonymous and autonomous monster without self-reflection.

Therefore, we cannot but ask ourselves seriously: what is happening between modern science and human happiness? Blumenberg seems to put forward the same question:

...But in view of the connection taken for granted as existing between knowledge and usefulness in life, a question remains unposed that at first sight appears to bring forward ancient concerns again—no longer, to be sure, the question of identity of theory and eudemonia, but rather the question of the dependence of man's happiness on knowledge, or even, taken a step further, the question whether man's happiness is not endangered by knowledge (1983, p. 403).

When Bacon dismissed the theological worldview and took on the concept of knowledge as a power for usefulness, he opened a modern path to forgetting our existential anxiety by dominating nature and human environments; since then, a way to seek a modern equivalent of existential fulfillment seems to have been blocked, except in the form of private religious faith or with a charge of nostalgic return to a metaphysical world from which the Enlightenment already awakened us. Since the modern scientific worldview lacks its equivalent of existential fulfillment, we moderns have had to repress our existential anxiety in exchange for all kinds of material flourishing that modern science has made possible.

Contemporary realization of epistemological contingency can be said to be the result of post-modern philosophical reflection on Descartes' too-ambitious project to establish a system of perfect human knowledge. On the other hand, I think that the realization of existential contingency requests us to undertake the same philosophical reflection on Bacon's determinate transformation of knowledge into a power for usefulness in the form of human assertion. Without reflection on Bacon's project, we moderns will still not only remain at a loss in dealing with our existential anxiety but also be in danger of turning the anxiety into a destructive mode in an attempt to forget and repress it.

Conclusion: Learning from Nominalists' Wisdom

Reading Blumenberg's account of Nominalism provided me with the chance for fruitful reflection. One question which I pondered at length in regard to Nominalism is directly related to my opening anxiety, caused by a skeptical question, "Can we ever know anything at all?" The question is, what stopped Nominalists directly moving *from* epistemological contingency, that is, the recognition of man's limited capacity for a hidden God, *to* the complete resignation of the hidden God, which we moderns do without hesitation?; in other words, why did they still retain the notion

of the hidden God which turned out to be empty to humans? As Blumenberg puts it, if “a hidden God is *pragmatically* as good as dead” (1983, p. 346), why did they not simply reject the hidden God? Blumenberg attributes the reason to the Nominalists’ “theologically motivated lack of courage” but I rather see in their indecisive attitude more wisdom and honesty than in the moderns’ courage to take the hidden God as a dead God, the wisdom and honesty coming from the consideration of non-pragmatic aspects of human life.

In the face of unattainable Truth, Nominalists take a position of *self-acknowledgment* of their finitude and surrender to the unstable status of the human species. In contrast, we moderns tend not to care about the Truth any more since we think the infinite Truth is none of our business, we who are finite in nature. However, is that really none of our business? When we are overwhelmed and frightened by existential contingency in witnessing the accidental loss of people around us due to unfathomable natural and artificial disasters, the matter of the infinite suddenly emerges as part of our business since the mortality and capriciousness of human affairs abruptly throw us into an insurmountable anxiety.

I think this anxiety can be explained as springing from our projection into immortality or the infinite (into a hidden God in the case of Nominalists) which is beyond our horizon which stands against it. Once we glance at the horizon in the experience of existential contingency, we cannot but acknowledge our smallness and weakness against the projected larger but unknowable order. Thus, we can say that the Nominalists’ *ambivalent* attitude was one way of dealing with their existential anxiety, caused by epistemological contingency, in the form of surrendering and acknowledgment; the ambivalent attitude at least kept them from forgetting how weak they were. Here, we can have a chance to consider if the self-knowledge as *the acknowledgment of self-ignorance* can be one modern (or post-modern) way of dealing with our existential anxiety.

Somebody might ask again, “What difference does the acknowledgment itself make when we are not destined to cross the horizon, anyway?” I think she is right in that the acknowledgment does not make any difference in narrowing the gap between this world and that world. But I am sure that the acknowledgment will make a big difference in making *this world* better, in the sense that the ancient philosophers implied in their belief that theory or knowledge is supposed to make life happy. I read somewhere that “Death is part of our lives.” I think we need to learn how to deal with death in our lives.

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Chapter 3

A Response to Modernity Between Reason and Faith: Kierkegaard's Ideas of the Ethical Self and Subjectivity

Introduction: "Being Educated" and "Being Ethical"

Young Lukács poses another series of seemingly arcane questions as follows:

What is the life-value of a gesture? Or to put it another way, what is the value of form in life, the life-creating, life-enhancing value of form? A gesture is nothing more than a movement which clearly expresses something unambiguous. Form is the only way of expressing the absolute in life; a gesture is the only thing which is perfect within itself, the only reality which is more than mere possibility. The gesture alone expresses life; but is it possible to express life? (1971, p. 28)

What does he mean by "gesture" and what does he attempt to address with this concept? Lukács here contrasts "gesture" with "form." "Gesture" is the only *reality* to us as sentient beings which is "unambiguous" and "perfect within itself," representing the life of temporality and transience. And "form" is "mere possibility," but "the only way of expressing the absolute in life," representing the life of eternal happiness. Thus, the question for Lukács may be, how to create and express a life-form *in* gesture. Here, good education can be formulated as learning how to create a life-form through gesture, i.e., how to *live* a form-creating life.¹

We have a commonsense belief that the more educated one is, the ethically better one becomes, whatever "ethically better" means specifically. This seems to presuppose that there is some conceptual or necessary connection between "being educated" and "being a good person." Thus, when people witness that the successful beneficiary of a long and high quality formal education turns out to lack ethical sense, they conclude that there is something wrong with schooling since they are schooled (objectively educated), but they are not genuinely educated (there is no change in their ethical attitude). What is wrong with this sort of schooling? Why is being intellectual, being creative or even being aesthetic, not necessarily transferable

¹The concept of "life" here is philosophically ambiguous. Its specific meaning and philosophical connotations for Lukács will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

to being good? I think Kierkegaard's critique of the intellectual and social climate of his times might provide us with one compelling perspective to diagnose the aforementioned problem with schooling because he seems to make a good point by putting the ethical question in a radically different form.

According to Kierkegaard, the problem with his contemporary society seen from an ethical point of view does not lie in the lack of other-regarding concern or world-historical concern but in an ill-conceived ethical question. For him, the fundamental ethical question which is essential to us is the Socratic question, "How should we live?" In Kierkegaard's view, objective knowledge, which includes both historical and speculative knowledge, is not only irrelevant to the ethical, but rather has become a main obstacle preventing us from facing the genuine ethical question.² Therefore, Kierkegaard claims that in order to be ethical we need to turn our back on the worship of objectivity and face the Socratic question.

What is unique about Kierkegaard's account of the nature of the Socratic question seems to me to be twofold. One is that we can only confront the Socratic question by decision. This means that for Kierkegaard the ethical is not a matter of understanding, which can be described as that of being quantitatively close to the ethical, but a matter of decision, namely, that of qualitatively leaping to it at a moment. The other, which seems much more original, is that the Socratic question is irreducibly referred to each single individual. That is to say, we are not able to collectively take up the Socratic question "How should we live?" nor reach a collective answer to that. For Kierkegaard, to be ethical requires each of us to face the question in our own way alone and to make our own leap of faith. Thus, this irreducibility of being ethical boils down to Kierkegaard's most central sentence in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (1992) that "to be ethical is to become subjective"; it means that we can be ethical only *subjectively* not objectively.

The originality of Kierkegaard's idea of irreducible subjectivity as ethical substance comes from its showing *the difficulty* in the task of being ethical, by making our concern turn into ourselves not outward from ourselves. I think this originality of Kierkegaard's can provide a radical perspective to our current educational problems. Therefore, we can say that Kierkegaard's diagnosis tells us two things about our educational practice. One is that we are mistakenly dealing with the ethical by misunderstanding the nature of it when we ask "What is wrong with schooling?"; therefore, what we should do now is to do justice to the ethical by returning to the nature of it, namely, by coming to know the difficulties in being ethical. The other point goes further and then notes that the greatest difficulty in being ethical is derived from the difficulty in becoming subjective.

Given the long introductory explanation of Kierkegaard's ethics, the urgent task of this chapter seems to be to elucidate Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity as the nature of the ethical. I will start with Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel, and then

²Kierkegaard was generally against the intellectual and rationalistic climate which was dominant in his times. Yet, what Kierkegaard had in mind specifically in his attacking the world historical objectivity was Hegelian philosophy.

explore his notions of subjectivity and subjective difficulty in regard to being ethical, by reading mainly his text *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments* (1992). And then, finally, I will briefly discuss Kierkegaard's idea of indirect communication.

Relation Between Subjectivity and Being Ethical

The charge Kierkegaard makes against Hegel's philosophy is that it lacks ethics. For Kierkegaard, the fundamental question of ethics is the basic Socratic question, "How should we live?," and Hegel's philosophy does not directly address this question. The nature of the primitive question of ethics, "What should I do?" is, according to Kierkegaard, that it is purely a first person subjective task, so that objective or collective answer to that is fundamentally impossible. Since the Socratic ethical question belongs to a single individual subject, the notion of subject or subjectivity seems to be crucial to the account of the ethical for Kierkegaard.

However, it is said that Hegel's philosophy, especially his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977), also intended to give an account of the concept of subject as substance. But compared to Kierkegaard's, Hegel's concept of subject seems to be for a qualitatively different kind of project. Hegel's account of subject as consciousness is aimed at pointing out objective conditions which are necessary to make sense of our subjectivity as in a transcendental argument.³ What Hegel's account of subjectivity shows is all the presuppositions which are embedded in the notion of subjectivity, by dialectically spelling out that, although our consciousness tries to assert its subjectivity or individuality in immediate terms, it always finds its conception of itself mediated by something else such as external world, other self-consciousness, and ethical institutions of custom or ethical order. In other words, for Hegel, individual or subject seems to be conceptualized ultimately in social terms, since broader and collective social or political conditions need to be in place for us to have a concept of ourselves as subjects.

In Kierkegaard's view, Hegel keeps turning from subjectivity or individuality into objectivity or collectivity, and then never comes back to the ethical subjective question of what we should do. Thus, Kierkegaard asserts that Hegel evades our basic ethical question of how we should live by deliberately replacing it with a qualitatively different sort of question, the one about the world historical. Therefore, Hegel seems to Kierkegaard to mistakenly reduce the role of the individual in moral choice to a reflection of the ethical spirit of her time.

There are two points to be made about Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel, which seems to intimate some characteristics of Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity. One

³I am using here two terms "subject" and "subjectivity" interchangeably. I think that, although there is a difference in lexical meaning between these two terms, it is acceptable to use them interchangeably in the context of this chapter where both Kierkegaard and Hegel look at subjectivity as substance of subject, namely, as what constitutes subject.

is that, while Hegel's view of subjectivity seems to assume that whatever a subject knows is eventually going to be knowable objectively, this assumption is exactly what Kierkegaard objects to. For Kierkegaard, there seems to be an asymmetry of subjective knowledge and objective knowledge, so that the subjective knowledge is irreducible to objective knowledge. The irreducibility of subjective knowledge to objective knowledge is another way of putting the irreducibility of a subject's ethical task to collective task. That is to say, in Kierkegaard's view, there is some inwardness of a subject which is never graspable objectively, and that inwardness is the very ethical dimension of the subject.

The other point to be made is that Kierkegaard notes that Hegel *deliberately* avoids the Socratic question because this question is fundamentally *unsettling*. Here, some deeper questions can arise: "What kind of question is the Socratic question?" "In what sense is it unsettling?" and "Why is this question so important to Kierkegaard in the first place?" I find these questions directly related to Kierkegaard's view of the human condition as existing. Kierkegaard considers the Socratic question essential to creatures like us. What kind of creatures are we? He responds by saying, "We are existing." For Kierkegaard, the Socratic ethical question is deeply rooted in the human condition as existing, and accordingly it is in principle as unsettling as the nature of our existence is.⁴

Thus, what is critically wrong with Hegel's speculative philosophy lies in its forgetting that we are existing, so as to advance something world historical as the ethical task for individuals, skipping the genuine ethical task. Even though Hegel builds up a wonderful and magnificent system which makes everything run together into one, it looks absurd to Kierkegaard since that system makes sense only by forgetting the fact that we are existing, which we are not to avoid.

Kierkegaard holds that the ethical question of how I should live – the existential question – cannot be replaced by Hegel's qualitatively different kind of question – world historical or political question – as long as we are existing. And this ethical question irreducibly belongs to *a single existing subject*. The question of how I should live or what is good for me, conceived in an existential sense, not in a political sense, is basically independent of how you should live or what is good for you, just as the significance of my own death is completely different from that of your death. In Kierkegaard's view, the only proper way to respond to the ethical question of how I should live as existing subject is to *become subjective*; that is to say, for him, to be ethical is to become subjective.

So, precisely what does Kierkegaard mean by "subjectivity"? What is the objectively irreducible aspect of subjectivity? Kierkegaard says that "the self is a relation which relates itself to its own self" (1968, p. 146). I think there are many ways to

⁴I think I need to say something here about what Kierkegaard means by existing, just for the sake of improving understanding of the current argument, although his sense of existence might be better understood in the later argument on the notion of subjectivity in this chapter. For Kierkegaard, that we are existing is equivalent to that we are mortal. So the human condition as existing points out the fact that we are not destined to approximate to the absolute or the infinite.

understand this sentence. One of them is to note that the significance of subjective knowledge does not lie in the objective meaning of it but in *the subject's having it*, namely, the subject's relation to the content of the knowledge. A typical example of subjectivity can be shown in the case of erotic love. If I confessed my feeling to my lover for the first time by saying "I love you," the significance of this sentence would be completely different from the case when I informed others of this fact. For although the two cases describe the same objective fact, what is lacking in the latter case is the significance of *my* having the feeling, that is, my enthusiastic passion for and commitment to the lover. Thus, Kierkegaard states, "objectively the emphasis is on *what* is said; subjectively the emphasis is on *how* it is said" (1992, p. 202).⁵

What should be noted here is that this sense of subjectivity is also a kind of reflection or thinking. In fact, Kierkegaard calls the thinking involved in subjectivity double-reflection. He says:

The reflection of inwardness is the subjective thinker's double reflection. In thinking, he thinks the universal, but, as existing in this thinking, as acquiring this in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated (1992, p. 73).

The above passage describes that one's thinking starts with the universal or objective knowledge, but then the existing subjective thinker turns her concern inward in relation to the universe; that is, she strives to establish a new relation with herself in regard to the universal knowledge.

What makes her concern turn inward, instead of identifying herself with the universal knowledge? Kierkegaard might answer with *the recognition of human condition as existing*. But how can our recognition of human condition as existing possibly lead our concerns to turn to ourselves? In order to seek another plausible answer from Kierkegaard, it might be helpful to draw out his view of the relation between thinking and being in an existing subject.

According to Kierkegaard, existing subjective thinkers are well aware that they are not destined ever to arrive at the absolute knowledge or the infinite. But, at the same time, they are still capable of conceiving of the absolute. Hence, there is an insurmountable gap between thinking and being in the existing subjective thinkers. For Kierkegaard, existing human beings are never able to unite or reconcile their thinking and their being into an integrated whole within themselves, whereas a speculative thinker like Hegel attempts to unite what existence separates, misconceiving truth as agreement of thinking and being. Kierkegaard's existing subject is always well aware that she is existing while thinking, that is, that her being is apart from her thinking. In other words, for Kierkegaard, the existing subject is always shuttling between thinking and being; I think that this is another description of double-reflection of inwardness.

However, this portrait of existing subject still gives us no clue to answering the question, "What exactly makes our concern turn inward?" Rather, it leaves us with

⁵Kierkegaard adds to this the following: "This (how) is not to be understood as a manner, modulation of voice, oral delivery, etc., but it is to be understood as the relation of the existing person, in his very existence, to what is said" (1992, p. 202).

another way of putting the same question, that is, “What motivates the striving between thinking and being?” The previous response “the recognition of human condition as existing” still seems short of a satisfactory answer because the negativity of human existing – never being able to achieve the absolute – is not enough to account for the motivation of the striving. For the recognition of the negativity could bring to us a fatal despair, so that we can take another direction of road like nihilism, instead of inwardness. In other words, the negativity of our existence could be a ground for nihilism just by our giving up conceiving of the absolute; since there is no accessible absolute, nor immanent necessity which is destined for human beings, we can decide to live for whatever finite objective we choose as the aim of our lives. Here is the point where Christianity plays a crucial role in Kierkegaard’s notion of subjectivity.⁶

According to Kierkegaard, what makes us keep turning our concerns to ourselves is, despite the negativity of our existence, our “desperate” desire for “eternal happiness” (1992, p. 130). Eternal happiness here can designate the infinite, the highest good, perfection or whatever image of God which appeals to each individual. And our having a desire for eternal happiness itself implies that God is within us looking at us. The absolute’s persistent staring at us compels us to keep returning to ourselves.

Kierkegaard suggests a graphic representation of this subjective inwardness as follows:

The little private theater where God certainly is the spectator, But where on occasion the individual also is himself a spectator, although essentially he is supposed to be an actor (1992, p. 157).

From the passage above, we can say that there are three figures in the theater of inwardness of an existing thinker: absolute self as God, thinking self as a spectator, doing self as an actor. And we can also imagine from the preceding account of existing subject that within this theater is always incessant tension and striving between thinking self and doing self coming from a desperate desire for the absolute self.

The way thinking self and doing self strive for the absolute self, which determines the I–God relation, is attributed to the individual’s inwardness. That is, my inwardness is how I (thinking self) relate myself (doing-self) to God (absolute self). This is exactly the structure of inwardness of an existing subjective individual.

Kierkegaard says that “there is something distinctive in being a subjective individual” (1992, p. 133). What does he mean by “something distinctive?” I think what he implies with this phrase is that to be subjective is not how we are as we are, but how we *become* with something distinctive in it. I also further think that, with the phrase “something distinctive,” Kierkegaard tries to allude that there is something

⁶Kierkegaard’s frequently suggested intention to go beyond the Socratic recognition of self-ignorance and then to make the transition to faith in God seems to come from this worry about the possibility of nihilism.

difficult in becoming subjective. Indeed, this difficulty might be already anticipated in the account of negativity as the nature of human existence.

If we have already realized that we, by existing, are destined to fail to achieve eternal happiness, why do we struggle to achieve it so desperately by becoming subjective? Whether we try or not, eternal happiness is beyond our destiny. If so, what is the struggle for? The tremendous difficulty in being ethical or becoming subjective is rooted precisely here, in Kierkegaard's view; striving for the absolute looks absurd, since it is not something achievable in the first place. In the face of this fated difficulty or despair, Kierkegaard holds that to be ethical or to be subjective takes, instead of objective understanding by approximating quantitative dialectic, subjective decision against objective understanding, namely, a leap of faith. Since this decision is against understanding, it looks objectively absurd; but subjectively, it is the very thing that makes the subjective individual's life meaningful.

I think there is one thing worth noting in regard to Kierkegaard's idea that the ethical is not a matter of understanding but that of decision. If we accept his idea, it seems to bring about the removal of any distinction between a simple person and a wise person in becoming ethical to the extent that both of them fully commit themselves to what they choose. In fact, Kierkegaard seems to agree with this point when he says that "the wise person ought to understand the same thing that the simple person understands" (1992, p. 159). For him, there is no absolute difference between what the wise person knows and what the simple one knows, as far as the ethical is concerned.

However, Kierkegaard points out that there is a relative difference between them. He says:

The more the wise person thinks about the simple the more difficult it becomes for him—the difference between the wise person and the simplest person is this little evanescent difference *that the simple person knows the essential* and the wise person little by little *comes to know* that he knows it or *comes to know* that he does not know it, but what they know is the same (1992, p. 160).

What the above passage indicates is that, even though what the wise know and what the simple know are the same objectively, their subjective attitude to what they know is different. According to Kierkegaard, while the simple have no idea about the nature of what they know, that is, about the difficulty of subjectivity, the wise exactly understand it since they come to know the nature of the paradox in their becoming subjective; that is, the existing subject's desperate pursuit of eternal happiness while existing.

Thus, for the wise, the question of being ethical becomes infinitely difficult when it is made simple, not when the question is about a new demonstration, about stringing on a thread the opinions of Tom, Dick and Harry, or about the best way to string the opinions on a thread; what makes it the most difficult for the wise to become ethical is the fact that to be ethical is simple: just a leap of faith.

Given Kierkegaard's notion of subjectivity, it seems to be necessary that the subjectivity can be communicated only indirectly. Objective thinking concerning the world can be understood directly since that kind of thinking is completely indifferent to subjectivity. Even though we sometimes have trouble in communicating objective

thinking the trouble can in principle be removed by asking each other to be clearer, by exploring further research and so on. But subjective thinking cannot be understood directly because it concerns inwardness.

For Kierkegaard, the point in saying that subjective thinking is communicated only indirectly is not that subjective thinking is impossible to communicate, but that there is always a danger of losing the meaningfulness of the subjective thinking whenever we try to communicate it. In other words, Kierkegaard's idea of indirect communication of subjectivity does not mean to deny the possibility of communication of it, but to call forth our sensitivity to the double-reflections in communicators' inwardness.

What is it exactly in subjective thinking which is likely to lose its point in communication? Why does it become pointless when it is communicated directly? According to Kierkegaard, there is always something left out or unsaid in communication; which is the speaker's own relation to what is said. This is the speaker's double-reflection where she relates herself to herself, namely, her-God relation. If the speaker's double-reflection is communicated directly, it means that the listener relates the speaker's double-reflection directly to herself without her own double-reflection; that is to say, the listener reduces the speaker's subjectivity to objective knowledge. This is exactly what Kierkegaard keeps warning us not to do. Without the listener's own double-reflection on the speaker's subjectivity, in other words, unless the listener tries to appropriate the speaker's subjectivity for her own deeper inwardness, the communication fails to be meaningful for the two existing subjects.

Thus, those who are concerned with preserving their own subjectivity should be engaged in indirect communication, by attending to others' double-reflections and then by appropriating them in their own double-reflection. For Kierkegaard, the indirect communication is a unique way for double-reflective thinkers to encounter each other.

What Kierkegaard's idea of indirect communication implies in respect to an educational context is that there is no teacher but that there are only learners in the ethical dimension, because nobody can directly help others to be ethical. Only the first person can help herself by the process of her own appropriation of others' wisdom. If there is my own appropriation in reading Kierkegaard's indirect communication, it is that his emphasis is not on the picture of an isolated self who is shut off from any relation with others, but on the picture of an enthusiastic self who commits herself to the work of her own appropriation with a desire for deeper inwardness.

Conclusion: Educational Implications of Kierkegaard's Indirect Communication

One of ironies about Kierkegaard's diagnosis of the current educational problem with regard to the ethical might be that it does not give us a solution to it, but rather makes us realize how difficult it is to be ethical and then urges us to make it more

difficult. I do not know how his ethics can make a difference in our educational practice. In fact, to calculate some effect of his ethics on practice is itself contradictory to his ethics. Even so, if there is a noteworthy contribution Kierkegaard's doctrine makes to ethics, it is that it reminds us of a critical importance of each individual's concentration on her own *intention*, not on her effect, in regard to being ethical. In other words, we can say that Kierkegaard indirectly shows us that only when we infinitely concentrate on ourselves in order to be ethical, might there be a chance to have an effect on others, but only in an indirect way.

This teaching tells us something about Lukács' concern with the relation between "gesture" and "form" or the idea of "form-creating life through gesture," introduced at the beginning of this chapter. One's inwardness in Kierkegaard's sense of a form-creating value of life, and it can be expressed only through one's gesture since it cannot be immediately seen or directly communicable. In other words, only through gesture can one's inwardness, namely, one's inner struggle with oneself in relation to something absolute, be disclosed and expressed. But, as Lukács questions himself at the end of the citation by asking "Is it possible to express life?," there is no guarantee that this struggle of inwardness or the expression through gesture would finally reach its destination, i.e., eternal happiness of life. In fact, the distinctiveness of being ethical lies in one's decision to believe in something absurd against her understanding. Thus, we can describe an ethical self as a kind of being who is willing to commit her whole life upon a gesture, just like Kierkegaard did with his own life, regardless of the fact that it is not possible to express life-form in gesture or to live up to the absolute value of life.

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Chapter 4

Practicing Philosophy, the Practice of Education: Exploring the Essay-Form Through Lukács' *Soul and Form**

Introduction: In Pursuit of a Pedagogical Form of Writing

When Wilfred Carr emphasizes a view of education as “a practice,” not as “a system,” (Carr 2005, p. 45), he wishes to recover integrity of education long embedded in educational communities through the accumulated professional wisdom of teachers. But what stands in the way of this is an externally imposed performance-orientated assessment system that dominates the whole of culture and practice of schooling today. It is not only the school curriculum but also teaching strategies that are governed by students' academic performance; and performance, understood this way, is measured in accordance with supposedly objective procedures and evidence-based criteria that are often external to the standards of excellence or mastery that inhere in the subject-matter at hand and indifferent to the depth of pupils' learning experience. The assessment measure is designed to *qualify*, not to educate, pupils in response to the pressing political and economic demands from society at large. Admitting that assessment of any form in educational practice is unavoidable, we may wonder what form of assessment that any serious attempt to recover education “as a practice” requires us to consider.

In contradistinction to “evaluation” and “ranking,” which are commonly employed assessment methods in education and yet which do not usually serve educational but rather professional or economic purposes, Robert Paul Wolff points out that *criticism* is the best way of assessing the learning of students and that this lies at the very heart of education (Wolff 2007, p. 461). With criticism, teachers give their students the analysis of their product or performance “for the purpose of identifying and correcting its faults or reinforcing its excellences” (2007, p. 459); here, in Wolff's words, to learn is “to submit oneself to the discipline of a standard” (2007, p. 461). And criticism as a form of assessment seems to presuppose a certain

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form of writing that students are supposed to produce – namely, what we call “essay writing.” It is this that has become the most standardized form of academic writing in the secondary and tertiary education today. Essay writing as a pedagogical tool is used to judge pupils’ mastery and comprehension of the material, and it is the means through which they are asked to explain, comment on, or pass judgment on the object of their study. The essay, which is usually expected to deal with an issue and to develop an *argument*, tends to be more formal than literary, with the emphasis on the factual and the logical, and with the use of the first person singular discouraged. As a form of writing, the student essay might be thought of as practice for the writing of academic articles, the name given to essays when they are developed and published in academic journals.

I have always had the suspicion, however, that this form of essay writing may not provide students with enough room to converse with themselves in such a way for their own being to be reflected in their work – that is, that it fails to allow sufficient room for a pedagogy committed to the development of the self. Michael Peters (2008) traces the origin of essay writing back to the sixteenth century French philosopher Michel de Montaigne’s *Essais*. And he reviews the way that the original form, with its less formal and more personal approach, reflecting the meaning “trying” or “attempting” evident in the French word, has given way to a more formal and discursive form under the influence of evidence-based scientific writing. Referring to Jacques Derrida’s attention to the questions of style, genre and form in philosophical writing, Peters remarks that “there is a certain materiality of writing and of its academic forms that for philosophy and history pose a peculiar relation to time – to its claims to universality and its ability to transcend the local and the particular” (Peters 2008, p. 820). The regret implicit in Peters’ comments is exactly the one that I have had: the written word in the West today “loses its spiritual connection to the self[,] and the written word, untethered from the speaking subject, is cast adrift from personality and intentionality” (2008, p. 821). And I wonder if we can find a way of recovering the original meaning of *essai* in Montaigne – namely, of testing oneself by, as Montaigne puts it, making “myself the substance of my book” in such a way that essay writing is conceived as a philosophical practice of self-study as well as self-formation (Montaigne 1958, p. 23; see Hartle 2003).

Perhaps, to make clearer the complementary relation between self-formation and critical assessment sketched in the preceding paragraphs, it may help to phrase this in Wittgensteinian terms. The language game of essay writing is conditioned by certain patterns of behavior and response, without which its characteristic form of expressiveness is frustrated. Crucial to the responsiveness with which essay writing reciprocates is a kind of open criticism (quite the reverse of assessment based on checklists). And such a criticism is attuned to the way that the essayist is, as it were, exposed at every point in the decisions that are to be made with every choice of word. If this is right, there are surely important lessons for teachers here. They need to understand the complementary relation between certain kinds of assessment and certain forms of expression on the part of students. This is not just about “writing styles,” self-consciously taught, but about the possibilities of learning, thinking and being.

I will explore these possibilities by examining early writings of George Lukács, which come from before the time when he became a full-blown Marxist. I find this early work of his very insightful for our educational thinking because his interest in the nature and form of the essay points to the way that philosophy can again address our life-problems, as Socrates once did, and this seems especially important in a nihilistic age of insecurity, when all that is solid melts into air (see Berman 1988). The role of philosophy for Socrates was much more ambitious than what we today conceive of it: it was supposed to provide us with personal wisdom on how to lead our lives. And a philosophical practice was also an educational practice in which what we know of the world was turned to the problem of how to conduct ourselves. This classical relation of philosophy to life in education tends to look out of step to us today, except where this takes a pragmatic turn, as, for example, in the work of John Dewey. Let's see how the young Lukács explores these matters by way of a different path and consider what we can learn from him.

Philosophy and Life-Form

No philosopher has expressed better than Dewey the importance of the intimate connection of philosophy with our everyday lives. For him, philosophy provides us with some general principles that can solve the problems we face in our ordinary lives. But there are some moments that indicate that the connection between philosophy and everydayness is not at all that simple, so that this picture may end up misleading us. This is the moment when we suddenly realize how brutal is the everydayness of the world outside the classroom: it is indifferent to any serious questioning in the classroom of such seemingly *arcane* but *ultimate* life-problems as “What is life?” or “What is human destiny?” And this is also the moment when our frantic and despairing mourning in the face of our lifetime lover's death is interrupted by something as mundane as having to go to the bathroom or feeling hungry. How disappointing our lives are! How embarrassing we are! I think these are the nonsensical moments that we commonly experience but that tell us that there may be, *as a matter of fact*, a radical but inevitable rupture between our speculations in philosophy¹ and our everyday lives.

In Plato's *Symposium*, Alcibiades half-drunkenly eulogizes Socrates, as if in a confession of love. I think a short reflection on his confession will give a more concrete sense of what is at stake in my concern with the relation between philosophy and everydayness. He describes Socrates as demon-like, saying:

When we listen to anyone else talking, however eloquent he is, we don't really care a damn what he says. But when we listen to you or to someone else repeating what you've said,

¹One can easily notice that the sense of “philosophy” here already appears different from Dewey's, but *not* in the sense that philosophy should be intimately connected with our everyday lives. I am at one with Dewey in regard to the latter point. But I think that the difference between Dewey and me derives from the difference in how to see *life*, as will be seen later in the chapter.

even if he puts it ever so badly, and never mind whether the person who's listening is man, woman, or child, we're absolutely staggered and bewitched. And speaking for myself, gentlemen, if I wasn't afraid you'd tell me I was completely bottled, I'd swear on oath what an extraordinary effect his words have had on me—and still do, if it comes to that. For the moment I hear him speak I am smitten with a kind of sacred rage, worse than any Corybant, and my heart jumps into my mouth and the tears start into my eyes—oh, and not only me, but lots of other men. Yes, I've heard Pericles and all the other great orators, and very eloquent I thought they were, but they never affected me like that; they never turned my whole soul upside down and left me feeling as if I were the lowest of the low. But this latter-day Marsyas [Socrates], here, has often left me in such a state of mind that I've felt I simply couldn't go on living the way I did. . . . And there's one thing I've never felt with anybody else—not the kind of thing you'd expect to find in me, either—and that is a sense of shame. Socrates is the only man in the world that can make me feel ashamed. Because there's no getting away from it, I know I ought to do the things he tells me to, and yet the moment I'm out of his sight I don't care what I do to keep in with the mob (Plato 1989, p. 567).

What strikes me after reading the above touching confession is the question of why Alcibiades, who had been moved this much by Socrates, failed to lead a higher life and finally ended up pursuing a public life, as the other *Dialogues* suggest.² It seems to me that he is an exemplary figure who consciously rejected the higher life for the lower life despite his recognition of self-ignorance. I think that part of the answer to this question has something to do with the tone underlying Alcibiades' speech, alluding to his being torn and struggling between his humiliation with himself and his admiration for Socrates. And the fact that he needed to be drunk for this confession can be read as revealing and highlighting the intensity of his inner struggle.

Here, we clearly see that Socrates' inspiring teaching assumes a radical rupture of philosophical life from everyday life and that it causes Alcibiades a deep agony – at least, in the moment of confession. We also see the assumed rupture between the philosophical life and everyday life seems to have a necessary connection with Alcibiades' inner rupture between his admiration for a Socratic soul-searching life and his shame at his present way of life. I should now confess, even without the help of alcohol, that I am more sympathetic to Alcibiades' inner agony, caused by Socrates' soul-disturbing teaching, than the teaching itself. But the more seriously I take Alcibiades' agony, the more closely I end up with a question, "What mode of life does this seriously taken inner agony ultimately demand us to lead?" or "How can the Socratic teaching of soul-searching life, assuming the inevitable rupture between the two planes of our experience, higher and lower, be related to everyday life, the only reality which is allowed to humans?"

Of course, we can simply drop the picture of two incompatible domains of our experience by regarding otherworldly experience as a metaphysical illusion. This is the way Dewey's pragmatism basically treats this kind of problem. But my deep motivation for this chapter is to take seriously this metaphysical or spiritual plane of our experience and save it in such a way as to allow it to give us our daily life

²Alcibiades seems at a later date to have been deeply engaged in a political career. In the *Apology*, it is suggested that he betrayed Athens in the Peloponnesian War.

without a religious inflection. But this should not be confused with some misunderstood line of thought, asking “Was Alcibiades wrong in ending up leading a public life?” or “Should we pursue philosophy as a career in order to lead a higher life?” I think these are misguided questions. For what is at stake with regard to the Alcibiades’ agony is not a matter of choosing a career, rather it seems a matter of how to lead “our inner life,” whatever kind of occupation we take for our daily life. Yet, how we can characterize that mode of life and how such a characterized mode of life can be related to our daily life should remain to be asked. These are exactly the tasks I will undertake in this chapter. These questions are also what Lukács deals with throughout his work, *Soul and Form* (1971).

This book is a collection of Lukács’ early essays on some literary authors of his day. But his main concern in writing these seemingly unrelated essays was the extent to which they were endowed with “the force necessary for a conceptual re-ordering of life, and yet distinguish it from the icy, final perfection of philosophy” (Lukács 1971, p. 1). Here, we can grasp the seeds of a new notion of philosophy that is different both from philosophy as a theory, with its principles ready-made for application to practice, and from philosophy as a discipline, with its own systematic and cognitive set of concepts and methods for conceptualizing the world, parallel to those of other disciplines. In other words, his attempt to explore a new kind and form of essay can be understood as an attempt to explore a new mode of philosophy, and it is reasonable to expect that this new way of doing philosophy will reveal a new mode of life, along the lines that we discussed above. Thus, to make intelligible Lukács’ new formulation of the nature and form of the essay is the main task I will now embark on.

Lukács describes the nature of his essays as “endowing the work with the force necessary for a conceptual re-ordering of life.” Here, the meaning of “a conceptual re-ordering of life” can be unpacked only by figuring out how he uses the term “life” in his own context. In fact, Lukács’ key terms – such as “life,” “soul” and “form” – are not only quite specific to his own context but also internally related to each other in their meanings. So, to examine each of these terms and their relation to each other will be crucial to the understanding of his project. Let me start first with his notions of soul and life.

According to Lukács, there are two types of reality of the soul. Lukács explains:

One is *life* and the other is *living*; both are equally effective, but they can never be effective at the same time. Elements of both are contained in the lived experience of every human being, even if in always varying degrees of intensity and depth; in memory too, there is now one, now the other, but at any moment we can only feel one of these two forms. Ever since there has been life and men have sought to understand and order life, there has been this duality in their lived experience (1971, p. 4).

The idea exhibited above is that there are two planes of life – that is, “life” and “living” – in accordance with two types of reality of the soul involved – namely, the empirical self and the metaphysical self. For Lukács, there is a rigid dichotomy between these two planes of life: there is the “not only but also” relative plane and the “either–or” absolute plane in which mutually exclusive opposites are separated

sharply and definitively from one another. But, according to Lukács, the absolute, the metaphysical plane of “living,” is the only *real life*.³

How is that so? We need to explore further his specific description of the two domains of life in order to get closer to the answer:

Life is an anarchy of light and dark: nothing is ever completely fulfilled in life, nothing ever quite ends; new, confusing voices always mingle with the chorus of those that have been heard before. Everything flows, everything merges into another thing, and the mixture is uncontrolled and impure; everything is destroyed, everything is smashed, nothing ever flowers into real life. *To live* is to live something through to the end: But *life* means that nothing is ever fully and completely lived through to the end. *Life* is the most unreal and unliving of all conceivable existences. . . . *Real life* is always unreal, always impossible, in the midst of empirical life. Suddenly there is a gleam, a lightening that illumines the banal paths of empirical life: something disturbing and seductive, dangerous and surprising; the accident, the great moment, the miracle; an enrichment and a confusion. It cannot last, no one would be able to bear it, no one could live at such heights—at the height of their own life and their own ultimate possibility. One has to fall back into numbness. One has to deny *life* in order to *live* (1971, p. 153, italics added).

The points to be made about the above passage are twofold. One is that, for Lukács, authentic life is the life to be lived through to the end or to the absolute, which is accompanied by illuminating, disturbing and enriching experiences; the unclear, relatively free-flowing anarchy of everyday life looks to him too bewildering and too impure to be real. The other thing is that even so, Lukács points out, we humans are not fully capable of leading the authentic life because our concrete human condition always makes us fail to live up to our demand for the absolute.

Lukács claims that this actual duality in our experience between two types of life is well demonstrated in the seeming arbitrariness of the ending in Platonic dialogues. He reminds us of how, for example, in the *Lysis*, when Lysis and his friend Menexenus are in the middle of the conversation with Socrates on friendship, they are suddenly interrupted by some rough attendants and told they must go home. A question is thrown out and extended so far in depth that it becomes the question of all questions. But after that, while everything remains open, something comes from outside, from everyday reality, and disrupts everything, something that has no connection with the question nor with what, as a possibility of an answer, brings forth a new question. Lukács writes: “this interruption is not an end because it does not come from within, and yet it is the most profound ending because a conclusion from within would have been impossible” (1971, p. 14). Thus, Lukács shows us the irony of how our life-and-death struggle in longing for the authentic life from inner necessity is arbitrarily interrupted by the small realities of everyday life.

³The following citation from a letter Lukács sent to one of his friends not only shows more clearly his main concern at this time of his life but also helps to sensitize us to his conceptual distinction between two types of life: “Your remark that the state is part of the self is correct. What I cannot accept is that the state is part of the soul. It is a mistake to convert the self into the soul. Only the soul has metaphysical reality and the problem is to find the road from one soul to another” (Kadarkay 1991, *Lukács*, p. 160). Here, Lukács names the empirical self simply as “the self,” (which can belong to the state as a member) and the metaphysical self as “the soul,” (which has nothing to do with the state). In this chapter, “soul” refers to the metaphysical reality of the soul.

What should we do, then, in the face of this cruelly ironical reality? At one moment, we are just longing for the absolute, and at another moment, just being helplessly under the control of merciless everydayness, or persistently resisting everyday reality and trying to build in its place an otherworldly kingdom on earth. Before getting into Lukács' argument on this matter, I think we need to explore more fully how the metaphysical reality of the soul as real life is characterized by Lukács.

Lukács characterizes the soul as a longing for the authentic life, *living through to the end*. It is not easy to capture the exact sense of what Lukács means by this, but some help is provided by the analogy to Socrates' longing for the Good or for Beauty, or Pascal's or Kierkegaard's seeking for God. But I think it is worth trying to spell out his sense of it as much as we can since he attempts to show a certain dimension of our experience, without depending upon a metaphysical or theological ground, but by employing such terms as "symbol," "destiny" and "tragedy." Lukács writes:

There are experiences, then, which cannot be expressed by any gesture and which yet long for expression. From all that has been said you will know what experiences I mean and of what kind they are. I mean intellectuality, conceptuality as sensed experience, as immediate reality, as spontaneous principle of existence; the world-view in its undisguised purity as an event of the soul, as the motive force of life. The question is posed immediately: what is life, what is man, what is destiny? but posed as a question only: for the answer, here, does not supply a "solution" like one of answers of science or, at purer heights, those of philosophy. Rather, as in poetry of every kind, it is symbol, destiny and tragedy (1971, p. 7).

To make it easier to understand what the above passage means, I think Lukács' metaphor of the tragic hero, who is standing at a crossroads in the middle of his struggle, is useful. According to Lukács, this crossroads or struggle is not his destiny about which questions may be asked and answers given: they must remain at the experiential level of struggle and crossroads. Only the hero can make this experience part of his destiny, and can bring about a miracle by walking to the end of the road he has chosen; and this is the moment when he *re-orders* his life. Only the hero can gain something from this experience, something sufficient to reorder his world-view. He does this by taking the crossroads seriously and allowing himself to be affected, profoundly, through his devotion to the struggle, even though the crossroads and the struggle do not necessarily impinge on his life *as matters of fact*. It is *he* who makes them necessary by taking these contingent events as something essential to his life.

This metaphor of the tragic hero gives us some clue to a better understanding of Lukács' passage above. First of all, let us interpret Lukács' characterization of the longing for authentic life as a *destiny-creating soul-event*. "Destiny" seems to mean one's "intellectuality, conceptuality as sensed experience," which, according to the above passage, "cannot be expressed by any gesture but yet longs for expression." So, it can be said that destiny is an immediate *soul-event* that actually orders one's life without making itself explicit in words. In other words, it is first-person experience of the *inner necessity of one's life as a whole*, with regard to the question of *how one should live*, even though the first-person hero does not know how to justify the experience objectively.

The other point we need to notice about destiny is that the soul-event is nothing other than the “spontaneous principle of existence,” “an event of soul” or “motive force of life” of the person. This is not something like a rational principle that we try consciously to apply to our lives or like a rule of habit to which we unconsciously conform. It is the very “worldview” the hero *willingly and actually lives up to*, whether or not he is conscious of it. That is to say, it is the motive force that orders and moves his life in a certain way. Thus, we can say that, in this destiny-creating soul-event, the first person hero accentuates the essential and eliminates the inessential from his life.

We have seen that what Lukács’ hero is longing for is his destiny. But why is the hero willing to follow or create his own destiny? What, according to Lukács, makes him long for the authentic life, in the first place? In Pascal or Kierkegaard, our first recognition of human wretchedness or of human finitude comes from our glimpse of the image of God. In other words, we see how limited we human beings are in contrast to God’s eternity, and then this recognition leads us to seek God. By contrast, it is not easy to find the equivalent of God in Lukács’ whole project, and this makes us wonder what motivated Lukács’ longing for the authentic life in the first place. But if we infer from the facts of his life how much he hated the bourgeois way of life and how this hatred affected his whole life, it may not be completely wrong to think that his longing for the authentic life was motivated by his extreme aversion to everyday life – namely, the bourgeois way of life. That is to say, his extraordinary aversion to hypocrisy, dishonesty and triviality, prevalent in the bourgeois culture around him, made him turn his attention from outside to inside and pursue the authentic life.

Since the bourgeois everyday life was *so* unsatisfactory to Lukács that returning to the triviality of the everyday meant falling into the most unreal and dishonest life, his longing for the authentic life must have been desperate and urgent. In other words, it must have been obvious to him that longing for the authentic life was the only means he could take if he was to lead a *real life*. Thus, we can begin to understand why Lukács did not need any higher metaphysical ground for the justification of his longing for the authentic life: his deep antagonism against the pettiness and shallowness of the bourgeois way of life seems to have been enough for him to turn inward.

We should admit, however, that there are aspects of the human condition that make Lukács’ description of the soul as a longing for the authentic self look absurd and ironical: the conditions of human corporeality. Since longing is not destined to be fulfilled but only to remain in the form of questioning, the person committed to the struggles of the inner life seems destined to a life of frustration. How absurd it all looks! This may be why Socrates was sentenced to death and why the Enlightenment decided to expel God from the earth. On the other hand, there is always brutal everydayness that indifferently interrupts the seriousness of the first person’s commitment to their inner necessity. The ruthless defeat of our quest for destiny in the face of the triviality of the everyday looks too ironical to endure. In the two-person dialogue of his essay “On Poverty of Spirit: A Conversation and a Letter (1995),” Lukács presents the character of Martha in conversation with the lover of a

friend of hers who has committed suicide. Here, the main character (the lover) proclaims his deep aversion to the base, everyday life after his lover's death, and he finally commits suicide himself, saying: "I can no longer bear the unclarity and dishonesty of the everyday life."

Let us return to the problem posed earlier: what should we do, what specific mode of life can we expect to lead, if we do not want to see Socrates sentenced to death or Martha's interlocutor commit suicide? Lukács puts this question in the following way:

Time and again I have met people who played an instrument exceedingly well and even composed after a fashion, yet afterwards, in ordinary life, were perfect strangers to their music. Is that not odd?...How people behave 'in ordinary life,' how art and life confront each other, how each shapes and transforms the other and how a higher organism grows out of two—or why it does not. Is style a matter of a person's whole life? If so, how and wherein does style manifest itself? Is there, in an artist's life, a strong, continuously ringing melody, persistent to the very end, that makes everything necessary, that resolves everything in itself, a melody in which everything divergent finds unity at last? Does a great life's work make a great man of its author, and where, in art, does it become apparent if the artist is a great man, made all of a piece? (1971, p. 19)

If we see art here as any specific activity of longing for the absolute, Lukács asks himself "What is the relation between one's pursuit of the absolute and his or her life?"; that is to say, "How does the way one questions the ultimate reveal itself in relation to his or her everyday life?"

What is quite original about Lukács' approach to this question is that he assumes that one's longing for the absolute should be necessarily related to one's own *work*⁴; otherwise, the longing will just remain as sentimental lyricism and nothing but day-dreaming. Here is the place where another of his key terms, *form*, comes to view in his whole project. For Lukács, the incorporeal soul-content of our longing is materialized in the form of our work. Lukács says that form is what sets limits around the soul-content of our longing and what gives a unity to it, the soul-content that otherwise would dissolve into thin air. In other words, for Lukács, form is the intermediate mode of reality of the immaterial soul-content. Thus, it can be said that the matter of how the longing *soul* can confront and transform *life*, posed above by Lukács, narrows down into the matter of how the *immaterial soul* can be transposed into its intermediate mode of reality, *form*.

Thus, Lukács' next task is to characterize the nature of this form. In order to do so, he coins another set of terms: "the Platonist's life" as an ideal mode of life, in contrast with "the poet's life" that he seems to dismiss. He says:

In the purest types the work and the life coincide—or, rather, only that part of their life which can be related to the work is valid and has to be taken into consideration. The life is

⁴The term "work" also has a special meaning in Lukács' writings. For Lukács, any work is the activity of one's pursuit of the absolute. This is why Lukács considered art as an exemplary activity for soul-searching longing. Thus, any serious work contains one's soul-content that is expressed in the form of the work. So, according to Lukács, the best way to appreciate the essence of a piece of work might be to detect the soul-content lying behind the form of the work.

nothing, the work is all; the life is mere accident, the work is necessity itself.....A problem arises when Platonist's eternal uncertainty threatens to cast a shadow over the white brilliance of the verse, when the heaviness of his sense of distance weighs down the poet's soaring lightness, or when there is a danger that the poet's divine frivolity may falsify the Platonist's profound hesitations and rob them of their honesty (1971, p. 22).

Of course, "the purest type" here means the poet's life. The problem with the poet's life is that, since the poet's work or the form manifested in the work always soars above his life while the Platonist's always fails to capture life, the poet attempts to substantiate the form of his work into his life by making some gesture. In other words, for the poet, "the life is nothing" and "the work is all"; he attempts to perform a universal, model-creating life. But, according to Lukács, the poet tends to forget the deep tension between the longing self and the empirical self, and rather *wills* to reconcile the absolute with the empirical life by means of gesture. In Lukács' view, the will to reconcile is nothing but self-delusion, however splendidly heroic it is. Finding this kind of fallacy especially in the lives of Kierkegaard and the Romantics, Lukács points out that Kierkegaard wished to perform an absolutely honest action⁵ and asks, "Can one be honest in face of life, and yet stylise life's events in literary form?" (1971, p. 32)

What, then, by contrast, is the relation between the Platonist's life and form? Lukács continues:

With such men the problem consists in finding a form spacious enough to contain the conflicting trends, rich enough to force a unity upon them, a form whose very fullness, the very fact of its refusal to be burst asunder, may give it strength. For such men one of the directions is the goal and the other the danger; one is the compass, the other the desert; one is the work and the other life. Between the two, a life-and-death struggle is fought out for a victory which could unite the two opposing camps, which could turn to advantage the weakness, the very frailty of the defeated force; a struggle full of dangers precisely because the one extreme might counterbalance the other and the result might be an empty mediocrity (1971, p. 22).

According to the above passage, a real solution of the fatal opposition between work and life can only come from *form* in which every antithesis and every trend becomes music and necessity; this means that the very conflict and opposition itself are embedded in form as the essential. Thus, the road of every "problematic" human being, as Lukács puts it – namely, the road of the Platonist who is always longing for something he can never reach, the road that he travels in order to arrive somewhere – leads into a specific mode of *form* because it is the unity that can combine within itself the largest number of divergent forces. Therefore, at the end of that road, there stands the man who can create form.

⁵In the essay on Kierkegaard, Lukács criticizes the possibility of performing a noble and authentic gesture in one's actual life. He refers to the Danish poet's break with his fiancée, Regine Olsen, who was thereby sacrificed to an exclusive love of God. Here, Lukács adopts a standpoint more Kierkegaardian than Kierkegaard, expressing astonishment at the latter's inconsistency with his rigorous position, saying "How could he do it, he of all men, who saw more clearly than any other the thousand aspects, the thousand-fold variability of every motive, he who so clearly saw how everything passes gradually into its opposite?"

Life-Form and the Essay Form of Writing

For Lukács, this Platonist's form is the very *form of the essay*. It is not my intention to advocate the form of the essay as a literary genre. The reason I am deeply interested in the nature of the form of the essay, as Lukács explains this, is that it shows us how the Platonist's life and work can be combined and, therefore, what the Platonist's form-creating life looks like. In the remainder of this chapter, I shall summarize Lukács' account of the nature of the essay-form by pinpointing four ironical features of it.

First, Lukács defines the essay as a form of writing that raises life-problems, whether the questions are addressed to life indirectly through the writings about other artists' works as in art criticism, or directly as in the greatest essays such as Plato's *Dialogues* or Montaigne's *Essays* (p. 9). But the way the ultimate life-problems are raised in both types of essay is ironical. The essayist appears just to be talking about paintings and books in order to explain them and to facilitate the understanding of the readers. But the readers spontaneously feel the irony that consists in the critic always speaking about the ultimate problems of life, but only in a tone that implies that he is only discussing pictures and books, only the inessential and pretty ornaments of real life. Thus, even though each essay appears to be far removed from life, we sense its essential closeness without its being pointed out explicitly. This means that in the essay there is an indivisible and organic, communal mixture between the essayist's accidental interest in books and pictures and his necessary interest in questions of the ultimate. According to Lukács, the same thing can be said of Montaigne's *Essays* and Plato's *Dialogues*. He points out how Montaigne dismisses his own proud hopes, which sometimes lead him to believe that he has come close to the ultimate, by giving his writings the ironically modest title of *Essays*, when his only concern in writing the essay lies in pursuing the ultimate problems of life. Lukács also emphasizes that in reading Plato it is rare that we are not struck in some way by the irony of the small realities of life: for example, this is so in the *Symposium* when Eryximachos cures Aristophanes of hiccups by making him sneeze before he can begin his deeply meaningful hymn to Eros.

Second, Lukács tries to characterize the essayist's attitude toward the matter that is represented in his essay (1971, p. 10). For Lukács, the essay always speaks of something that has already been given a form, at least something that has already been there at some time in the past. Hence, it is part of the nature of the essay that it does not create new things from a void but rather orders those that were once alive. Lukács sees a strong analogy between the essayist and the portrait painter in this sense. Lukács asks, "What is a portraitist pursuing with an already given life?" He answers by saying that it is "truth," not in the sense that the figure of a Velasquez portrait corresponds in its likeness to the real life of the figure, but in the sense that the life of a human being, who once was really alive and is now expressed in the portrait, forces us to *feel* that his life was exactly as shown by the lines and colors of the painting. I think that we can feel the life of the portrayed figure to be *real* or *true* only when we experience the painter's intense struggle for truth or the incarnation

of the life that the painter has seen in a man. It is nonsense to think that whether the painting conveys to us this suggestion of that particular life depends upon the sheer likeness between the picture and the real life of the person. For although we discover that there is a great degree of likeness between them, what do we know of the immeasurably large part of the person's life or of the inner light that burns within him? What we can know about him is only through the great painter's painful struggle to incarnate the truth about him, and this implies that we can no longer distinguish in the portrait the painter's descriptive part of the figure from its real life.

The same thing can be said of the essayist: the truth of the essay lies in how intensely and profoundly the essayist has struggled to incarnate the truth about books, pictures or a person's life. The essay is not just about the essayist's painful struggle nor just about the book or the picture he is talking about. This means that the more truthful is the essayist, the more mingled are the essayist's voice and the given form at issue, and, therefore, the more invisible the distinction between them.

Lukács brings up the third feature of the essay in relation to the second one. According to Lukács (1971, pp. 11–13), although the essayist does not create something completely new as does an artist, but only deals with and orders something that is already given, the essayist has to create from within himself all the preconditions for the effectiveness and validity of his vision of the given form or life with which he is dealing. This is how he reorders the given form or life and gives his own form to it. More specifically, the only thing the essayist is concerned with is his own life-problems, but he uses others' destiny as a means in order to give a form to these life-problems. Plato met Socrates and was able to give a form to the myth of Socrates, and he used Socrates' destiny as the vehicle for the questions he, Plato, wanted to address to life about destiny.

As we saw above, however, it should be noted that the essayist's concern with his own life-problems remains only in the essay's tone, color and accent but never appears on the surface in an explicit form, just as Velasquez's struggle to incarnate the truth about his model was manifested only in the lines and colors of his portrait. By the same token, just as it is only these lines and colors that make up the greatness of his portraits, it is the tone, color and accent of writings that show how deeply and truthfully the essayist addresses his life-problems.

Why should the way the essayist addresses his life-problems be so indirect and only implicit? Why can it not be more explicit? Lukács says that this is because the essayist knows that it is impossible to think aloud about himself or his life since his pursuit of life-problems will have no answer and no substantiality; and also it is because he knows that he can only experience his own life through the works of others and that by understanding others he comes closer to his own self. In other words, the essayist, like the Platonist, knows that our longing for the authentic life is not destined to arrive at a substantial world: thus, if we want to speak of ourselves, we must work through the destiny of others so as to penetrate the most deeply hidden intimacies of our own soul.

Fourth and last, Lukács turns his attention to the fact that the essayist's possibility of existence becomes profoundly problematic (1971, p. 16). He says that the essayist writes about the relative and inessential things such as books and pictures but

filters them by the force of judgment of values he has glimpsed. But Lukács asks himself, "Who gives him the right to judge?" It would be *almost* true to say that he seizes the right because he creates his judgment of values from within himself. But as we have seen so far, although the criteria of the essayist's judgment do in a sense come from within himself, it is not he who awakens them to life and action. The one who whispers them into his ear is rather the one who has been living as the great value-definer of life, such as Socrates was for Plato. But this is someone who is always about to arrive but has never quite arrived. So if Plato had not followed Socrates' whisper and written the *Dialogues*, Socrates' life could not have been justified. This makes the essayist the pure type of the precursor. If the other does not come in the end, the essayist is not justified. Yet, if the other does come, he is made superfluous by it. Thus, according to Lukács, it is highly questionable whether the essayist could lay claim to any value or validity that is independent of the fate of the other for whom he is the herald.

For Lukács, however, the longing for value and form cannot be abandoned simply because there is no independent value and validity that can be attached to it. For to long for the authentic life is to seek for fulfilment only by taking the road to be traveled. For Lukács, giving up the road before traveling it, because the end has no independent outcome, is to give up all the wisdom we can learn in the course of the traveling itself. Indeed, for Lukács, this wisdom is the value of what only the essay brings to us.

On the other hand, in my view, we should not forget that longing is a fact of the soul with a value and existence of its own. We actually experience this type of reality of the soul, no matter how difficult it is to express it in explicit form. Surely we cannot deny that this unique and deep rooted attitude toward the whole of life is a final irreducible category of possibility of human experience. Therefore, it needs to be given a form that will redeem and release its most essential and indivisible substance into eternal value. According to Lukács, this is what the essay does.

We have discussed Lukács' ideas on the nature of the essay-form, although without a deeper analysis of how to understand them in regard to a new way of doing philosophy; I think such an analysis would need another whole paper. Yet, I hope that just the laying out of Lukács' ideas on essay-form is enough to give us a sense of what such a new mode of philosophy might be like, because, for Lukács, writing the essay means the very same as doing philosophy. Thus, we can conclude that a new way of doing philosophy would be to realize Lukács' sense of the essay-form, and that the new mode of life that this new way of doing philosophy manifests would be the form-creating life itself. To put it another way, the way the Platonist leads his life is the same as the way the essayist writes his essay.

I do not know whether this perhaps modest conclusion can give us any clear idea about how far the Platonist's life will be fundamentally different from the Deweyan's life in terms of their everyday dealings. But at least I think it gives us a sense of how they are different from each other in their attitudes towards their whole lives, because they have completely different motive forces of life: the pragmatic motive of problem-solving and the soul-searching motive of problem-raising.

Conclusion: The Essay Form of Writing as an Educational Practice

If we can see the practice of essay-writing in Lukacs' sense as a kind of educational practice, would it be too unrealistic to expect this practice to be realized in secondary or tertiary education today? Yes, it would be, for it starts with big questions – such as “What is life?,” “What is destiny?” or “How should I live?” – of a kind that we scarcely raise in our everyday lives. These are questions that occur to us only as a result of the accidents of experience, usually when we are the victims of painful turns of fate, even if great artists, philosophers or even scientists can also sometimes confront us with them. When this happens, we are perhaps more likely to acknowledge the fragility of human condition and to be left dissatisfied. But Lukács' response is: “Strive to go beyond it, knowing you cannot fully fulfil it.” His response is quasi-romantic in the sense that it is concerned with a longing for the authentic self such as being true to oneself, quasi-Platonic in the sense that it is concerned with going beyond something everyday or mundane, and quasi-existential in the sense that it is concerned with sensitizing us to our own finitude. And all these terms sound out of step in a “post-something” age like our own.

However, there are at least two perspectives from which his response can still be seen extremely relevant to today's culture and education. First, the great existential or metaphysical questions, which he asks us to raise in our own voice, can lead us to break radically, if only momentarily, with everything “present and here,” with our submersion in day-to-day life, so as to enable us to look at ourselves from a perspective larger than that of our everyday selves. And I think that this can turn us inward towards a beneficial self-regarding ethics, which I have sketched in quasi-romantic, quasi-Platonic and quasi-existential terms, and open up a way to our learning not to seek overall mastery but rather to take responsibility for a finite life lived under conditions of which we cannot be fully in control. These self-regarding ethics may also create a psychic and social impulse in us that is resistant to the homogenizing and commodifying dynamics of instrumental reason so dominant in our lives today and that prevents the self-assertion of reason from turning into an offensive, narrow-minded self-empowerment.⁶ Lukács seems to whisper to us, “Think heroically but live modestly!”

Second, Lukács' subtle description of the essay as a form of inner conversation with books and paintings shows how the essay can be a form of writing in which a

⁶Here, there is expressed my dissatisfaction with “egoistically self-centered” life-style that is so prevalent in the contemporary culture. In relation to oneself, we tend to be more and more narcissistic and self-celebrating, excessively concerned with fake self-images helplessly shaped by the cheap consumerism of technology and information-driven society. In relation to others, we tend to be highly politicized, oversensitive to politically corrective vocabularies, not knowing how to communicate across culturally and politically different groups. I have been taking pains in showing how the quest of great existential/metaphysical questions can free us from our own self-indulgence and relieve us of political and moral disagreement with others since the former usually tends to be taken as indifferent to, at best, and escapist from, at worst, the latter.

philosophical form of thinking as “a communication of being” can still be expressed. Virginia Woolf says that “the essay is an attempt to communicate a soul” (Woolf 1925, p. 98). “Soul” is not a word we philosophers today are much inclined to use except in a metaphorical way. But, if the activity of education is to be considered not just as the mastery of theoretical knowledge but, more importantly, as a process of self-understanding, I think we educationalists need to take a risk of embracing the word, not as a metaphysical category but as an experiential category, as Lukács did. Only then would educators today know where their concern with students was to be directed. Only then would they provide their students with room in which they could breathe, take rest and experiment with themselves in search of their inner voice. I think this would be in the exactly same spirit as Michael Oakeshott’s when he writes: “philosophical reflection is recognised here as the adventure of one who seeks to understand in other terms what he already understands and in which the understanding sought is a disclosure of the conditions of the understanding enjoyed and not a substitute for it” (Oakeshott 1975, p. i).

One last thing to be noted is that the essay writing I intended to develop here as a form of pedagogical practice is distinct from the essay writing as literary art criticism, even if it is quite akin to it and adopts many features from it. We need further to develop and articulate the inner structure of the essayist form of writing in philosophical terms – that is, in a form that is more adequate to the experience of self-knowledge in which the educated self, rather than the literary or aesthetic self, can be cultivated, formed and expressed. The question of assessment in educational practice that I raised in the introduction to this chapter needs to be a part of this broader exploration. So, too, we must remember the ways in which the essay can be an occasion for self-expression appropriately responsive to the object of its concern and to the whispers the learner must hear. The language-game of essay writing requires these commitments of objectivity, attentiveness and voice. And the critical abilities needed by the teacher will in the end depend less on checklists of criteria, or on the “evaluation” and “ranking” of which Wolff complains, than on the arts of interpretation and conversation. It is the latter that will provide the means to the appropriate assessment of students’ works and performance.

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Part II

Stanley Cavell: Practice of Education in the Essay-Form

The second half of the book will address the second question set up in the introduction: How can we describe the essay form of writing as a pedagogical device for a philosophical practice in which self-(trans)formation can be practiced and expressed? Here, I will take Stanley Cavell as my inspiration and converse with him in developing my argument in relation to the question. This is because I believe his ordinary language philosophy to be tremendously useful in contextualizing young Lukács' main theme in the larger philosophical landscapes of more contemporary intellectual interests. First, Cavell's (romantic or existentialist) interpretation of Wittgenstein's later philosophy, especially centering on philosophical skepticism, gives us fresh food for thought in further elaborating Lukács' theme of the relation between philosophical practice and the human condition. Of particular relevance is Cavell's discussion on the relation between "philosophy" and "everydayness" in a slightly transformed formulation – i.e., the relation between "skepticism" and "the everyday" or "the familiar." Second, Cavell's unusually personalized writing style can be seen as a refined (post-modern) version of the essay-form of writing, drawn from Montaigne and developed through Lukács. Here, I view Cavell's skepticism and its emphasis on the private nature of doing philosophy as a development of young Lukács' notion of individuation, and Cavell's emphasis on the experientially productive tension between (skeptical) philosophy and everydayness as illuminating the educational/moral significance of existential struggle in the (trans)formation of subjectivity. I also regard Cavell's writing style as consonant with the way Lukács characterizes the essay form of writing. Thus, in this second part of the book, I will try to more fully elaborate the essay form of writing as a pedagogical practice and examine how this practice of essay writing can be a way of cultivating the *reflexive* post-secular sensibility with which liberal citizens of politically and culturally pluralistic society are expected to be equipped.

Chapter 5

Stanley Cavell's Ordinary Language Philosophy as an Example of Practicing Philosophy in the Essay-Form: In Search of a Humanistic Approach to Teacher Education*

Introduction: A Humanistic Approach to Teacher Education

In teaching a philosophy of education course within a teacher training program, we are often challenged by self-assertive student-teachers with questions like: “What is the relevance of philosophy to teacher training?” or more specifically, “What is the relevance of ‘philosophy of education’ to the (professional) life of teachers?” Knowing that any attempt to respond to such questions in the form of justificatory claims – i.e., giving the account of how useful it may be – will sound unconvincing to them,¹ I tend to throw the question back at them, asking what sort of relevance they can conceive of in terms of its preparation for their professional lives. Very often, doubtful silence follows. The raising of this relevance-question by students over the role of philosophy of education in teacher education programs has always haunted me, but with a sense of frustration as well as a sense of fascination: it frustrates me because I do not have any magical answer for them, and it fascinates me because it suggests to me that they may at least be beginning their journey to an answer. How exasperating yet deeply intriguing this challenge is to us!

There is a distinctive line of response to this kind of challenge that I find quite attractive. This is from the view of philosophy of education as “practical philosophy” (Carr 1995, 2005; Dunne 1993), a view that emerged as a decisive alternative to the analytic tradition of philosophy of education, alongside the postmodernist critique of philosophy as an epistemology-oriented theoretical project. What I find interesting and instructive about the “practical” nature of this line of response is twofold. One is that it is based on the view of education as a human practice with its

* An earlier version of this essay was published in *Teachers College Record*, 113:8 (2011). I am grateful for permission to use this material here.

¹ What is assumed here is that practically-minded students will be looking for some instrumental connection between philosophy and their professional lives. That is, they will want to know with what skills and competences philosophy will equip them.

own tradition and integrity long embedded in educational communities through the accumulated *practical* wisdom of teachers. The other is that philosophy of education as “practical philosophy” is expected to be not so much “philosophy of education” as “philosophy for education,” in the sense that it is “explicitly committed to promoting the integrity of education as a practice by cultivating the educational practitioner’s natural human capacity of *phronesis* (practical knowledge)” (Hirst and Carr 2005, pp. 625–626). This means that the teaching of philosophy of education is in itself expected to be *educative* by producing not theoretically justified propositional knowledge but “reflectively acquired self-knowledge” in student-practitioners. Thus, the idea of teaching or doing philosophy of education as practical philosophy can pre-empt the relevance-question that can be raised by student-teachers because the whole approach is designed to begin with students’ direct engagement in the understanding of their own educational practice.

Wilfred Carr, one of the main advocates of this view of philosophy of education, aims to enable student-practitioners to engage in a form of reflective philosophy that makes them more self-consciously aware of the prejudices embedded in their pre-philosophical practical understanding of education and the historical and cultural contexts of their lives. Combining this reflective philosophy with “action research” as a form of practitioner research, Carr presents his action research as a kind of inquiry that enables practitioners to test the historically embedded assumptions implicit in their practice in such a way as to improve their practice (Carr 2007, p. 145). Thus, we can say that philosophy of education as practical philosophy begins with a full acknowledgement of its dependence on the willingness of student-practitioners to recover reflectively the unacknowledged prejudices at work in their practical knowledge as a way of improving the practical knowledge exercised in their educational practice.

While being sympathetic to the “practical” nature of this view of philosophy of education – in the sense of it being “explicitly committed to promoting the integrity of education as a practice” – I wonder if there may be another form of reflective philosophy that can contribute to “cultivating the educational practitioner’s natural human capacity of *phronesis* (practical knowledge),” in Carr’s words. Practical philosophy as action research may prepare would-be teachers to be historically conscious and reflective professionals, but it would fall short of enabling them to be morally mature and emotionally literate *humanistic* professionals. I want to hold on to the word “humanistic” in order to differentiate what I am doing most obviously from technicist approaches to teacher education but also from those forms of practical philosophy associated with Carr and Dunne. As David Hansen (Hansen 2001, p. 21) suggests in his emphasis on “the person” in the role of the teacher,² I think the cultivation of this humanistic orientation for teachers is more urgent today than ever. It is an orientation that can be sensitive to the predicament of being human in the

²In his book *Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching* (2001), David Hansen refreshingly explores the nature and predicament of teaching that can be well articulated and responded to by the humanistic sensibility.

face of the conflicts of modern life and that can respond to the increasing yet unpredictable complexity of social relation and human emotions. This is even more important when unprecedented changes in our educational environment, against the background of economic globalization, tend to challenge and frustrate classroom teachers, sometimes to the point of breakdown.³ Questions that might touch a person's soul – questions about their sensibility, their fate, wholly conflicting world-views, the vanity of human existence and so on – have rarely been the object of ethical or educational reflection with teachers. But it is precisely this sort of ethical and educational reflection that would *deepen* their self-understanding – of the emotions, desires and opinions whose innumerable cross-currents give point, purpose, and meaning to their lives. And I think this kind of self-understanding constitutes a core to the kind of humanistic practical wisdom that teachers need in order to deal with the difficulties in their everyday school lives.

In contrast to reflective philosophy in the form of action research, I would call this new form of humanistic practice “philosophy in the form of essay.” As mentioned in the earlier chapters, the term “essay” has its origin in the title of the sixteenth century French Renaissance humanist Michel de Montaigne's book *Essais*, where its literal meaning is “attempt” or “test.” Montaigne is known for popularizing the essay as a literary genre in which serious philosophical speculation is merged with anecdotes and autobiography. Montaigne identifies the essay as a philosophical form for “trying-oneself-out” or “putting-oneself-to-the-test” or “self-study” in which philosophical reflection and personal story-telling are held in balance in such a way as to uncover a deeper sense of things. I take inspiration from this idea of the essay because it exemplifies the *classical* relation of philosophy to life but refracted through the *modernist* sensibility. It is *classical* in the sense that the essay as a philosophical practice is also an educational practice in which what we know of the world is turned to the problem of how to conduct ourselves, as shown in Socratic soul-searching. It is *modernist* in the sense that the essay's openness to the unsettling and the unorthodox reflects our modern sense of insecurity – an insecurity that is the price we pay for our newly acquired freedom, in a world with no fixed points of support.⁴

In this chapter, I shall explore whether this original sense of the essay can be recovered for the purpose of cultivating a humanistic orientation in our student-teachers. I will take here Stanley Cavell's notion of ordinary language philosophy as an exemplary case of the essay-form of writing and thinking, and examine its

³ Think, for example, of the kind of classroom setting with students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds that is seen in the recently released French film, *The Class* (2009), and the kinds of challenges that these rebellious students present to the teacher. These wild and unconventional, yet curious and self-assertive, students seem to represent a new kind of challenge to teachers today. Even in South Korea today, well-intentioned young teachers often leave their teaching career after the disillusionment they experience when confronted by wild teenage students, who seem completely unintelligible to them.

⁴ Emphasizing this modernist aspect of Montaigne's philosophy, Hartle calls it “accidental philosophy,” implying the radically contingent and created order of the world (Hartle 2003, pp. 3–27).

underlying method and aspiration to see if it can be developed into a humanistic approach to teacher education. Here, I will focus on whether his ordinary language philosophy is a plausible way of recovering the aspiration of the classical relation of philosophy to life, at the same time considering how far its method realizes the modernist sensibility. This will, I hope, pave the way for a rich response to the relevance-question raised by student-teachers, addressed at the beginning of this introduction.

The Methodological Characteristics of Cavell's Ordinary Language Philosophy

In the introduction to his work *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cavell 1976), Cavell attempts to articulate the beliefs underlying his way of philosophizing and to explain why it takes such a form. While acknowledging that different aspects of his writing can be categorized under such different headings as philosophy, literature or criticism, Cavell confesses his wish to call them all *philosophical* works. I take this as saying that what he does, across different genres of writing, is always “philosophical” in a different sense from that in which we normally understand the word. But then what does he mean by “philosophy” or “the philosophical?” It seems to take the whole book for him to explain the kind of philosophy he does. In fact, what he seems to intend is not to explain this directly but rather to *show* it through different styles of his writings, with sporadic comments about it; in other words, the way he explains it is very allusive and elusive, turning a number of corners and taking many detours. This means that it is not easy for readers to grasp the nature of his philosophical work in a systematic way. So let me reconstruct his account of the kind of philosophy he is doing, mainly drawing upon his book *Must We Mean What We Say?* since this early work does seem to give a more or less explicit account of what he is doing.

Cavell makes it clear from the beginning that he does not see philosophy as a form of science. I think this can be read as a way of distancing himself from the tradition of analytic philosophy in which he was academically trained. In fact, Cavell tries to describe his complex relation with this analytic tradition in terms of what he calls “the modern,” similar to the problem of the modern in the modern art,⁵ and he devotes some space to an account of this term. According to Cavell, the essential feature of “the modern” lies in “the fact that the relation between the

⁵ The term “modern art” is usually associated with art in which, in a spirit of experimentation, the traditions and conventions of the past are no longer taken for granted, and it refers to artworks produced during the period extending roughly from the 1860s through to the 1970s. Modern artists experimented with new ways of seeing and with fresh ideas about the *nature* of materials and the functions of art, being highly conscious of the nature of their own practice. A salient characteristic of modern art is self-consciousness. This often led to experiments with form and work that draw attention to the processes and materials used. I think that the same thing can be said about the nature of what Cavell attempts to do in his practice of philosophy.

present practice of an enterprise and the history of the enterprise" has become problematic (Cavell 1976, p. xix). Here, he formulates the problem of "the modern" in relation to his philosophical practice in two ways. First, anyone committed to the enterprise tends to be placed in a *paradoxical* position in which she needs to *repudiate* the history, and yet her practice and ambition within the enterprise can be identified only against the continuous experience of the past. Second, the past here does not refer merely to the historical past, but "to one's own past, to what is past, or what has passed, within oneself." Cavell adds: "in a modernist situation 'past' loses its temporal accent and means anything 'not present' (Cavell 1976, p. xix)." Thus, for Cavell, "the modern" means that "what one says becomes a matter of making one's sense present to oneself." I would call the first element of the modern "the historical turn" and the second element of it "the intra-personal turn." Cavell finally announces that Wittgenstein's philosophical practice and J. L. Austin's philosophical teaching are exactly what taught him how to do philosophy in this *modernist* sense, incorporating these two turnings. This is why Cavell describes his philosophy as "ordinary language philosophy," following the spirit of these two philosophers. We can also notice here that Cavell's ordinary language philosophy is a form of philosophy that has come out of serious confrontations with two elements: one's tradition and one's self.

How, then, should we understand Cavell's ordinary language philosophy in this modernist sense? How can it be characterized? What is its distinctive philosophical procedure? Cavell takes pains throughout the book to show the main characteristics of ordinary language philosophy. He sometimes complains about his teacher, Austin, not giving an accurate account of his philosophical procedures; at other times, he ponders the thought that Austin's apparent reluctance to do this may itself be a way of saying something about ordinary language philosophy. For example, in the middle of discussing *King Lear*, Cavell suddenly mentions the difficulty of "discovering when and how to stop philosophizing" (Cavell 1976, p. 269). It seems that Cavell writes in this way about *King Lear* as if to show the nature of his ordinary language philosophy. In this sense, we may even say that Cavell's entire texts are designed to make our reading of them challenging and demanding, to remind us constantly as *readers* of this difficulty of "discovering when and how to stop philosophizing."

What sort of difficulty is this? Why is it so difficult for us to know "when and how to stop philosophizing"? To unpack what this phrase means seems critical to the understanding of Cavell's notion of ordinary language philosophy. So let me take it as a starting-point for our enquiry. I think this difficulty has deep connections with what Cavell describes below as ordinary language philosophy:

there[in ordinary language philosophy] the problem is also raised of determining data from which philosophy proceeds and to which it appeals, and specifically the issue is one of placing the words and experiences with which philosophers have always begun in alignment with human beings in particular circumstances who can be imagined to be having those experiences and saying and meaning those words. This is all that "ordinary" in the phrase "ordinary language philosophy" means, or ought to mean. . . It reminds us that whatever words are said and meant are said and meant by particular men, and that to understand what they (the words) mean you must understand what they (whoever is using them) mean, and that sometimes men do not see what they mean, that usually they cannot say what they

mean, that for various reasons they may not know what they mean, that when they are forced to recognise this they feel they do not, perhaps cannot, mean anything, and they are struck dumb (Cavell 1976, p. 270).

The passage above points to the two distinctive features of the practice of ordinary language philosophy. First, ordinary language philosophy is usually triggered by something we are tempted to say about particular persons in particular circumstances, the meaning of which can be brought out by appealing to widely shared, or easily imaginable, circumstances. This means that the ordinary language philosopher claims to know only what an ordinary human being can know and that this is what "ordinary" means in "ordinary language philosophy." Second, the ordinary language philosopher seems to take seriously the fact that, sometimes when asked, the speaker of an utterance does not know how to "place" the ordinary words and experiences in relation to her own particular circumstance, even when she is the one who has uttered the words. For we ourselves sometimes do not seem to know, when we are asked, what we meant when we said the words. This is exactly the state that the ordinary language philosopher intends to throw us into, i.e., the state of "being struck dumb" when faced by the question "What do you mean by what you said?"⁶ But, how is it that we can say words without knowing what we mean by them? We have to ask, then, *what sort of meaning* is the ordinary language philosopher concerned with in asking the speaker what she means by her words.

According to Cavell, in asking what the speaker means by her words, the ordinary language philosopher does not expect her to *explain* or *paraphrase* the meaning of her words. As an example, let us take the case where I ask a close friend of mine what she means when she says of Jane, who I know lives next door: "Jane is a student at the school where I am teaching." In response to my question, my friend may well respond, with some surprise: "What do *you* mean by the question? You don't know who Jane is?" Or considering that I am not a native English speaker, she may try to explain the words "student" or "school" or some aspect of her expression that may have caused my trouble in understanding her words. According to Cavell, what my friend is trying to do for me, in such a scenario, is precisely to *explain* the meaning of her words; here, what is at stake is the *literal* meaning of the words. So, if my friend can explain things to me *this* way in response to my question, she can be said to know what she means by her words.

We can imagine another context in which I ask another friend of mine what she means when she says: "Juliet is the sun to Romeo." Unlike the earlier case, the first response of my friend is not likely to be one of surprise; for what is at stake here is

⁶ Now, it may be objected that this is a slight variation on the formulation of words with which ordinary language philosophy is most commonly associated, which is "When we say..., we mean..." And indeed, Cavell makes much of the importance of this being both first person and plural, indicating first that we are required to say how things seem *to us*, and second that in so doing we are trying to speak for others, too, making an appeal *to community*. But it is this very point that legitimates my expressing this in the second person: in doing ordinary language philosophy with others (and how else could it be done?), I must take the other's first person expression as at the same time an address to me, to see if this is what I mean by the words I use.

the *metaphorical* meaning of the words. According to Cavell, what is expected from the speaker in this case is *not* that she explain the words by, say, offering dictionary-type definitions of them, but rather that she *paraphrase* the expression; for in metaphorical expressions, “meaning is bound up in the very words they [the expressions] employ” (Cavell 1976, p. 78). Thus, my friend might say: “To Romeo, Juliet is the warmth of his world, his day begins with her, and so on. This is why Juliet is the sun to Romeo.” If she cannot provide me with some kind of answer along these lines, we can say she does not know what she means by the words she has said. An interesting point that Cavell makes in regard to the metaphorical expression of words is that to understand a metaphor, or to be able to give its paraphrase, we need to understand the ordinary meanings of the words first, *and then* we are able to see that the words are not being used there in their ordinary sense; we are now invited to look for the meanings of the words *imaginatively*. What is unique about the function of metaphor as an expressive form of words is that it opens up the meanings of words in a more or less indefinite way, so that the words can mean as much as the speaker can imagine. Thus, Cavell says, “metaphors are paraphrasable” (Cavell 1976, p. 79).⁷

In the light of this, then, we can say that it is neither the *literal* nor the *metaphorical* meanings of the words that ordinary language philosophers are concerned with in asking the speaker what she means by her words; for philosophers are interested in the case in which the speaker does not know what she means, even if she knows what the words mean to her in the literal or metaphorical sense. In fact, Cavell brings up the point that there are some modes of figurative language in which what the expression means cannot be stated at all, at least not in any conventional way. According to Cavell, one example in such a use of language is the style of poetry known as “Symbolist,” “Surrealist” or “Imagist.”⁸ Cavell describes the kind of dumbness that strikes us in such a case when we find ourselves lacking the language to express what we mean by the words we use:

I know what it means but I cannot say what it means. And this would no longer suggest, as it would if said about a metaphor, that you really do not know what it means—or; it might suggest it, but you couldn't be sure. . .

Paraphrasing the lines, or explaining their meaning, or telling it or putting the thought another way—all these are out of the question. One may be able to say nothing except that a feeling has been voiced by a kindred spirit and that if someone does not get it he is not in

⁷ Some people are very good at explaining what they mean by their words, putting their thoughts another way, perhaps referring to a range of similar or identical thoughts that have been expressed by others, depending upon who the listeners are. These good explainers are those who are quick to notice what prevents the listeners from understanding the meaning of their words, whether this is their presuppositions, their prejudices and so forth. But *to explain* what I mean by my words is basically to *reproduce* the *literal* meaning of the words; nothing is to be added to the original meaning of them. On the other hand, in the case of metaphor, in giving the paraphrase, we are *free to create* meaning in an indefinite way. According to Cavell, this is the very attraction of metaphor as a form of expression, even if there is always the danger of over-reading (Cavell 1976, p. 79).

⁸ Cavell cites as examples of poetic expression of this kind “The mind is brushed by sparrow wings,” and “as a calm darkens among water-light” (Cavell 1976, p. 81).

one's world, or not of one's flesh. The lines may, that is, be left as touchstones of intimacy. Or one might try *describing* more or less elaborately a particular day or evening, a certain place and mood and gesture, in whose presence the line in question comes to seem a natural expression, the only expression (Cavell 1976, p. 81).

The moment of dumbness Cavell describes in the earlier citation seems to refer here to the moment when we feel something deep, rich or powerful inside us, which cannot be put into words. For Cavell, this is not a *failing* of language but a feature of a specific approach of language. As Cavell suggests above, in poetry of certain kinds the words are used *not to mean* something but *to show* something, as if they were *gestures* pointing to something happening deep inside us.

But what exactly is Cavell trying to say when he talks about the nature of "this dumbness" that ordinary language philosophers tend to evoke in us? What does he imply about the connection between using words and meaning what they say? Normally, what is said is what is meant; when being forced to explain the meaning of what we say, we can explain what we mean by the words we use. But there are a number of specific ways in which one's words do not say what one means, as in the more deliberate cases of lying, feigning or misleading, and as also in those less obvious cases of self-deceiving and "bad faith." Thus, the connection between using words and meaning what they say is not inevitable or automatic; it looks more like a matter of convention or convenience. Yet, for Cavell, this is not the sort of convention we would know how to get rid of. For "it is not a matter of convention or ritual unless having language is convenience or unless thinking and speaking are ritual" (Cavell 1976, p. 271). This would mean that having language (that is, thinking and speaking) must be a very special kind of ritual (if it could be said to be a ritual at all), outside which we could not imagine what human life would be like, or without which there could be no human life at all. Likewise, if the connection between using words and meaning what they say is a matter of convention at all, this would be a very special kind of convention, in the absence of which we could not be the linguistic creatures that we are, and without which we could not even make sense of what we say. So what is the point of Cavell's pointing to the possibility of the disassociation between what we say and what we mean by what we say? Or what is the point of ordinary language philosophers' wish to "strike us dumb" with the annoying question of "What do you mean?"

We may find some clue to Cavell's answer from the following passage:

But Wittgenstein is also concerned with forms of words whose meaning cannot be elicited in this (ordinary) way—words we sometimes have it at heart to say but whose meaning is not secured by appealing to the way they are ordinarily (commonly) used, because there is no ordinary use of them, in that sense. It is not, therefore, that I mean something other than those words would ordinarily mean, but rather that what they mean, and whether they mean anything, depends solely upon whether I am using them so as to make my meaning. . . . In general, Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations* moves into this region of meaning. It is a region habitually occupied by poetry (Cavell 1976, p. 271).

Ordinary language philosophers tend to ask: "What do *you* mean by the words you use?" Of course, in response, I may be able to answer by saying what I meant by referring to the way they are ordinarily used. But being interested in forms of

words in which there is a chasm between what we say and what we mean by it, ordinary language philosophers raise the question, "What do you mean?," in a *specific* way, to which the (ordinary) response I have just given is not quite on target – very much in the way that Plato's *Meno*, when he gives to Socrates all the answers he knows to the question, "What is virtue?," is thrown by Socrates. The passage tells us that the question raised by ordinary language philosophers, "What do you mean?," can be read to have a certain force in it, which gives us the impression that we are supposed to have our *own* meaning in saying the words we use, as if we *ought* to have a special relation to the words we say. This relation may be of a kind that could not be replaced by the conventional relation between using the words and meaning what they say, as if I *ought to* interfere between the two to create my own meaning. What is surprising is that Cavell says above that this demand is not meant to make us create a meaning for the words that is somehow other than what they ordinarily mean; there is no other meaning for them. The demand is rather meant to lead us to see the condition of what makes the words mean what they ordinarily mean or of what makes them mean anything at all: that is, to understand my capability in using words to say what I mean. But what does this mean?

As Cavell makes clear in the passage above, the moment when I find a disassociation between using words and meaning what they say, which is as much as to strike me dumb, is the moment when I am called upon to make my *own* meaning of the words, by intervening between the words I use and the meaning they have. But, as Cavell also says, this meaning that is my own creation cannot be other than what they ordinarily mean; in other words, there cannot be a special or private meaning that only I can attach to the words I use. Then what is the *use* of making my own meaning of the words? I think that, even if the meaning of the words I use remains the same, my relation to the words will be changed when I am able to make my own meaning of the words I use. In other words, I am forced to establish a new relation to the words I use and, thereby, a new relation to myself, as well as to the world around me. Cavell describes above the meaning involved here as akin to the meaning with which poetry is usually concerned.

Let me further elaborate on this point. One way of understanding "making my meaning" may be that I can now say that the words, whose meaning I already knew, come to me in a new light, concrete and alive: "Now I know what the words mean *to me*, which is the same as what I knew before *objectively*, but not exactly the same *subjectively*." To put it another way, the same ordinary meaning of the words has come alive for me, and I can see now what the ordinary meaning of the words exactly means: now I am living through the words. I think this is exactly what Cavell means when he says above: "What they mean, and whether they mean anything, depends solely upon whether I am using them so as to make my meaning." Echoing the words of Michael Oakeshott that "Philosophical reflection is recognized here as the adventure of one who seeks to understand in other terms what he already understands and in which the understanding sought is a disclosure of the conditions of the understanding enjoyed and not a substitute for it" (Oakeshott 1975, p. vii), Cavell concludes, "their (ordinary philosophers') philosophical procedure is designed to bring us to a *consciousness* of the worlds we must have and hence of the

lives we have” (Cavell 1976, p. xxv). In other words, ordinary language philosophy “strikes us dumb,” only to lead us to become aware of what we already know through our *lived experience* of it.

To explore further the nature of this awareness that ordinary language philosophers try to realize for us, let me quote more of Cavell's words:

The philosophy of ordinary language is not about language, anyway not in any sense in which it is not also about the world. Ordinary language philosophy is about whatever ordinary language is about.

The philosopher appealing to everyday language turns to the reader not to convince him without proof but to get him to prove something, test something, against himself. He is saying: Look and find out whether you can see what I see, wish to say what I wish to say (Cavell 1976, pp. 95–96).

From the passage above, we may draw out three distinctive features about what ordinary language philosophy is about. First, we can confirm that ordinary language philosophy is about understanding the ordinary meaning of the language we use, but only in relation to *oneself*. In other words, it may be said that it is about the understanding of what we already know, but only to *deepen* its meaning in relation to oneself. Thus, we can say that ordinary language philosophy is, first and foremost, directed to one's self-knowledge as the first-person knowledge of one's inner experience. Second, the kind of self-knowledge with which ordinary language philosophy is concerned is, given the passage above, not a matter of knowing but a matter of *seeing*: “Look, and find out whether you can *see* what I can *see*.” I think this indicates a crucial aspect of what Cavell's ordinary language philosophy aspires to, which has to do with its primary concern with first-person self-knowledge, since seeing is exclusively a first-person activity. Third, Cavell's ordinary language philosopher seems to have a wish to subscribe to a kind of realism: she assumes that what she sees could also be seen or shared by others, even if this is not something that could ever be a matter of objective proof or certainty of knowing.

The Educational Aspiration of Cavell's Ordinary Language Philosophy

We may now wonder: if ordinary language philosophy is a matter of seeing, “Seeing exactly what?” In fact, Cavell gives us a short response to this in the passage above, when he says that ordinary language philosophy is not about language, nor about the world, but “about whatever ordinary language is about.” This means that ordinary language philosophy is about the way we ordinarily use language to mean what we say – i.e., about our “language games,” in Wittgenstein's terms. And Wittgenstein describes what the ordinary language philosopher does as “the grammatical investigation” of the language game, which means unpacking the grammar of the way we ordinarily use language. This indicates that there is a special grammar or pattern in the ways we ordinarily use language, which ordinary language philosophers are supposed to make stand out for us. To make this grammar or pattern stand out for

ourselves, we need the form of account that ordinary language philosophers provide. What form would that be? In fact, describing ordinary language philosophers' job as "the grammatical investigation" of the way we use language gives us the impression that this project attempts to do something similar to what "transcendental argument" attempts to do.⁹ But, following Wittgenstein, Cavell clearly denies this view. To get a clearer understanding of what is meant by "grammatical investigation," let me quote Wittgenstein's words directly:

A main source of our failure to understand [our use of language] is that we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words.—our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists of 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*.

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. (Is this a 'Weltanschauung'?) (Wittgenstein 1958, #122)

From the passage above, we can say that Wittgenstein does not presume that his grammatical investigation can provide a transcendental account of the grammar of how we use language because "we do not command a clear view of the use of our words." He finds that we cannot ground or justify the grammar, nor explain it *for certain*. The grammar underlying the way we use language cannot afford the form of account his grammatical investigation requires. So, for Wittgenstein, the best thing we can do is to give an "intermediate case" that enables us to *see* the connections between things, for this will be the best means of attaining "a perspicuous representation," not of the whole but of that segment of reality, of the language-game, that is under scrutiny. Thus, the offering of careful descriptions of intermediate cases that guide us to see connections would be the form of account that Wittgenstein or ordinary language philosophers would give in such grammatical investigations.

What should be noted here is that Wittgenstein says of his "form of account" that it is "the way we look at things" in the passage above. What does this mean? How should we understand it? One way of understanding it may be that his form of account (of the way we use language) – namely, the perspicuous representation – *reveals* (or shows) the way we look at things. Wittgenstein then asks himself in parenthesis at the end of the passage above whether it (the way we look at things revealed here) is a *Weltanschauung*, a German word usually translated into English as "worldview," referring to a comprehensive framework of ideas and beliefs through which we as individuals interpret the world and interact with it. Cavell's answer to this question of Wittgenstein's is insightful: "The answer to that question is, I take

⁹ "Transcendental argument" refers to a kind of philosophical inquiry that seeks to spell out all the presuppositions that are necessary to make sense of experience, or all the objective conditions that are necessary to make our experience at all. The first technical distinction between the terms "transcendent" and "transcendental" was made by Kant. Kant reserved the term "transcendent" for entities such as God and soul that are said to be beyond human experience and to be unknowable. The term "transcendental" Kant reserved to signify prior thought forms: the innate principles that give the mind the ability to formulate its perceptions and to make experience intelligible.

it, not No. Not, perhaps, Yes; because it is not a special, or competing, way of looking at things. But not No; because its mark of success is that the world seem – be – different” (Cavell 1976, p. 86).

Cavell characterizes “the way we look at things,” revealed by Wittgenstein’s form of account of the way we use language, as twofold. First, his answer is “not Yes”; this means that “the way we look at things” *cannot* be said to be a *Weltanschauung* because it is not a particular – i.e., Christian or Muslim, etc. – way of looking at things, which is what *Weltanschauung* usually means. Now looking at the term in a different way, Cavell’s “the way we look at things” might be taken to refer to the *human’s* way of looking at things, as opposed to, for example, the bird’s way of looking at things, if this can be called a *Weltanschauung* at all. Second, Cavell’s answer is “not No” because “the way we look at things” can be changed as a result of our grammatical investigation, not because we are now allowed to *choose* another way of looking at things – indeed, we are not – but because things now seem different, *the world becomes different*. But what do all these points add up to? What do they mean? Cavell seems to say: we come to live in the (same) world in a *different spirit* (Cavell 1976, p. 86).

Thus, we may conclude that, when ordinary language philosophers ask us “What do you mean by the words you use?,” they do not mean to test out empirically the extent of our agreement, nor are they setting out to strike us dumb. They mean rather to exert a certain pressure on us to make us *see* “the way we look at things.” In other words, ordinary language philosophers try to *challenge* our very condition in using language as a whole, or our power to use language at all, by making us confront the gap between the words we say and what we mean by them, only to lead us to *see* the language-game in which we live, i.e., its limitation as well as its possibility. This seems to be a kind of realization that there is nothing that grounds our language except for our form of life, contingent though this inevitably is; and this seems also to be a kind of realization that leads us to see that it is only *I* who can decide to participate in this form of life to make sense of my life as human at all. This self-knowledge *as a human being* as well as *as a subject* is exactly what makes the way we inhabit the world become different. And this is a self-knowledge that is derived not so much from introspection as from attending better to the way things are.

Why is this kind of self-knowledge-as-seeing so important for education? I think this is because it makes us go back to our everyday life *in a different spirit* or *as a different being*; we *are* different now. Let me quote the way Cavell describes this:

The more one learns, so to speak, the hang of oneself, and mounts one’s problems, the less one is able to *say* what one has learned; not because you have *forgotten* what it was, but because nothing you said would seem like an answer or a solution; there is no longer any question or problem which your words would match. You have reached conviction, but not about a proposition; and consistency, but not in a theory. You are different, what you recognize as problems are different, your world is different. (“The world of the happy man is a different one from that of the unhappy man” (*Tractatus*; 6.43).) And this is the sense, the only sense, in which what a work of art means cannot be *said*. Believing it is seeing it. (Cavell 1976, pp. 85–86)

The above passage can be read as describing what the ordinary language philosopher aspires towards for us: a certain state of our being. Can we call it a state of "being educated?" We may describe "a state of being educated" in various ways: being equipped with high-level knowledge, being competent to think critically, being developed in moral ways, and so on. But I think that this list cannot be complete without that kind of happiness that involves a sense of being in harmony with oneself as well as with the world, to which the passage above seems to refer. Cavell also describes this state of being as a state in which human beings' "passion for their lives is at one with their lives" (Cavell 1976, p. xxviii). For Cavell, when one has reached this state of being, philosophy is not useful any more: its job for the moment is done.

What is noteworthy about Cavell's ordinary language philosophy as indicated in the above passage is that "saying" or "theory" matter less than "having conviction" or "seeing" aright. I think this aspect of Cavell's ordinary language philosophy is closely connected to his confession of the difficulty of "discovering when and how to *stop* philosophizing," which I raised early on in my discussion. Philosophizing consists of activities of speaking and thinking, typically taking the form of arguing, reasoning and justifying. But what ordinary philosophers aspire towards for us is a state of being that can be reached not by "theory" or "proposition" but by "conviction" or "seeing." Cavell makes an analogy between our way to this state of being and our way to the meaning of an artwork. This means that, no matter how powerful my philosophical argument for the truth of "the way we look at things" may be, or no matter how elaborate my explication about "the note of F# minor" may be, it will fall short of bringing the reader to *see* (or *hear*) it.¹⁰ For seeing or having a conviction is ultimately a non-mediated and only personally accessible first-person action.

However, the emphasis on seeing or personal conviction in doing ordinary language philosophy, as opposed to public persuasion or objective proof, should not be understood as a sign of subjectivism or of the impossibility of communication. It should rather be understood as an indication of the distinctively different way of

¹⁰ In *A Pitch of Philosophy* (1994), Cavell introduces an autobiographical example that shows vividly the way we have an access to the meaning of a work of art. According to Cavell, in his college music class, a famous teacher, Ernest Bloch, often introduced an exercise to the students by playing something simple at the piano, for instance, a Bach four-part chorale, with one note altered by a half step from Bach's rendering, and then with the Bach unaltered. Introducing these two versions, he asked the students if they could hear the difference. And then he went on to say: "my version is perfectly correct; but the Bach, the Bach is perfect; late sunlight burning the edges of a cloud. Of course, I do not say you must hear this. Not at all. No. But, if you do not hear it, do not say to yourself that you are a musician. There are many honorable trades, shoe-making for example" (Cavell 1994, pp. 49–50). Cavell confesses that he heard the difference, supposing that not everybody did, and describes how thrilled he was by the drama of this teaching because it made him interested in the understanding of what he heard as well as in the rightness and beauty of what he heard. I think that this sense of a private triumph about what we experience is exactly what ordinary language philosophy aspires towards for our education.

communication that is needed in ordinary language philosophy. For, when a person has come to see something and tries to communicate it to her interlocutor, what it is that is to be communicated cannot be directly said, no matter how hard she tries to convey it; she may be able only to circle around it in her words as a way of pointing towards it. This is not because what is meant to be conveyed is in principle something that cannot be put into words, but because, if it is put into words, the very nature of what is meant to be conveyed – i.e., *my seeing* it or *your seeing* it – will be ruined or obstructed; what matters is one's special relation to it. This is the very reason why Cavell says that ordinary language philosophers have difficulty in knowing “when and how to stop philosophising;” they can exert upon us pressure to feel or act in a certain way, but they cannot deliver this directly to us.

I think that from this fact we can draw out two important educational implications about ordinary language philosophy as a form of educational practice. One is that ordinary language philosophers must, in a sense, take a *non-authoritative* approach in their teaching. The other is that the aim of ordinary language philosophy as an educational practice is to transform the reader's (or the interlocutor's) *sensibility*, rather than to equip her with a certain set of abilities and competences. Understood this way, Cavell's ordinary language philosophy can be described as an educational practice that promotes the essay in Montaigne's sense as a kind of “trying-oneself-out” or “putting-oneself-to-the-test” or, in a sense, “self-study.” Cavell as an ordinary language philosopher tends to start with examples from literature, film or even normal everyday circumstances, but only so as to bring the reader into a philosophical reflection on what is meant by someone when she says a certain thing in a particular circumstance. In doing this, he often strikes the reader dumb by provoking her to respond in her own voice as a way of *recovering* the ordinary meaning of her words – that is, by becoming able to understand the ordinary words in a *different spirit*. In fact, Cavell's well-known philosophical writings on Emerson and Thoreau are examples of the essay as his own testing of himself (Cavell 1988, 1990). We can always hear his voice, which is triggered by some specific example and which is constantly engaged in a conversation with itself (much as is realized by the presence in the *Investigations* of Wittgenstein's interlocutor), sometimes in a self-confessing way, at other times in a self-testing way, on the journey towards a kind of self-enlightenment in the face of the familiar and everyday.

Conclusion: A Role for Philosophy in Teacher Education

Going back to our question in the introduction, we may now need to ask ourselves how the practice of ordinary language philosophy can contribute to teacher education. That is, what is its relevance to the (professional) lives of (would-be) teachers? Highlighting “the contested and often ambiguous nature of the work” in the delivery of teaching as one of the conditions that may drive teachers to philosophical abstraction, Hansen points out how philosophy can *humanize* teachers in such a way as to be responsive to the contested and ambiguous nature of teaching (Hansen 2001, p. 6).

I think this view can be a good way of making sense of Cavell's ordinary language philosophy in regard to its contribution to the life of teachers.

Cavell points out that, unlike in other disciplines where a teacher of literature is a professor of English and a professor of anthropology is an anthropologist, in philosophy a professor of philosophy is not necessarily a philosopher. This implicit remark underscores the point that being a philosopher or being philosophical need not require us to write philosophical works or to study serious philosophical literature. I think what is assumed here is the classical relation between philosophy and life, which is implied in an expression such as: "since ancient times, what theory (philosophy) was supposed to do was not to make life possible but to make it happy" (Blumenberg 1983, p. 232). Pierre Hadot, a well-known French scholar of the ancient philosophy, also says that for the ancient, "theory is never considered an end in itself; it is clearly and decidedly put in the service of practice" (Hadot 1995, p. 60). When Cavell says, "If silence is always a threat in philosophy, it is also its highest promise" (Cavell 1976, p. xxi), he seems to express the wish to recover this healthy relation between philosophy and life, a relation that has been jeopardized by the narrow professionalization of academic philosophy, far from the wider problems of human culture or human life as classically understood.

On the other hand, Cavell agrees with Socrates and Nietzsche who thought that good old men have no need of philosophy, not necessarily because they are old but because their passion for their lives is at one with their lives through the *experience* of a long life; their private passion is well spent, and spent without rancour (Cavell 1976, p. xxviii). Cavell holds that philosophy *must* be useful to life, for otherwise it will be harmful; this is why, where philosophy is not needed for life, it should be silent. Thus, we may need philosophy only as a way of recovering and enlivening our everyday life that has been flattened and alienated from us, and this is exactly the role to which Cavell thinks his ordinary language philosophy is committed: by making us more attentive to the familiar and everyday, so that we develop an existential and aesthetic sense of life that allows us to relish what exists in all its particularity and complexity, in its excellence, in the depth of things.

This relation between philosophy and life has a number of practical implications for teacher education and education in general. First, when the ordinary language philosopher as teacher-educator attempts to invite student-teachers to participate in doing philosophy, she does it as an ordinary person without any privileged position. She knows that she cannot have for her students the self-knowledge they need for themselves, and we are all placed equally in relation to it. Thus, Cavell says, "No man is in any better position for knowing it than any other man unless *wanting* to know is a special position," and he goes on to conclude: "this discovery about oneself is the same as the discovery of philosophy" (Cavell 1976, p. xxviii). I think this tells us how humble we should be not only as teacher educators but also as teachers in regard to what we *can* (and *cannot*) do for the growth of our students as persons. What is educationally significant about this self-discovery is that it can be a source of our genuine respect for our students as persons *with* the possibility of their own inner depth, no matter how young they may be.

Second, while teachers and students stand equal in the quest for self-knowledge, the awakened desire of teachers for self-knowledge puts them in a special position, that is, the position of being able to see the point of philosophical enterprise for their students, and thereby being obliged to take up an educational responsibility to *awaken* the students' desire to know themselves. However, the kind of self-knowledge at stake here is distinct from what is emphasized in the current educational discourse of "emotional intelligence" or "emotional literacy" that is directed to the cultivation of students' ability to understand their own as well as others' emotions and desires.¹¹ The latter psychological approach has its own merit in giving teachers and students technical prescriptions on what we should do in order to better understand their emotions, heighten their self-esteem, and attain balanced emotional control. But Cavell's philosophical practice aspires after a different kind of self-understanding for both teachers and students. It is the kind that is accompanied by a long-lasting *ethical* or *spiritual* effect on us, derived from our deepened self-understanding of what is true about ourselves.

Third, it is the case that, in this sense, everybody is in need of philosophy; it is almost inescapable because it is about our lives and about happiness, in a deep sense. Thus, Cavell adds: "If philosophy is esoteric, that is not because a few men guard its knowledge, but because most men guard themselves against it" (Cavell 1976, p. xxvii). This means that what makes philosophy look so irrelevant to student-teachers in the first place is not so much philosophy itself as the students themselves, who tend sweepingly to dismiss wonder and hope, confusion and pain, caused by philosophical questions, as irrelevant to their lives. Thus, what teachers as ordinary language philosophers should do is to lead students to take seriously the complex and ambiguous nature of their pain, wonder, confusion and hope they encounter in their everyday lives as a way of understanding themselves. This requires teachers to have courage to question their own teaching-and-learning experiences in company with their students. This aspect of Cavell's philosophical practice leads teachers to build up a kind of friendship with their students, at least in the sense that they are helping each other for the others to take a step into their own inner journey into self-knowledge.

Fourth and lastly, it was said that Cavell's philosophical practice can be best delivered and expressed in the essay-form of writing as "trying-oneself-out." For Cavell, philosophy is a form of writing (or reading) of someone else's work, such as a philosophical or literary text, or a works of art including film or painting. This means that philosophy as writing about (or reading) someone else's work is a way to self-understanding. What kind of constitutional features does this philosophical

¹¹ The recent discourse of "emotional intelligence" or "emotional literacy" in the practice of teaching and learning tends to highlight interpersonal sensitivity and emotional responsiveness not only as an effective pedagogical virtue but also as an educational aim. The term "emotional literacy" was coined and popularized in the 1990s in the field of positive psychology, especially in the UK, whereas the term "emotional intelligence" became popularized in the US by Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence* (1995).

writing imply? And what sort of text or works of art are more appropriate for this kind of practice? These are the key questions we will pursue in the next chapter to make Cavell's ordinary language philosophy more employable for teacher education or education in general.

Unlike "philosophical reflection as a form of action research," philosophical reflection as a form of essay is not concerned directly with educational practitioners' practical knowledge; it tends to view student-teachers primarily as free learners rather than as would-be professionals. While philosophical reflection as action research is interested in promoting self-knowledge as historical consciousness – that is, in coming to recognize our educational beliefs as historically constrained and culturally embedded – philosophical reflection as the essay form is directed to self-knowledge as philosophical consciousness, that is, to a knowledge of ourselves as human subjects obliged to find and speak in our own voices. In addition, philosophical reflection as action research is understood to be the practice of *public* discourse in which dialogical inquiry among practitioners is promoted, whereas philosophical reflection as the essay form must be a *personally engaged* practice in which an inner conversation with oneself is stimulated. The former is focused on the formation of professional identity, the latter on the cultivation of one's humanistic sensibility as a human being. No matter how different the two forms of philosophical reflection may be, I think that they can contribute to improving would-be teachers' practical knowledge in a complementary way. But, providing student-teachers with a more intense and focused experience of being free-learners themselves is something that has been widely neglected in teacher training programmes, even though this seems essential to the formation of that humanistic orientation that will help them face today's unprecedented educational problems and challenges with courage, imagination and vision.

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Chapter 6

Philosophy as the Essay Form of Writing: Cavell's Concepts of Voice, Method, and Text

Introduction: The Essay as a Form of Writing for Self-knowledge

The idea of philosophy as a form of *writing* is not unfamiliar to us since Rorty's and Derrida's well-known critiques of the Kantian view of philosophy.¹ The Kantian view considers philosophy's privileged job as "more than a kind of writing," i.e., the pursuit of something that goes beyond language in relation to the world. But the idea of philosophy as an *essay* form of writing specifically in Lukács' sense may be unfamiliar, because the term "the essay" is usually used for a kind of *academic* writing that is common to several disciplines. We are unfamiliar with Lukács' idea of the essay as a proper vehicle of philosophical practice precisely by virtue of its *literary* nature, i.e., something to do with the precise choice of words, the style and the fine nuances of meaning, which matters "as much as," and "inextricably from," the "content" of what is said.

However, it was this association that the sixteenth century Renaissance French philosopher Michel de Montaigne developed in inventing *the essay* with his book called *Essays* as a modern literary genre. The meaning of this genre is shown by the use of the verb "essayer" in French, which means "to try" or "to attempt." So, some scholars render the meaning of the title *Essays* to be "self-try-outs" or "tests-upon-oneseff."² In other words, for Montaigne, the essay was a form of writing in which the philosophical practice of "testing-upon-oneseff" is practiced and expressed. I wonder if this sense of the essay-form in which "the autobiographical" and "the philosophical" are structurally intermingled can be recovered for today's education as a pedagogical as well as a philosophical practice of writing.

¹For Rorty, philosophy after this critique is "a kind of writing" for the re-description of the world in a new way, whereas, for Derrida, philosophy is "writing about writing" for the deconstruction of "metaphysics of presence." See Richard Rorty (1978).

²See Hartle (2003).

When Stanley Cavell says that he wishes “to understand philosophy not as a set of problems but as a set of texts”(Cavell 1979, p. 3), I think he wants to describe the nature of his philosophical practice as something similar to what Montaigne attempted to do with his invention of the essay as a literary form. I also believe that Cavell’s philosophical practice of writing, which he describes with phrases like “fascination with the text” or “using oneself” (Cavell 1979, p. 3), aims at *self-knowledge*, which I consider is comparable with “testing-upon-oneself” in Montaigne. Thus, I boldly propose in this paper that Cavell’s view of philosophy is a way of reformulating Montaigne’s sense of the essay as a philosophical form, especially in the sense that he seeks a form of philosophical writing in which one’s spiritual connection to oneself is brought into life.

But to argue for this proposition with full textural evidence is not exactly the main concern of this chapter; I am more concerned with the internal structure of the essay as a philosophical form. How can “self-knowledge” or “testing-upon-oneself” be a structural part of the essay as a philosophical form of writing? I think Cavell assumes that there is something of “the method” to self-knowledge, even if he *appears* to deny it. I am tempted to claim that Cavell’s writing as the essay-form is a modernist form of philosophical writing³ in which this method to self-knowledge can be employed and practiced. Then, we can ask: What is the constitutive method of the essayistic text as the philosophical practice of self-knowledge?. What sort of educational effects does it intend for the audience? These would be crucial questions for educators if they want to employ the essay as a writing form for their pedagogical purpose. I think Cavell attempts to give us a set of answers to these questions. Thus, this chapter will focus mainly on the examination of his answers.

Before embarking on this investigation, let me briefly examine Montaigne’s idea of the essay. This can be considered to be a way of supporting, even partially, my proposition that Cavell’s view of philosophical writing is a reformulation of Montaigne’s sense of the essay as a pedagogical as well as a philosophical practice for self-knowledge. But it will also nicely foreground my analysis of the internal structure of Cavell’s philosophical writing as the essay form.

Montaigne and the Essay: Its Educational Nature and Purpose

According to Reda Bensmaïa (1987, p. 96), it was not Montaigne who gave this term “the essay” all the meanings it has carried since the Middle Ages. Coming from the Latin *exagium* that signifies both exact weighing and examination, the

³The term “modernist” here is meant to be associated with “modernist art” in which, in a spirit of experimentation, the traditions and conventions of the past are no longer taken for granted. “Modernist art” usually refers to artworks produced during the period extending roughly from the 1860s through to the 1970s. Modern artists experimented with new ways of seeing and with fresh ideas about the *nature* of materials and the functions of art, being highly conscious of the nature of their own practice. A salient characteristic of modern art is self-consciousness. This often led to experiments with form and work that draw attention to the processes and materials used. I think that the same thing can be said about the nature of what Cavell attempts to do in his practice of philosophy. We will see more of this aspect of Cavell’s philosophical project later in this chapter.

lexeme *Essai* and the verb *Essaier* “to try” already existed, being commonly used. In fact, for a long time, any prose text that represented a relatively personal point of view on any subject was automatically classified as an essay. But Montaigne was the one who invented it as an aesthetic form. What are the distinctive characteristics of this essay as a literary genre as created by Montaigne? Why did Montaigne deliberately create it as such a form in the first place? A fully-fledged answer to these questions would be beyond my academic specialty and our current purpose. I think that to carefully examine his Preface to the *Essays* can give us sufficient insights for our purpose about the nature and the style of his writing as the essay. Let me cite it in its entirety:

This, reader, is an honest book. It warns you at the outset that my sole purpose in writing it has been a private and domestic one. I have had no thought of serving you or of my own fame: such a plan would be beyond my powers. I have intended it solely for the pleasure of my relatives and friends so that, when they have lost me- which they soon must- they may recover some features of my characters and disposition, and thus keep the memory they have of me more completely and vividly alive.

Had it been my purpose to seek the world's favor, I should have put on finer clothes, and have presented myself in a studied attitude. But I want to appear in my simple, natural, and everyday dress, without strain or artifice; for it is myself that I portray. My imperfections may be read to the life, and my natural form will be here in so far as respect for the public allows. Had my lot been cast among those peoples who are said still to live under the kindly liberty of nature's primal laws, I should, I assure you, most gladly have painted myself complete and in all my nakedness.

So, reader, I am myself the substance of my book, and there is no reason why you should waste your leisure on so frivolous and unrewarding a subject. (Montaigne 1958, p. 23)

What an unusual preface this is! We usually expect from the preface to a book that its author will provide good reasons for readers to continue to read the book, such as the kind of enjoyment or benefit they would entertain by reading it. These reasons are also what will give the whole work an intellectual or literary authority over the readers. But Montaigne appears to be doing exactly the opposite, namely, deliberately undermining his authority as the author of his book. He says that the book is about his private and domestic matters that would interest only his own family and close relatives, and then gives readers a sort of warning that they should not waste their time on such frivolous and vain matters. What exactly is going on here? Let me interpret Montaigne's intention underlying this seemingly dismissive preface to better understand the nature and form of his essay as a *modern* literary genre.

Montaigne describes *the nature* of what he is doing in *Essays* as “private” or “domestic” because it is “myself that I portray” in his terms. What seems to be suggested here is a sense of the *inadequacy* of his writing for the general readership. But why does he need to suggest it? One obvious reason is that, since his writings were meant for his family and relatives for their recollection of him when he was gone, the general readers, who didn't know Montaigne in person, could not search for Montaigne in reading *Essays* in the same manner that his family and relatives might have looked for the original in reading it. In other words, the general reader cannot have a reference point by which the way Montaigne portrays himself would be judged to be right or wrong or found to be amusing and memorable, just as can

his close acquaintances. However, this obvious reason for his apparent dismissal of the general readership appears to stand at odds with Montaigne's words in the same passage above: "My imperfections may be read to the life, and my natural form will be here in so far as respect for *the public* allows." Here, we can see that he certainly assumes the presence of the public or general readership for his book.

How should we understand Montaigne's apparent suggestion of the inadequacy of his writing for the general readership? One way of understanding it may be that the "inadequacy" he talks about has more to do with the *manner* of his writing than with the content of his writing. In fact, writing about personal matters does not necessarily make the writing inadequate for the general readership. Think about Augustine's *Confessions* and others' autobiographies, which must have already been available to Montaigne. But Augustine's *Confessions* was for the praise of the just and good God, and was supposed to stimulate the heart and mind of man to approach God. Others' autobiographies, we can suppose, must have been those of noble deeds and glorious lives. Thus, it is reasonable to think that the inadequacy Montaigne seems to be concerned with in his preface is not exactly about the nature of the topic he would talk about, but about the manner in which he would portray himself in *Essays*.

In the second paragraph of the passage above, Montaigne claims that the manner in which he intends to portray himself is a "simple," "natural" and "everyday dress" with all the personal imperfections presented in it. What kind of manner is this? John O'Neill, a Montaigne scholar, rephrases it by saying that Montaigne in *Essays* "reads [and writes] with his body" as an "effort to keep body and soul together in family life" (1982, p. 2). Another way of saying it would be that Montaigne's writing in *Essays incarnates* the way he is in a low, vernacular and common manner, a way that is not reducible to any other forms of articulation. Montaigne says:

I want people to see my natural and ordinary pace, however off the track it is. I let myself go as I am... I speak my mind freely on all things, even on those which perhaps exceed my capacity and which I by no means hold to be within my jurisdiction. And so the opinion I give of them is to declare the measure of my sight, not the measure of things (Montaigne 1958, pp. 297–298).

O'Neill even calls Montaigne's *Essays* a "carnal inquiry" of himself. This means that the reader should expect nothing glorious about this portrait.

Thus, we may say that the reason Montaigne looks like abdicating his authority over the general reader has to do with the manner in which Montaigne claims to portray himself. He seems to use no (respectable) *method*, philosophical or literary, that might give him authority over the readers. Since the author does not have the method he abandons the glory. But we cannot naively accept what he says at its face value, so as to underestimate his seriousness for his project. Nor can we simply conclude that Montaigne's self-undermining preface to *Essays* would be simply an expression of modesty. Rather, as John O'Neill suggests (1982, p. 3), it would be wiser to take seriously what he says and to try to read between lines. One way of reading it would be to say that Montaigne *deliberately* invokes his own inadequacies for the general readership in his preface in order to give them a warning that they should *not trust* the presumptive literary authority of his published work.

What does this mean? Why does he want to give this warning to his readers? In fact, with this self-undermining gesture, Montaigne looks like leaving his fate as an author in the hands of his readers. The preface does not encourage readers to rush into the main body of his book with a sense of excitement. But nor does it sweepingly put off the readers' initial interest in the book, either. The preface appears to carry a certain degree of seductive power, which I think emanates from the straight honesty in the tone of his voice as well as the sheer simplicity in the style of his writing. This seductive power of Montaigne's is the only thing that can attract his potential readers' attention to his writing, and lead them to read out his hidden message, i.e., that the readers need to be prepared "to essay" their *own* literary ability of reading, or "to test" their reading of the text *upon themselves*. In other words, we can say that Montaigne's apparent dismissal or self-undermining gesture is a paradoxical way of inviting the readers, serious and attentive readers, to his philosophical journey to "self-try-outs" or "test-upon-oneself."

Montaigne says in another part of his *Essays* that "it is the inattentive reader who loses my subject, not I. Some word about it will always be found off in a corner, which will not fail to be sufficient, though it takes little room. I seek out change, indiscriminately and tumultuously. My style and my mind alike go roaming" (Montaigne 1958, p. 761). For Montaigne, then, it would be "the inattentive reader" who cannot capture his message hidden between the lines of his words, the one who stops at the first sense and remains in error. Thus, in order to make a proper response to Montaigne's invitation, his readers should be prepared to engage in the *learned* reading of Montaigne's writings for their deeper meanings, *learned* in the sense of being accompanied with "self-try-out." In doing this, they will struggle with error. But this struggle with error is exactly what his book title *Essays* means as "self-try-out" or "test-upon-oneself." Thus, we can conclude that Montaigne's preface is meant to announce a possible split in *Essays* between the author's writing and his readers' reading *unless* the readers seek out the pleasure of "learned reading" in alliance with the author's incarnate union of book and self. We can also see here that Montaigne assumes or demands a certain literary equality between the author and the reader in his preface.

Now we are in a position to see that the purpose of Montaigne's writing in *Essays* is not entirely for his family or close relatives but also for general readers. But we can still wonder why a man, who hasn't done any great and glorious deeds and who claims not to offer any authoritative teaching for the general readers, *presumes* that the public would be interested in his work. Related to this question, what motivates Montaigne to write his *Essays in the first place*? To write an essay in Montaigne's sense is to write one's being, one's conduct or one's ways of life. Why did he want to write about it? I think there are at least two accounts we can reconstruct from Montaigne's *Essays*.

The first account can be found in Montaigne's confession that "the desire to tell it seized me" (Montaigne 1958, p. 409). "The desire to tell it" here refers to the desire to give a public account of his being or his ways of life. He describes the nature of this desire as follows:

The Daemon of Socrates was perhaps a certain impulse of the will that came to him without awaiting the advice of his reason. In a well-purified soul such as his, prepared by a continual

exercise of wisdom and virtue, it is likely that these inclinations, although instinctive and undigested, were always important and worth following. Everyone feels within himself some likeness of such stirrings of a prompt, vehement, and accidental opinion: it is for me to give them some authority, since I give so little to our wisdom. And I have had some as weak in reason as violent in persuasiveness- or in dissuasiveness, as was more ordinary in Socrates—by which I let myself be carried away so usefully and fortunately that they might be judged to have in them something of divine inspiration. (Montaigne 1958, p. 30)

Here, Montaigne considers that everyone has this desire, calling it “divine inspiration.” But he says that this desire as divine inspiration is authoritative only *for* himself, acknowledging that it is not rationally justifiable. And Montaigne finally declares: “I am hungry to make myself known, and I care not to how many, provided it be truly.... I have a mortal fear of being taken to be other than I am by those who come to know my name. I am pleased to be less praised provided I am better known” (Montaigne 1958, p. 643). What sort of desire is this? Interestingly enough, the kind of being that he is so eager to reveal and give a public account of is not the quality of noble deeds, but the “morbid quality” (Montaigne 1958, p. 273) or the quality of “his weakness and his lowliness” (Montaigne 1958, p. 700). In other words, his self-revelation has nothing to do with honor or glory; it is rather potentially humiliating and shameful. But he is so eager to reveal the way he truly *is*. This desire may be understood as a desire to *be truthful to oneself* and, according to Montaigne from the above passage, it is a deep desire within us that is hard to resist.

However, it looks quite obvious from Montaigne’s words above as well as the words in the preface⁴ that Montaigne acknowledges that the pursuit of this desire for self-revelation is *not* rationally justifiable. He even asks himself whether it is reasonable that “I, so fond of privacy in actual life, should aspire to publicity in the knowledge of me?” (Montaigne 1958, p. 611). But, while admitting that “what I write here is not my teaching, but my study; it is not a lesson for others, but for me,” he also adds that “what is useful to me may also *by accident* be useful to another” (1958, p. 272; my italics). This can be considered as another account for his motivation to write *Essays*.

But, in my view, a more appealing and educationally more significant account of Montaigne’s motivation for his public display of himself is the first one, that is, *his mysterious desire* that seized him to give a public account of his opinion. I think there are some aspects of this desire that deserve our further attention because they are related to the nature and the form of the essay as a literary genre as Montaigne conceives it. For example, Montaigne acknowledges that each man experiences such movements of the soul, and he characterizes it as something noble by calling it “divine inspiration.” I wonder if there is something distinctively *new* and *modern* about this desire, at least in the way Montaigne pays attention to it as a mysterious force in each individual. My interest in this sense of desire will be directed to the question of whether and how this desire may differ from another supposedly distinctively modern desire in us, namely, desire for “self-assertion.”

⁴I mean Montaigne’s words from the preface cited above as follows: “there is *no reason* why you should waste your leisure on so frivolous and unrewarding a subject.” The italics are mine.

On the other hand, this mysterious desire of Montaigne's to reveal himself as he truly is in all his strangeness and defectiveness is the very force that made him create the essay as a kind of a literary genre. For example, the disorder (or absence of method) shown in his essay form of writing may be evidence of Montaigne's honesty, seriousness, and good faith in regard to the pursuit of this desire. For his being in the way he truly is cannot be completely captured in words, for the subject is by its nature elusive and can only be discovered by and in the movement of his own loss. Thus, Montaigne takes the fragmentary form of the essay as the most appropriate way of expressing or incarnating his being as fragmented and accidental as it truly is. In other words, the essay form is a response to the difficulty of capturing his constantly changing being, which his mysterious desire forever tries to capture.

Finally, we still can ask why Montaigne feels forced to give a *public*, not private, confession about his being. This leads us back to the earlier question about why he presumes that general readers might be interested in his work. Ann Hartle (2003) gives us a plausible answer: Montaigne's essays may be read as an attempt to *communicate* (not just to express) a soul. The openness and generosity of Montaigne's self-revelation seems to tell us that it aims at communication of his being and his soul to others. But where does this kind of confidence about his self-revelation come from? I think one of the principal justifications for Montaigne's claim to the communication of his being may be his discovery of the fundamental quality of the human condition (Hartle 2003, p. 68). Montaigne says: "I set forth a humble and inglorious life; that does not matter. You can tie up all moral philosophy with a common and private life just as well as with a life of richer stuff: Each man bears the entire form of man's estate" (Montaigne 1958, p. 611). Here, Montaigne seems to think that he can completely communicate his very being to others because he located that which makes him one with every human being. Now, "the desire that seized" Montaigne to reveal his being looks like a deep need within us that is waiting for its expression to *represent* a human desire, rather than to express a unique desire of a particularly fascinating human individual.

In conclusion, we may say that with his essay-writing Montaigne seeks soul companionship, or attempts to give himself in an act of friendship to readers, as if they were his family or close relatives in his private life.⁵ I think that this *new* kind of desire for a "*public* confession" is closely connected to the question of why Montaigne feels forced to invent the essay as a literary genre. That is, Montaigne needs to create the essay as a literary genre in order to find a (public) way of communicating his private being in search of soul-companionship. Of course, the invention of the essay as a literary (aesthetic) form or as a public form of confession has never been without difficulties in the history of literature. And these difficulties, I think, have to do with what Montaigne says as follows: "The one who does not guide others well, guides himself well; and the one who cannot produce *effects* writes *Essays*." (Montaigne 1958, p. 759)

⁵Montaigne says that he turns to philosophy and essay-writing "to make it (his being) appear in public a little more decent" (Montaigne 1958, p. 409).

Cavell's Philosophical Writing: Voice, Method, and Text

It was said that Montaigne invented the essay as a way of communicating the way he truly is or his being, which he describes as a private matter. But what does he mean by “the way he truly is” or “his being”? Is there such a thing as “the way we truly are” at all? Even if it is, how do we know if it is such a thing? For “the way I truly am” seems to be constantly changing. More importantly, the being that the essayist attempts to reveal is arguably mysterious to itself. What he arrives at in his repeated returns to himself is always something strange and astonishing, yet not transparent or fully comprehended. In response to this line of objection, Montaigne might give us an answer which goes something like this: “Yes it is *for* me, but only *with good faith*, yet without certainty; so I am not sure about your case, which is what you should find out yourself.” However, how can we give a (literary) form to something that is constantly changing, elusive, and mysterious? There seems to be a *real* literary problem in giving a (public) form to the private experience of “the way I truly am.” Thus, Hartle says that Montaigne’s writing always reveals “a kind of acknowledged *tension* between speaking at the level of unexamined common opinion and speaking at the level of the truthfulness of *good faith*” (2003, p. 68). This *aesthetic* problem, i.e., problem of *giving a form* to the essay (of “the way I truly am”), seems to derive from the *philosophical* problem of *seeing* “the way I truly am” in the first place.

I think that Stanley Cavell is one of the contemporary philosophers who seriously tackles this aesthetic problem. He does this with his idea of “the voice” in his practice of so-called “ordinary language philosophy,” following his teachers Wittgenstein and Austin in their philosophical spirit. Cavell himself didn’t seem to be fully conscious of “the voice” as a distinctive medium for his philosophical practice until the time when he embarked on his later work *A Pitch of Philosophy* (1994). But it is obvious from the fact that the presence of his voice(s) as a distinctive style of his philosophical writing is visible and pervasive throughout his writings from early on. So it is not far-fetched to claim that “the voice” is one of the central aspects of his philosophical project. For Cavell, an appeal to ordinary language in his practice of ordinary language philosophy can be characterized as an appeal to the (everyday) “voice” (Cavell 1994, p. 62). But how should we understand Cavell’s idea of “the voice”?

Timothy Gould, who was concerned exclusively with the philosophical method of Cavell’s writing in his book *Hearing Things* (1998), claims that in Cavell’s writing “the voice” as “the human capacity for speech and meaningfulness” (p. xi) is used not only as a philosophical theme but also as a philosophical method for self-knowledge. This leads us to think that Cavell’s appeal to “the voice” can be understood as an appeal to “the way I truly am” in Montaigne’s sense, i.e., my being “in my simple, natural, and everyday dress.” This means that “the voice” in Cavell’s writing is a philosophical medium through which “the way I truly am” is released, marked, or expressed. And Cavell’s philosophical writing can be described as “the essay” in Montaigne’s sense because his idea of “the voice” seems to provide us

with a (public) medium or method of communicating one's private being or the way one truly is.

However, "the voice" as "the human capacity for speech and meaningfulness" can also be understood as related to the idiosyncrasy of our personality as when we say, "She speaks her view in a *particular* voice." Or more broadly, we can say that "the voice" refers to one's unique identity in the sense that we cannot imagine two persons having the same voice. This is why Cavell's personal tone or voice pervasive in his philosophical writing is sometimes misunderstood as self-absorbed or subjective or even self-expressive. But I think that Cavell's voice is far from being meant to represent a mode of self-assertion or self-expression of a particular individual, let alone a mode of self-identity. Cavell instead often talks about "the *human* voice" or "*everyday* voice," the voice yet in a personal *tone* or with a personal *force*.

Thus, it is critical to understand the exact nature of Cavell's voice if we are to understand the constitutive method of Cavell's philosophical writing as the essay. So let me examine Cavell's idea of the voice, especially centering on its two counterpart literary elements in Cavell's writing, namely "method" and "text." These are the elements that are always structurally in tension with "the voice" in Cavell's writing. I think this examination will exhibit a set of answers to the two questions formulated in the introduction: What is the constitutive method of the essay (Cavell's) text as a philosophical form of writing, if there is any and what sort of educational effects does or can it intend?

Voice and Method

Cavell engages with the problem of the philosophical method to self-knowledge by conceiving the problem in terms of the recovery of the human voice in his philosophical writing. I think this approach is closely connected to his account of the relation of his writing to the enterprises of modern philosophy with analytic tradition.⁶ In this account, Cavell views the nature of his philosophical practice as a series of profound confrontations with his tradition and his self. According to Timothy Gould (1998, p. 1), what is so original about Cavell's philosophical practice is that he confronts two elements, namely his philosophical tradition and his self, in such a way as to make the tension between his "philosophical method" and his "voice" the main characteristic of his philosophical writing. What we may call the "constitutive method" of Cavell's philosophical writing as the essay can then be unpacked by articulating how the *tension* between the philosophical *method* and the *voice* in his writing is structured and is supposed to work as something of a

⁶I described in my earlier chapter Cavell's account of the relation of his writing to the tradition of modern philosophy in terms of two turns, "the historical and the intra-personal".

“method” by which we may acquire self-knowledge. By “method,” we mean the steps we take as philosophers and by “voice” we mean the way in which we speak our minds or express our perceptions.⁷ The tension between these is described by Gould as the tension between “the method that Cavell proposes to inherit from the philosophical tradition and the voice that inhabits those proposals and those methods” (Gould 1998, p. 6). This is quite schematic but will hopefully become clearer as we go along.

According to Cavell, “the voice” and “(philosophical) method” are structurally intertwined in a particular kind of (Wittgensteinian) ordinary language philosophy (Cavell 1994, pp. 3–5). For Cavell, ordinary language philosophers in this tradition are, on the one hand, arrogant in the sense that they arrogate the right to speak *for us* when they practice their philosophy by appealing to what *we* ordinarily say. For they pretend to address their issues *for humanity* when in fact they have no grounded authority to do so. In other words, ordinary language philosophers “brag for humanity” (Cavell 1994, p. 3) without any legitimate authority. Thus, this assumed superiority of philosophy for Cavell needs to be explained or interpreted. One interpretation provided by Cavell is that ordinary language philosophers’ arrogance, on the other hand, requires them to be based on “the autobiographical.” Here “the autobiographical” can be understood as referring to “the voice” or its characteristics.

But what does Cavell mean by the voice as “the autobiographical?” Cavell says that when he talks about philosophy in connection with the voice, he talks “at once about the tone of philosophy and about my right to take that tone and to conduct my talking, to some unspecified degree, anecdotally” (Cavell 1994, pp. 3–4). Thus, we can describe the way the autobiographical voice is present in ordinary language philosophers’ philosophical writing as at least threefold: in a certain *tone* of his philosophizing, in *his claim* to taking on the tone, and in some stories he gives from his personal life-experience. For Cavell, without this autobiographical authority of ordinary language philosophers from these presences of the voice, what they say is useless. In other words, the autobiographical voice is what gives authority to the philosophical method of ordinary language philosophy. How can this be?

For Cavell, the necessity of philosophy’s arrogance and autobiographicality as well as its openness about this necessity have deeply to do with what ordinary language philosophy is about. Cavell holds that the “philosophical method of Wittgenstein and Austin demands systematic engagement with the autobiographical” (Cavell 1994, p. 6) because what they do is “to lead words back from their metaphysical to their *everyday* use” (Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigation*,

⁷“Philosophical method” here can be considered as consisting of steps that are always to be taken by oneself and for oneself. Yet it is always to be re-appropriated from its point of origin, at once within and beyond its particular human inventor. I agree with Gould in saying that Cavell seems to think that there exist steps or routes to self-knowledge that are independent of particular persons and their spiritual accomplishment, even if “the steps or routes” here should not be understood as referring to the method in any conventional sense of it (Gould 1998, p. 26).

#116; my italics).⁸ Philosophers who practice ordinary language philosophy say things like: “What *we* mean by what *we* say is...” This does not mean that they wait for the agreement of others. They rather feel that they already have others’ agreement in being able to speak in the same language. For Cavell, this is what Wittgenstein taught us. But using the same ordinary language does not automatically bring us the *authority* to assume this. The only thing that can bring authority to our everyday language is “the autobiographical voice.” According to Cavell, “philosophers who shun the autobiographical must find another route to philosophical authority, the a priori or to speaking with necessity and universality” (Cavell 1994, p. 8). But how can “the autobiographical” be the ground for the authority of our ordinary language? Or what puts the autobiographical in that position? Cavell’s words cited above tell us that it is because “the autobiographical” contributes to “leading words back from their metaphysical to our *everyday* use.”

Cavell gives us a more explicit account of the autobiographical when he retrospectively comments upon his earlier writings that were in defense of his teacher Austin’s work against an attack that had dismissed it as *unscientific*. He says:

What I was unprepared to claim, what was systematically unsaid, was that the question of verification was exactly made to miss the interest of the new work, of its new claim to philosophy’s old authority, one whose power would reside in a certain systematic abdication of that authority (without resigning it to science, or to anything else). Put otherwise, I was unprepared to claim that the interest in the new philosophy lay precisely in the necessity and openness of its arrogance and autobiographicality, that these are not personal but structural features of the necessity to say what we say, that in thus laying their bodies on the philosophical line, and living to tell their tale, the likes of Wittgenstein and Austin must be tapping a dimension of philosophy as such (Cavell 1994, pp. 9–10).

A few features of the autobiographical are suggested by this passage. First, the autobiographical voice in Cavell’s new philosophy is supposed to reclaim philosophy’s old authority which was based on universally verifiable “objectivity.” Second, the way in which the autobiographical can reclaim the old authority is to systematically give up on the old authority. This means that the (autobiographical) process of giving up on the old authority itself is the very way of recovering the authority. Third, “the necessity and openness of its (philosophy’s) arrogance and autobiographicality” are not a personal but a *structural* necessity to say what we say. Our arrogance (or our rights to speak for others) as well as our autobiographicality (or our right to speak for ourselves) in Cavell’s new philosophy are *structurally* conditioned by our everyday use of language. This means that the autobiographical voice is already there when we say what we ordinarily say; it just needs to be acknowledged and recovered. Fourth, a way of acknowledging

⁸ What should be noted here is that Cavell’s emphasis on the autobiographical can also be seen as the philosophical response to metaphysics or our skeptical impulse to it. This is why Cavell says that “the necessity and openness of philosophy’s arrogance and autobiographicality is closely connected to the fact of philosophy’s humility or poverty essential in this arrogation” (Cavell 1994, p. 8). I think “philosophy’s humility or poverty” here refers to the groundlessness of our language (and knowledge) in relation to the world. This point will be further discussed later in this chapter.

and recovering this voice can be described as “laying their (one’s) bodies on the philosophical line, and living to tell their [her body’s] tale.” This may mean that the recovery of the autobiographical voice, which is also “our *everyday* voice” in Cavell’s terms, can be brought out with our constant struggle to align our everyday embodied life with our philosophical thinking in order to make sense of the embodied life.

I think the fourth point is especially important from the educational perspective. So let me cite more of Cavell’s words to further clarify what it means and where it is directed:

I have insisted that philosophy is interested in questions in its own way—call it a way in which the answer is not in the future but in the way the future is approached, or seem to be unapproachable; in which the journey to the answer, or path, or tread, or trades for it, are the goal of it. So the life of which philosophy is a condition will be seen by philosophy to be one that can take such an interest in itself. And since I am imagining the life of philosophy to be interesting to philosophy in its commonness, its representativeness, that life will be seen in its aspect of interest to itself, or in its failure of it, in what it is that preserves its worth for itself, what payments, what deferments, allows it to go on with interest; and that is perhaps its uniqueness (Cavell 1994, p. 10).

The above passage describes what the relation between philosophy and life would be like in our lives if we follow Cavell’s new philosophy. For Cavell, first, “philosophy” is a kind of enterprise that has its own kind of questions to pursue in the sense that the questions are the kind to which the answers would be found only in the journey or the path we as individuals would take into the future. Thus, whether we would find our answer depends upon the kind of journey each of us will take toward the future. The primary goal of philosophy is to prompt us to embark on the journey. Second, “the life of philosophy” is a form of life in which philosophy is a condition of life in the sense that life is interested in the kind of journey with which the enterprise of philosophy is concerned.

Third, if philosophy is interested in “the life of philosophy,” it is because that life retains what Cavell calls “commonness” or “representativeness.” So, the life of philosophy would be a form of life in which things are constantly viewed, judged, and struggled with in their relation to the commonness or representativeness of the life. In Cavell’s new philosophy, this is how the autobiographical voice can take on the representative dimension of the human life.⁹ And this is why Cavell finally concludes that “the autobiographical dimension of philosophy is internal to the claim that philosophy speaks for the human,” that “the philosophical dimension of autobiography is that the human is representative” and that “each life is exemplary of all” (Cavell 1994, p. 11).

The discussion so far leads us to conclude that “the autobiographical” for Cavell refers to the *inner journey* that each individual is expected to engage in through his new philosophy. This inner journey involves a process of *obtaining* the authority of

⁹Here, we should notice that the “commonness” or “representativeness” of the autobiographical is what we are supposed to *obtain* through the inner journey of struggle, not to be assumed or given. This makes the concepts of “commonness” or “representativeness” distinct from the concept of “universality” in Cavell’s philosophy.

what each of us ordinarily says. This, I think, goes some way towards explaining the sense in which “the voice” as “the autobiographical” is required as part of the philosophical “method” in Cavell’s new philosophy. But how is “the autobiographical” supposed to play out in Cavell’s philosophical writing as the essay form? For example, how would it be different from the autobiographical in other forms of writing or inquiry, such as “narrative” or “journal-writing,” to which an autobiographical element also looks central? I think an answer to this question will make clear the way in which “the autobiographical voice” contributes to “leading words back from their metaphysical to our *everyday* use.”

Cavell says that “not to shun the autobiographical means running the risk of turning philosophically critical discourse into clinical discourse (Cavell 1994, p. 8).” His phrase “clinical discourse” reminds us of the philosophical spirit of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy as *therapeutic*. Thus, we may say that the autobiographical element in Cavell’s philosophical practice or writing is supposed to play a certain role, that is, a role of curing us of the *metaphysical* use of the words, only to recover their *everyday* use. This particularly *philosophical* role is exactly what distinguishes Cavell’s philosophical writing as “the autobiographical” from other forms of autobiographical writing or inquiry. But the role is also what seems to constrain his autobiographical writing as part of his philosophical method. Let me clarify what I mean by this.

Following Wittgenstein’s later philosophy and Cavell’s ordinary language philosophy, Gould nicely sums up as follows a deep philosophical problem that the two ordinary language philosophers struggle with:

To say that we “speak the same language” is to suggest that we are in a state of intimate accord and need not waste time on unnecessary explanation... Not even a philosopher would just set out to deny such a familiar features of our language....And yet the study of philosophy often leads us to want something *more* from language, something it seems incapable of giving... At some stage in our efforts to pursue a thought philosophically, it is almost inevitable that we arrive at the sense that ordinary words are too crude for our purposes. But this is not the only way we become conscious of our words when we are engaged in philosophy. We may find ourselves that the difficulty in saying what we mean derives less from the poverty of language and more from the difficulty of seeing, and saying, the obvious. Here the difficulty is perhaps better thought of as stemming not from the crudeness of words, but from their obtrusiveness. We can at times be overtaken by a sense of being obtrusive in speaking and writing *at all*, as if we are in danger of betraying a kind of perpetual clumsiness in the face of the objects and events we are trying to understand....On Cavell’s account, Wittgenstein’s gaudy yet painstaking modes of writing have everything to do with this difficulty – but also the triumph and the pleasure – of seeing the obvious (Gould 1998, pp. xi-xii).

Gould says that philosophy “leads us to *want something more* from language” (my italics). We can refer this moment to the moment of what Cavell calls “the threat of (philosophical) skepticism.” Philosophy or philosophical skepticism tends to push us to go beyond language, as if there were something more than language, i.e., metaphysical truth of “the world” or “things in themselves.”¹⁰ Here, Cavell’s recommendation for our response to skepticism is quite original. While acknowledging the

¹⁰We can describe this philosophical skepticism as pretending to be “more than a kind of writing” in Rorty’s words. See Rorty (1978).

danger of metaphysical illusion which skepticism tends to conjure up for us, Cavell asks us not to dismiss skepticism as a whole either; he asks us to take its threat seriously, not because he believes that there is something more to discover beyond language but because he believes that suffering from this threat would lead us to *see* "the obvious."

But seeing the obvious of what? Wittgenstein would respond with "the obvious of *the form of life*." Cavell would respond with "the obvious of *how we truly are in our everydayness*." By taking the threat of skepticism seriously and admitting to one's being lost in the world by the discovery of the groundlessness of our language, we can also face a more ordinary and more terrifying region of disorientation between two kinds of dilemmas. Gould vividly describes the way we often encounter these in our everyday contexts:

Both of our dilemmas are worth attending to: you can hide from your (everyday) problems inside philosophy, and you can hide from your tendency to think by taking refuge in the world of everyday concerns. . . . Both of these forms of intellectual scrupulousness are capable of maintaining a provisional boundary between a philosophical problem and the human anxiety it may be connected to. But both also tend to make this boundary more permeable than most philosophers would like. Cavell uses Wittgenstein's work to further permeate the boundaries between what counts as properly philosophical issues and what lies "outside" philosophy (Gould 1998, pp. 10–11).

What Gould reveals about the point of Cavell's philosophical skepticism above is twofold. One is that, by pushing us to face the question expressed in what Gould calls two kinds of dilemmas, i.e., whether we hide ourselves from everyday problems inside philosophy or from philosophical reflection in our everyday concerns, skepticism can take us as far as into the truth, which is usually hidden from us, namely, the obvious of "the way we truly are in our everydayness." This means that it pushes our thought to the limit in which the boundary between philosophy and life is blurred, so as to open up a perspective on how and where we stand in relation to philosophy or life *as a whole*.

The other thing Gould reveals about the point of Cavell's philosophy is that this perspective on our selves is always open to, or in tension with, "what lies 'outside' philosophy," namely our everyday concerns. This means that it affects the boundaries between philosophy and what is outside philosophy in such a way as to make them more permeable. How should we understand this? One way of understanding it may be: the perspective on how I truly am now leads me to find myself standing at a crossroads, realizing that it is I myself who should decide which road or which interpretation I take *as mine* in the face of the dilemmas described above. To be able to take on what lies in front of me *as mine* would also be a way out of the dilemmas. I think this move will shed a new light on *the meaning* of the world of my everyday concerns, as well as *the meaning* of the world of my philosophical thinking. This is how the boundary between philosophy and my life is made permeable. I think this can also be a description of what Wittgenstein calls the recovery of the "*everyday* use" of our words from their metaphysical use and what Cavell calls the recovery of "the *human* voice."

What seems to me so enlightening about this whole process of seeing the "obvious" is the degree of honesty or seriousness it demands of us. Cavell says: "As an ideal

of one kind of philosophical criticism—a criticism in which it is pointless for one side to refute the other, because its cause and topic is the self getting in its own way—it seems about right” (Cavell 1976, p. 85). This means that, for Cavell, it is not the world but the self that gets in the way of our seeing “the obvious.” Thus, what is required for us is to discover this fact about our selves, not in the form of self-assertion with a position to take but probably in the form of self-confession with our being as it is to acknowledge. But in my view, this discovery of the fact about our selves in the form of self-acknowledgment seems to require of us an unusually high degree of honesty and self-openness, or a unique kind of seriousness, which comes close to what I see as the neutrality of philosophical method, understood as one of the old virtues of philosophy. Cavell, of course, does not want to call it “neutrality” when he says: “I assume that no philosopher who has been brushed by the threat of skepticism can be sure once and for all on which side of this question he or she has enlisted, that is, sure whether neutrality has been achieved here.” (Cavell 1994, p. 45). But he seems to want to describe it as a kind of spiritual and intellectual achievement as high as we humans can possibly reach *philosophically*. I think this high degree of honesty or seriousness with oneself can come only with one’s struggle for a kind of self-detachment or even impersonality.

The kind of self-detachment involved in Cavell’s philosophy makes us think that “the autobiographical voice” in Cavell’s writing is more than a token of a particularly fascinating human individual. It is also what distinguishes Cavell’s autobiographical writing from other forms of autobiographical writing or inquiry. How can this be achieved in Cavell’s writing? What kind of philosophical procedure allows his writing to achieve this degree of self-detachment? In reading Cavell’s writings, we always encounter more than one voice. This is why we find ourselves so confused and disoriented in following up his arguments, and Cavell is notorious for this style of his writing. Let me give you an example. Cavell says as his opening remark in the first chapter of *The Claim of Reason*:

I will say first, by way of introducing myself and saying why I insist, as I will throughout the following pages, upon *the Investigations* as a philosophical text, that I have wished to understand philosophy not as a set of problems but as a set of texts. This means to me that the contribution of a philosopher – anyway of a creative thinker – to the subject of philosophy is not to be understood as a contribution to, or of, a set of given problems... – And is the remark about texts and not problems itself to be taken as a philosophical text? It seems argumentative or empty enough, since obviously not all texts are philosophical ones, but only those that precisely contain problems of a certain sort! – The fact that the remark is short would be no bar to that status. Many philosophical texts are short....Some philosophers are able to make about anything into a philosophical text, like a preacher improving upon the infant’s first cry....Some texts are as long as long books, but generally treated as though they are sets of given problems, something between conundrum and formal arguments, e.g., Hume’s *Treatise*... (Cavell 1979, pp. 3–4).

How many voices can be heard from the above passage? There seem to be at least three voices present. Which one is Cavell’s? All of them perhaps or none of them probably. What is fascinating about his writings like this is that you can hear distinctively personal voices that converse with each other, voices that can be anybody’s, and yet are uniquely Cavell’s. Each voice seems to have its own force while

competing with each other in testing each other's voice. How should we understand this manner of philosophical writing? What does Cavell intend by this manner of writing? One way of understanding it is that the voices present here are struggling for the impersonality of philosophical method as a struggle between different selves or voices. This may also be described as a moment of the tension between the voice and method, a moment of the presence of multiple voices in a struggle for the method that can be accepted by others.

Cavell says: "In order to know the self, we have to relinquish the personal element" (Cavell 1979, p. 352). The personal element in Cavell's writing is not what he struggles to assert or achieve. The personal element seems to be what he is struggling *with*. And the reader is supposed to learn from this struggle of Cavell's by engaging with it vicariously. In engaging in this struggle with the author, the reader engages in a struggle for the impersonality of philosophical method, struggle within oneself for a perspective *on* the self. It is only from a special sort of angle that such a perspective can be seen as a truly "personal" one. Thus, we can say that the perspective on the self as an achievement from the inner struggle is "a voice" which is impersonal and personal at the same time. With the achievement of this perspective, the tension between voice and method resolves and the two appears as one in the writing. In this sense, the voice can be said to be both a medium and the goal of Cavell's philosophy at the same time.

Voice and Text

Now we can sum up as follows how Cavell defines the kind of contribution philosophical practice makes to human life: what makes philosophy be philosophy is its attempt to show *in words* how the obvious can be obvious. This explains why philosophy is necessarily a form of writing and why this form of writing is so essential to philosophy's achievement. Yet, this is also what makes the writing of philosophy both so distinctive and difficult. One thing to be noted from the first citation of Gould's words above is his suggestion that Wittgenstein's difficulty in giving the account of how the obvious can be obvious has everything to do with the difficulty of our *seeing* the obvious. This means that how to go about giving an account of the obvious is as much of an issue as how to go about seeing the obvious; the difficulties involved in both jobs are closely related to each other. I think Cavell deals with this difficulty not only by adopting the idea of "the voice" as a literary and philosophical device in his philosophical writing but also by shifting his idea from "philosophy as a kind of writing" to "philosophy as a kind of reading."¹¹

¹¹Gould describes this shift in Cavell as a transition from the method of ordinary language as appeals to the voice to the model of philosophy as a kind of reading (Gould 1998, p. 12). It is interesting to note that Gould thinks that this shift is made by Cavell as a response to a kind of methodological crisis or overload.

Cavell's idea of "the voice" seems to transform both the practice of philosophy and the idea of philosophical method. Through the teaching of Wittgenstein's later philosophy and writing, Cavell seems to learn that "the (philosophical) method" for acquiring self-knowledge exists, at least in the sense that the steps of the philosophical method can, in principle, be taken by anybody. But, Cavell also seems to think that we *cannot* and *will not* use the method because there may be some personal reason for such a refusal. This means that there may be a good reason for listening to Wittgenstein's or other philosophers' voices, but we should decline to pursue their method in our own philosophical practice. Why is it the case? What are the "personal reason" for this decline? I think it has to do with the very nature of "seeing the obvious" or of "self-knowledge" as the goal of Cavell's philosophy. What "personal" means in Cavell is that there is no point in "seeing the obvious" unless the act of "seeing it" is undertaken by a particular individual – Joe, Anna, Fred, etc. – with his own particular history. Then how is Cavell's philosophical method for self-knowledge supposed to work out for others? How can it be made useful for others who attempt to do the Cavellian practice of philosophy? Cavell makes a shift to the view of philosophy as "a kind of reading" to respond to this question.

We can consider this question in relation to Cavell's reading of Emerson and Thoreau. In his writing about these authors, Cavell depicts himself as struggling to know himself through their texts, i.e., philosophizing through reading. This is why I identify Cavell as an essayist, who is at one with Montaigne and Lukács in the sense that they all conceive philosophy as an activity of reading (or commenting on) someone else's work that already exists. How can we understand this model of philosophy as reading in Cavell, then? How can this activity of reading a text be seen as a set of steps of the philosophical method to seeing the obvious or recovering our human voice? By proposing what he calls the "theology of reading," which consists of three principles of ideas, Cavell tries to explain how this philosophical practice as reading can be transformed into a *pedagogical* practice of recovering the human voice (Cavell 1984, p. 52). The three ideas are those of "transference," "seduction," and "freedom." We can take these as the steps of philosophical method in reading a text. Let me reconstruct Cavell's account step by step.

Cavell introduces the idea of "transference" in saying that philosophy as the activity of reading a text is *therapeutic* because we ourselves *are read by* the text while reading it. Here, he makes an analogy between his model of philosophy as reading and the psychological model of redemption. Cavell says:

It ought to help to see that from the point of view of psychoanalytic therapy the situation of reading has typically been turned around, that it is not first of all the text that is subject to interpretation but we in gaze or hearing of the text. I think good readers, or a certain kind of reader, have always known and acted on this, as in Thoreau's picture of reading by exposure to being read..... access to the text is provided not by the mechanism of projection but by that of transference (Cavell 1984, p. 52).

Contrary to "projection" in a psychological sense, in which we *attribute* our own repressed thoughts and feelings *to* someone else or some other objects, "transference"

as a psychological concept refers to “our *redirection* of the unconsciously retained feelings and desires toward a new object” (Webster’s Dictionary 1976). And Cavell describes above “our redirection” of our feelings and desires toward “a new object” as follows: “it is not first of all the text that is subject to interpretation but we in gaze or hearing of the text.” This means that the situation of reading is “turned around,” so that, while we are reading a text, it is we, not the text, that are read or interpreted. In other words, while reading a text, we are expected to read it in such a way that we, i.e., our repressed feelings and desires, are read by the text. But what does “our *being read by the text*” mean here? How can the text read us? One way of understanding this would be to say that reading a text can help us understand ourselves (our repressed feelings and desires) or “listen to our voice,” just as a psycho-analyst can help us understand ourselves. But how can this happen? To answer this question, we need to go back to the psychological phenomenon of “transference” that Cavell mentions above.

I think that in a psychoanalytic therapy context there is often a moment when the analyst refuses the patient’s first effort at interpretation of her feelings or desires. Either by silence or by some other indications of refusal, the analyst declines to endorse the patient’s interpretation. Then, the refusal indicates further that the patient has to interpret her own investment in the act of offering an interpretation. This may lead to the patient’s transference into the analyst, creating a particular psychological state in the patient, i.e., her wish that her words or interpretation should coincide with the analyst’s perception of her. That is, she *redirects* her feelings and desires to the analyst’s, so as to merge them with what she thinks the analyst would think of her. If we think of “transference” in the context of reading a text, we may say this would refer to the moment when I am reading a text in such a way as to be willing to *listen to* and *be merged* with *the voice* of the text, *as if* it were mine. This seems to be what “our being read by the text” means. Here, the reader’s full receptiveness of, or voluntary obedience to, the text seems to be required.

However, how can this be a way of understanding ourselves or listening to our *own* voice? Or how can this help us understand ourselves or listen to our voice? For, at the stage of transference, there seems to be no distinction between my voice and the voice of the text. I listen to my voice by hearing the voice of the text. According to Cavell, just as our efforts to listen to our therapist as the therapist in the psychotherapy context is (if all goes well) “transferred” to our effort to listen to ourselves, i.e., our repressed thoughts and desires, reading a text as the text in the philosophical practice can be transferred to our listening to our repressed voice, namely, our *human* voice. Here, there are two things to be noted. First, just as our attraction to and trust in the therapist is critical for the occurrence of this transference in the therapy context, our attraction to and trust in the text also seem critical to the occurrence of the philosophical transference. In other words, a certain attitude to the text we read seems to be required. Second, just as “transference” to one’s analyst in the psychoanalytic context is not the goal of the therapy, merely being merged with the voice of the text may not be the goal of reading in Cavell’s philosophical practice. These are the reasons why Cavell needs two other principles as next steps for his philosophy as reading.

Cavell says that “the pleasures of appreciation [of the text] are succeeded by the risk of seduction” (Cavell 1984, p. 52). Here, the idea of “seduction” is proposed as the second idea of the model of philosophy as reading. This seems to tell us two things. First, once we are able to listen to the voice of the text, we are likely to be seduced by the text. Second, the fact that Cavell uses the word “seduction” implies that there is something dangerous and exciting about being merged with the voice of the text, as if it were mine. Or we can say that it indicates that embarking on a journey into the text opens up an *uncertain* space for the reader in terms of where she would end up. For, when we are seduced by something, we tend to be drawn to it, not out of sound judgment but out of mysterious yet irresistible attraction.

Then what is the point of Cavell's idea of seduction in his model of philosophy as reading? First of all, I think Cavell's principle of seduction addresses the nature of the text as the object of our reading. Cavell is well aware of the seductive power of a text or a teacher that pretends *not* to need audience or followers. In his foreword to *Must We Mean What We Say?*, mentioning Wittgenstein as such a seductive teacher, Cavell adds that “the great teacher invariably claims not to followers, i.e., imitators. His problem is that he is never more seductive than at those moments of rejection” (Cavell 1976, p. xxv). In other words, when a text (or a teacher) in question shows a kind of rejection toward readers or audience, it (or she) becomes most attractive to them. With his idea of seduction, Cavell seems to tell us that a proper text or a proper teacher for the model of philosophy as reading needs to have this seductive power. Then, what sort of text or teacher has this power?

Cavell says of the characteristics of the text that he is interested in for his philosophy as follows:

...the one [the problem] that is perhaps paramount in terms of my work on skepticism...is one I only mention here, namely, why or how the same silence, or rather the stillness of the text, the achievement of which perhaps constitutes textuality, or a text's self-containedness, should be interpretable ... epistemologically as the withholding of assertion, on which I have found the defeat of skepticism, and of whatever metaphysics is designed to overcome skepticism, to depend – as if the withholding of assertion, the containing of the voice, amount to the forgoing of domination. (Politics, p. 199)

I think that “the silence” or “stillness” of the text mentioned above is exactly what Cavell thinks makes the text seductive because of the gesture it makes for its own autonomy. A text's autonomy seems to be secured by its gesture of silence or stillness and its achievement of self-containedness or its own textuality, that is, its refusal to open itself up. But what is the purpose of this seductive refusal or autonomy of the text? Cavell says above that it can be understood as a gesture for the withholding of its own assertion. So why should the text withhold its own assertion?

I think that what Cavell calls the nature of “silence” or “stillness” of the text as a gesture for withholding its assertion is at the heart of the philosophical practice of reading as *therapy*. For, as Cavell says above, it is supposed to lead the text in question to avoid any confrontation with or domination over the reader, so as to leave the reader *open to* the experience of “the defeat of skepticism” and metaphysics *by herself*. By avoiding a certain kind of assertiveness or assertion, the text can function to ease the reader, so as to lead her to make a transition from the imitation

of the author of the text to independence from her or from the merging with the voice of the text.

But the silence or stillness of the text should still retain a seductive power to the extent that it shows its unwillingness to relinquish the presence of the reader altogether. For it is in the end the presence of the reader that constitutes the status of a text as the text in the model of philosophy as reading; the text needs the audience-reader to be read or to read it. This means that the principle of seduction in the model of philosophy as reading presupposes the autonomous power of the text in relation to itself, which goes beyond its author's exclusive authorship over the text. For the text is supposed to *wait for* the reader to join for the co-authorship over itself. This is how the seductiveness of the silence or stillness of the text is expected to work out in Cavell's model of philosophy as reading.

Cavell proposes "freedom" as the third idea of his philosophy as reading when he says that the risk of being seduced by a text is worth running because "the goal of the encounter with the text is not consummation but freedom" (Cavell 1984, p. 52). What does he mean by freedom here? And how can we achieve it as readers? Let me cite Cavell's words that can help us answer these questions.

In the picture of psychoanalytic therapy, casting ourselves as its patient, its sufferer, its victim (according to the likes of Emerson, and of Heidegger, this is true form of philosophical thinking), the goal is freedom from the person of the author. (So we might see our model in Emerson's "Divinity School Address," which seeks to free us from our attachment to the person of the one who brings message, an attachment in effect according to Emerson, of idolatry....). Presumably we would not require a therapy whose structure partakes of seduction, to undo seduction, unless we were already seduced..... (Cavell 1984, p. 53).

The above passage suggests that, in Cavell's model of philosophy as reading, the reader's freedom means "freedom from the person of the author" whose text he reads. But what does he mean by "freedom from the person of the author?" The reader seems now to be supposed to be on her own, disillusioned of the merging with the voice of the text, the voice which was in fact that of the author. But, in an analogy to the psychoanalytic therapy context, Cavell suggests above that the achievement of this freedom requires us to be able to acknowledge ourselves as "patients," "sufferers" or "victims." This acknowledgement, for Cavell, means the acknowledgment about one's epistemological confusion (similar to the psychological confusion of "transference"), namely, about the fact that I have mistakenly "redirected" my repressed human voice into the text. In other words, it is self-acknowledgement about the fact that it was *not* the text *but* I myself that read my repressed human voice. For the text ultimately remains silent in its self-containedness. Here, we can see how the seductiveness of the text by way of being *silent* and *still* prepares the reader for a way to her freedom.

On the other hand, the last sentence from the passage above tells us that this acknowledgment of ourselves as "patients," as an essential part of our "freedom from the person of the author," in turn presupposes that we have *already* been repressed and seduced by the force of the text. For the reader's "freedom from the person of the author" can be achieved only when she can acknowledge herself as a repressed "sufferer" or "victim." But how should we understand the psychological

term “repression” in Cavell’s model philosophy as reading? In the context of Cavell’s ordinary language philosophy, we may say, “repression” refers to the fact of our being repressed by our skeptical impulse to speak outside of language-games. In the context of his model of philosophy as reading, we can see it as referring to the reader’s *problematic* attachment to the text, or more accurately, to the voice of the author or “*the person of the author*” whose text she reads. What should be noted here is that this is the attachment that was generated by the *seductive* teacher or *the seductive voice of the author* of the text, not necessarily by the text per se. Thus, in the model of philosophy as reading, it seems required for the reader to be attached to or seduced by “*the person of the author*” at first as a form of repression, but only for her to attain freedom from *that* person. But what is the point of this freedom from “the person of the author?” I think the point is that it is a kind of freedom which leads the reader to *begin* to establish a new relation to *the text*. The latter is exactly what Cavell means by “the recovery of one’s human voice.”

I think Cavell’s notions of freedom, “freedom from the person of the author” and freedom for a new relation to the text, can be achieved only when the text the reader reads is structured in a certain way. This is the question related to the relation between readers (or writers) and the text. So let me examine it by starting with Cavell’s slightly puzzling question: “What is a text that it has this power of overcoming the person of its author?” (Cavell 1984, p. 53). In this question, Cavell wants to address the relation between the philosopher-writer and the text she writes. He seems to claim here that, in writing a text as a response to the philosophical text she reads, the philosopher-writer is supposed to create a text that has a power to overcome the person of herself or her attachment to herself, i.e., her own authorship over the text.

What kind of text is this? How can it be created? If we imagine the kind of context in which the philosopher is interested in writing her text as a response to a prior text she reads, we can conceive at least three parties involved in the context: (1) the empirical self of the philosopher-writer who addresses the audience of her text, (2) the non-empirical self of the philosopher-reader who is concerned with reading and receiving the prior text, and (3) the text itself as an independent quasi-autonomous entity the philosopher reads. What is so challenging about the philosopher’s writing in terms of the idea of freedom is that she is expected to carry out double tasks: to find a way of addressing her work in such a way as to get herself free from her attachment to the prior text she reads, as well as to get the potential audience-readers free from their attachment to the text she writes. In raising the question above, “What is a text that it has this power of overcoming the person of its author?,” Cavell seems to suggest that the only way to deliver the double task is to write a text that “has this power of overcoming the person of its author,” namely, deliberately abdicating her authorship over her own text. What does this mean?

Let me follow Cavell’s words:

But what is a text that it has this power of overcoming the person of its author? We can learn this, many of us have been forever saying, only by letting ourselves be instructed by texts we care about. For someone who thinks this way, there lies in wait what you might call the paradox of reading: I was just saying in effect that you cannot understand a text before you

know what the text says about itself; but obviously you cannot understand what the text says about itself before you understand the text. One way of investigating this is to ask whether "before" bears meaning in this formulation, and if not, whether there is a paradox here. Another is to say that what you really want to know is what a text knows about itself, because you cannot know more than it does about itself; and then to ask what the fantasy is of the text's knowledge of itself. (Cavell 1984, p. 53)

The above passage tells us about the kind of the text that has a power to "overcome the person of its author." According to the passage, it is a kind of the text which achieves this power not by itself but by how it invites the reader to approach it. For example, we as audience-readers tend to appreciate this power of the text only when we care about it to the extent that we let "ourselves be instructed" by it. But Cavell says that there is a paradox of reading involved in this process; for we as audience-readers cannot care about the text before we understand it, and we cannot understand it before we understand "what the text says about itself." Thus, what is at stake now in regard to a text's power to "overcome the person of its author" is to know "what a text knows about itself." But, since "what a text knows about itself" is always more than what we as audience-readers know about it, that is, out of our reach, we should ask ourselves what is "the fantasy" we have of "what the text knows about itself."

But what does Cavell mean by "the text knows about itself" in the passage above? Why can we have a fantasy of such a thing? On the face of it, this phrase suggests the absurd idea that the text has its own consciousness. I think that through this expression Cavell tries to suggest a certain constitutional feature of the text, namely, a *reflexive* structure: a structure that makes the text reflexive of itself, or self-referential. I think this interesting and puzzling feature of the text is required to meet a demand that we might call the text's "consciousness of its audience-readers." What does this mean? Or what sort of effect is this reflexive structure supposed to produce? The answer to this question will be the same answer to the question of why we need to have the fantasy of "what the text knows about itself" at all.

Let me cite more of Cavell's words:

The sentence I cited from *Walden* about sitting still long enough knows, for example, all about the seductions of this writing—its writer is sitting still, maintaining silence, in what he calls an "attractive" spot in the woods.... The text he is producing, for our conversion, is based, along with some other things, on an equation between morning (as dawning) and mourning (as grieving). ...What bears here on the idea of a text as therapeutic is the structure of what I call in my book on *Walden* its "immense repetitiveness," something you might think of as a capacity for boredom, ... Now the repetition of each fact in one's attachment to an object gone, an effort to undo or release the ties of association strand by strand, is part of the work of realization of loss that Freud and principally after him Melanie Klein recognize as the work of mourning. They call it reality-testing, a subjection to the verdict of reality that one's attachment to an object is to undergo severing... (Cavell 1984, p. 54).

The passage above suggests a few distinctive features of what I call "reflexive text." First, the reflexive text is supposed to be seductive for audience-readers, in order to lead them into a new way of seeing things, a "conversion." Second, the way it leads us as audience-readers into conversion is "therapeutic" by having a structure of "immense repetitiveness" which causes us an effect of boredom. But, third, this

boredom is exactly expected to be an effect of going through a long and painstaking process of audience-readers' undoing their attachment to an object (or a text) that has gone. I think that "the text that knows about itself" is the text that structurally allows this kind of interaction between audience-readers and itself.

What is the literary effect of this reflexive text? I think its reflexive features are designed to lead us as audience-readers to disassociate the text from the author, so as to become more conscious of the relation between the text and the author. And it thereby opens up a space in which the audience-readers' act of taking an interest in the text is merged with the author's act of relating herself to the text. This is an event of transference, or conversion in Cavell's terms, in which there is no distinction between my voice and the author's voice. The author's relation to the text is transferred to the audience-readers' relation to the text; or we audience-readers *recognize* our own voices in the author's relation to the text. But the reflexive text with a textural device like "immense repetitiveness," through which the audience-readers' relation to the text is newly established or "sloughed off" in Cavell's terms (Cavell 1988, p. 114), tends to lead audience-readers to the point where there is no point in making a clear distinction between the personal identities of the audience-readers and the person of the author in relation to the text. In a sense, our voices tend to converge in a shared human ground in relation to the text. This may be another sense of what Cavell means by being free from one's attachment to "the person of the author."

Likewise, if we are philosopher-writers who write a text in response to a particular philosophical text, we are expected to *construct our text in a reflexive manner*. This will allow the interest of audience-readers in the prior philosophical text and their interest in the philosopher-writers' criticisms to become *merged* with one another. This way, philosopher-writers invite audience-readers to merge *their* own acts of taking an interest in philosopher-writers' words for their experience with *their* acts of taking an interest in the text. This is how audience-readers as well as philosopher-writers become free from their attachment to the person of the author of the prior text. And this freedom of the readers is made possible only by a reflexive structure of the text in question, which allows the text to achieve its autonomy or impersonality. This autonomy or impersonality of a text is a key to audience-readers' as well as philosopher-readers' freedom in relation to the text. We have to notice here that readers' freedom can be achieved from their own act of *merging* the voices of different agents on the prior text and that this act of merging voices is in the end what makes their voices as readers (or writers) representative of the human.

If we view philosophy as reading and the philosopher as the essayist who is engaged in this reading, we as audience-readers are to be encouraged to step into the shoes of the philosopher-readers and begin to engage in the process of their reading. That we have stepped into the middle of someone else's activity of reading invites us to examine what we find representative about that reading. In turn, we are invited to extend our reflections in order to see what is representative about our ability to take the steps. Thus, we can say that what presents itself as "personal" or "the autobiographical voice" in Cavell's texts has more to do with Cavell's response to a specific

philosophical text. And his responses to the text in question are almost always intended as *representative* responses, not responses belonging to him alone.

Of course, we as audience-readers may fail to recognize our own voices in the philosopher's various reconstructions of responsiveness. For example, if I follow Cavell's words too closely, then I cannot precisely find anything at all. Or I may follow the wrong thing about his words, failing to listen to what his words might have in common with another's words. What is worse, it would be possible that I could still not show my personal responses, even if I read through whole books of Cavell. This is exactly the consequence of the tension between the voice and method in Cavell's work. It is a kind of consequence which I think any essay cannot avoid bringing about, a consequence which derives from the tension between "the voice" as the need to find the words that will allow me articulate the depth of my position, and "method" as the need to find words that will let others acknowledge my position as one that they can share. In the end, this tension is something with which we as audience-readers can and must engage within ourselves.

Conclusion: The Philosophical Voice and the Essay

Gould gives a helpful summary about the characteristic of Cavell's model of philosophy as reading. According to him (Gould 1998, p. 148), there are three kinds of "reversals" that are supposed to take place in Cavell's model of philosophy as reading. First, it is the reversal of the one who is producing a philosophical text into the position of one who is reading a prior text. This means that the philosopher turns from the position of one engaged in the work of producing a text or discourse to the position of one who is engaged in reading an existing text. The second reversal is the reversal that converts the philosopher from the position of reading the prior text into the position of one who is being read by the prior text. This is closely associated with the analogy between philosophy as reading and psychoanalytic therapy in Cavell's work. The third reversal involves the reversal of the role between philosopher-writers and audience-readers. This means that something in philosopher-writers' texts must enable audience-readers to assume the role of the readers in relation to the prior text and to take on the activities and responsibilities that such a role implies.

I think this description of Cavell's model of philosophy as reading can well support my view of his philosophical writing as the essay in which writing and reading are a set of interactive pedagogical practices to self-knowledge. Cavell's view of philosophy as reading also gives us some insights into how the educational relation between teachers and students can be set up around the essay form of writing. When we view the essay as a pedagogical form of writing-and-reading activity, we can think of students as audience-readers and of teachers as philosopher-readers. In order to expose students to the reflexive text and to encourage them to respond to the reflexive text, teachers need to be able to deliver the double task: being able to respond to the text in their own voices and at the same time being able to present

their voices to the students as a reflexive text. The reflective structure does not need be considered the feature of the text alone; it could be the structure of teachers' teaching activity in the classroom. Of course, the double task may be challenging for teachers to command. But it may be one of the most promising ways by which we can lead our young generation to be able to participate in a conversation of humanity in an educationally irreplaceable way, namely, such a way as to appreciate different voices of humanity without unnecessary competition for self-assertive argument, nor suppression of the individual's voice.

To properly measure the educational significance of the last point, let me point out a few educationally important aspects of Cavell's idea of "the voice." First, Cavell's voice is the voice we need to *recover*. But we cannot recover it unless we have *experienced* its exclusion and repression. Thus, Cavell almost acknowledges the rightness and inevitability of the repression by philosophical means, but only to recover the repressed voice. For Cavell, the philosophical drive to emptiness in our words is inseparable from the wish for transcendence. He interprets the skeptic's wish to speak outside of language-games as a version of the wish for transcendence. But he also thinks as if something about the very impulse to philosophy or transcendence would itself forever block us from achieving the ambition of philosophy, that is, the recovery of the human voice. Or we can say that it is as if we have to learn from philosophy itself how to give up what we know of philosophy or as if this were the only way to put ourselves in a position to inherit philosophy. Thus, we can say that, for Cavell, philosophy is supposed to play a paradoxical role for the educational purpose.

Secondly, Cavell's work often gives us the impression that the words are returning from a kind of lifelessness in the recovery of the everyday. But it is a lifelessness for which no one in particular is responsible. For the skeptical impulse to speak outside of language-games and to derive one's words of the voice in which they are uttered is *not* exactly the responsibility of any one person or any one text.¹² Thus, to recover the voice that the skeptical impulse has banished is consequently *not* to recover the voice of some particular author or text. But this is the voice that we pursue in "philosophy as reading" to refuse the separateness from, or the lifelessness of, the everyday and to be reconnected to it as the goal of our reading. It is a philosophical voice with the dress of a first-person voice. This is why this voice is not a voice of one's self-assertion, rather a voice that can reflect upon the skeptic's (or metaphysician's) self-assertive voice as a way of resisting it.

Thirdly, Cavell's voice is a philosophical device which voices the force of silence. For Cavell, what philosophy in the Kantian sense demands in the name of rationality

¹²According to Cavell, it is derived from the way we ordinary use language. In using language, we tend to conjure ourselves up with the idea of 'an absolute relation to the world' because the way we are attuned to criteria in using language is so intimate and absolute. This means that it tends to lead us to project our agreement in using language into our relation to the world. Thus, it is almost inevitable for us to be confused or obtrusive with words in using language in regard to our knowledge about the world. That is to say, our wish for, or obsession with, the objective or metaphysical truth is derived from the way we ordinarily use language. In this sense, what prevents us from seeing the obvious is ourselves, the way we are as embodied linguistic creatures.

is the repression of (our everyday) voice, or confession or autobiography. Thus, Cavell identifies his kind of philosophical investigation as a form and work of confession or autobiography which can be a way of recovering the voice having been repressed by this tradition. According to Cavell, what is wrong with the Kantian philosophy is its identification of truth with what is *assertible*. This means that, for Cavell, there still seems to be a way of identifying matters of truth with what is non-assertible, or confessional, in one's relation to the world.¹³ So, for Cavell, philosophy is *more* than "a kind of writing" (Rorty 1978, p. 143), since there is something between language and the world which can be found only in the force of silence or unassertiveness. Hence, we can say that the model of philosophy as *reading* is exactly how Cavell formulates philosophy as more than "a kind of writing," i.e., philosophy that is attentive to the silence between language and the world. For Cavell, "this is not a silence that can be found once and for all at the limit of philosophy, but rather philosophy ever and again is to re-find its silence at the limit of human" (Cavell 1994, p. 117).

Philosopher-teachers as essayists are concerned with "making sense" of a philosophical text in pursuit of the non-assertible truth about ourselves, whether the text is in the form of film or literature. And in delivering and presenting this text in a reflexive manner, they lead student-readers to be open to the experience of acquisition of meaning similar to that which they have achieved. The essays in a reflexive form hide nothing. They are entirely readable. But this is not because they are easily seen through but because they reward anyone who digs beneath their surface. Voices in the essays converse not because they are lacking in organization but because that is the only way we can bring our thoughts in the way we mean it. There is no straight line or method in the essay as we conventionally think of because it cannot be given (e.g., planned, structured) ahead of its own course of work. This means that philosophical writing in the essay-form requires endless reworking by the writer and readers to furnish its alteration as well as to keep the conversation over the text going.

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¹³Cavell criticizes that Rorty and Derrida haven't explored or refused to explore this path in their critique of the Kantian philosophy. See the chapter 2 in Cavell (1994).

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Chapter 7

Cavell's Essayist as the Political Self: Implication for Citizenship Education

Introduction: The Private, the Philosophical, and the Political

If we can call Cavell's ordinary philosopher the essayist, what kind of citizen would she make as a member of her society? Is her political sensibility inherently conservative or progressive? Is he elitist or egalitarian? Cavell addresses these questions in his book *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (1990) by calling his philosophical practice in a socio-moral context "moral perfectionism."¹ But the way he gives us an answer never seems straightforward. In the introduction to his book, Cavell describes his essayist, or "moral perfectionist," in her own terms, as a kind of person who tries "to be true to oneself, true to the humanity in oneself" through her inner journey that begins "by finding oneself lost to the world, and requires a refusal of society, perhaps above all of democratic, leveling society, in the name of something often called culture" (Cavell 1990, p. 1). Cavell also describes the practice of his moral perfectionism as "revolutionary" rather than progressive, and "honoring democracy" rather than being democratic in itself (Cavell 1979, p. xxv; 1990, p. 1). What do all these add up to? How would these remarks place his moral perfectionism in a broader context of contemporary political debate on the liberal agendas such as "social justice," "equality" and "power"? I think a set of answers to these questions may be reconstructed by our close examination of the concept of subjectivity underlying Cavell's moral perfectionism, especially its assumptions of society and the relation between the individual and society.

According to Andrew Norris, Cavell's view of "the political" is quite similar to Socrates' in the sense that both believe "the activity of philosophizing is where *private*

¹By the practice of (Emersonian) "moral perfectionism," Cavell refers to a mode of philosophical thinking that can be shared with Wittgenstein and Heidegger, counter to a mode of philosophical thinking as reasoning. This is a mode of thinking in which one tries to make one's thoughts and feelings *intelligible to oneself* (Cavell 1990, p. xi).

deeds take on a *public* significance" (Norris 2006, p. 83).² What does this statement mean? One way of understanding it may be drawn out from Plato's Dialogue *The Apology*. Socrates, in response to a charge against him for corrupting the youths in Athens, attempts to plead for himself by saying as follows: all he tried to do *with* his philosophizing was to busy himself in people's private affairs for the highest welfare of the souls of the Athenians and there is nobody who cares about the city of Athens as much as he does (Plato 1961, p. 16). Socrates also adds that throughout his life he tried to remain the same person in any public duties as he was in his personal dealings (Plato 1961, p. 18). Here, we may conclude that, for Socrates, the practice of philosophizing makes us good citizens by way of making us good persons and that "the line between the public and the private is not the one that can cleanly separate an agora from a household" (Norris 2006, p. 82). If Cavell's view is similar to this ancient model, as Norris describes, it appears to be in tension with the modern model, especially the Rawlsian model of political liberalism in which a separation between the public and private is taken for granted as two different social realms with two different ways of governing our thoughts and behaviors. In the latter model, being a good citizen is conceptually distinct from being a good person, while the public as a realm of the right tends to be prioritized over the private as a realm of the good. But, for Cavell, as for Socrates, this very separation is supposed to be taken as problematic, as something with which each of us should personally work out through our philosophical practice; this is why being a good person seems to be prioritized over being a good citizen. In other words, for Cavell, the philosophical is the very element that makes a man of nature *turn into* a man of the city. How, exactly, is this possible?

When it comes to the issue of the private-and-public split in a contemporary political philosophy discourse, Rorty's concept of "the liberal ironist" as the post-modern ideal of the educated comes to mind. The liberal ironist is a person who is devoted to the Romantic ideal of self-authenticity in her private life, while remaining in her public life a liberal who is concerned with social justice in its minimum sense, i.e., in the sense of not being cruel to others (Rorty 1989, p. xv). This view has been harshly criticized by many philosophers.³ One of the educationally interesting criticisms made by Richard Bernstein (1993) holds that virtues of "kindness"

²Here, we should notice that Norris views "the political" as equivalent to "the public." I think this can be true of the case with Cavell. The separation between "the political" and "the public" as social realms is an uniquely modern phenomenon, according to Taylor (2008, p. 188) and Habermas (1989); the political as a realm of institutional apparatus for the distribution of power and the public as a realm of civic discussion and activity where people come to a common view about important matters in society. Cavell's moral perfectionism seems to be directed to the recovery of the ancient model where the two realms are considered indistinguishable, even if both realms are now considered internalized into the mental space of individuals in their nature.

³This form of the private/public split in Rorty's liberal ironist has been harshly criticized, mostly by the Enlightenment camp, on the ground that it makes the liberal ironist *politically* dubious. One line of criticism holds that this political dubiousness comes from Rorty's attempt to disconnect (literary) philosophy from politics, a disconnection that, on a social level, looks practically impossible. For example, Thomas McCarthy (1990, pp. 365–367) points out that, if we consider Rorty's literary philosophy as "a kind of writing," "writing" inevitably belongs to the public sphere that

or “decency” as possessed by Rorty’s liberal ironist are not thick enough to provide social solidarity for liberal democratic society. Pointing out the *psychological* implausibility of the liberal ironist, Bernstein concludes that it is politically dubious because he is likely to become a “narcissistic aesthete” who is cynical about public responsibility (Bernstein 1993, p. 287).

I don’t think that Rorty’s concept of liberal ironist is psychologically implausible *just because* it is based on the private-and-public split, as Bernstein claims. For the split is rather a kind of psychological condition that we cannot avoid living with as a price to pay for living in a pluralistic liberal democratic society. We often think of one thing in private and act on another in public, not only for political convenience but also for moral reasons, i.e., to coexist with others from different political, cultural, and religious backgrounds. But I think that Bernstein’s worry about Rorty’s concept of a liberal ironist is justified *because* it is hard to know what would motivate “the ironist” to become “a liberal” who is concerned with social solidarity and public justice. My point is that the public–private split is endemic to the society of (post)modernity; thereby what is to be at stake is not whether we should accept the split as our psychological fact, but rather *in what spirit* we should take it. Thus, it may be more discreet to take advice from Hugh Grady’s words as follows: the public–private split “is ideological to the extent that it justifies the cruel necessity of power, but utopian and critical in that it posits and attempts to live out an ideal which the all-too-real world will not fully allow” (Grady 2002, p. 114).

Given Grady’s criterion, Rorty’s view of a liberal ironist cannot exactly be blamed for being “ideological” because it cannot be said to justify “the cruel necessity of power,” since his liberalist would be someone who cares about others’ pain, especially the pain caused by an unjust social system or power. But we cannot regard his view as “utopian” and “critical” either. Rorty seems to presuppose quite an optimistic view of liberal democracy “as the best political system we have had so far” which is exclusively designed to promote the individual’s political autonomy by “maximizing the quality of education, freedom of the press, educational opportunities, opportunities to exert political influence, and the like” (Rorty 1989, p. 67). He even claims that “contemporary liberal society already contains the institutions for its own improvement” which can mitigate the dangers Foucault and other post-modern thinkers anticipate (Rorty 1989, p. 63). For Rorty, a utopian attempt should be limited to the private activity of the ironist, such as an artist’s imaginative creation of work in the form of re-describing the ideal society. But this utopian or critical attempt in the private life may be made possible only under the social condition that is *parasitic on* “the cruel necessity of power,” potentially embedded in any

affects others in society. The feminist political radical Nancy Fraser (1988, p. 264) claims that it is impossible to distinguish the ironist’s re-descriptions that have consequences for others from those that do not. She points out that, from a feminist point of view, even the domestic and personal realm is a politically charged domain. In contrast to Bernstein who criticizes the public/private split for its psychological implausibility, both thinkers tend to focus on it in terms of its practical implausibility.

political system of liberal democracy. Rorty's failure to see this possibility, which seems evident in his uncritical acceptance of liberal democracy, is potentially vulnerable to being called "ideological."

Cavell seems to take a different path from Rorty's in his attempt to do some critical work on John Rawls' theory of justice. His moral perfectionist represents a form of subjectivity that tends to take a more ambivalent attitude toward the private-public split in the sense that it takes the split as a source of releasing a dissenting force that can *resist* both the self-complacently rationalizing self implied by the Rawlsian theory or the self-celebrating aesthetic self implied by Rorty's liberal ironist. Thus, in this chapter, we will examine whether Cavell's essayist as the moral perfectionist can represent a form of subjectivity that is "utopian" and "critical" in the sense that it takes seriously the public-private split in a way that "posits and attempts to live out an ideal which the all-too-real world will not fully allow."

To do this, I will address two main questions. The first question concerns Cavell's critique of Rawls' theory of justice as "a form of conversation of justice." This will allow us to further articulate the political aspect of Cavell's moral perfectionism. The other question is how Cavell reformulates the moral perfectionist's "conversation of justice." This will hopefully show how the practice of ordinary language philosophy, as Cavell describes and practices it, may lead his moral perfectionist, with a possibility of harmless escapism, into critical rationality which makes social and political subversions thinkable. I think that this may be the very process through which the private essayist turns into the political citizen.

The Political Dimension of Cavell's Moral Perfectionism

Unlike Rorty who tends to embrace liberal democracy as the best political system that humans have ever invented, Cavell appears to reserve his view on it when he complains about John Rawls's theory of justice in his book *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (1990). But it is not easy to grasp Cavell's precise complaint or position in relation to it, even if it looks clear that he does not make a sweeping dismissal of it. Some people hold that Cavell's politics of moral perfectionism can be seen as a "supplement" or "augmentation" of Rawls' theory of justice, since it tends to address and articulate "a precondition of such [the latter's] philosophizing" (Norris 2006, p. 102). This view seems to be supported by Cavell's own remark that his attention to moral perfectionism is restricted not only to "individuals who are *more than least advantaged* and *less than most advantaged*, but also to social conditions" which he calls "those of good enough justice" that escape the extremes of chaos or of tyranny (Cavell 1990, p. xxii; my italics). I think that the social condition of "good enough justice" here refers to the condition where Rawls' theory of justice is expected to be implemented as the principles according to which the public institution of liberal democracy is ordered. I also think that those who are "more than least advantaged and less than most advantaged" refer to ordinary people from a thick block of the social class that can cover from the

upper-middle class bourgeoisie to relatively well-to-do working class people within the Rawlsian society.⁴

However, the political aspect of Cavell's moral perfectionism can be seen as more ambitious than just a supplement or augmentation of the Rawlsian theory of justice. For its vision seems to go beyond Rawls in the sense that it enables us to revise the liberal concept of equality, i.e., the formal concept of equality as "equality of opportunity," for the concept of equality *from within*. I would like to call this even "equality of intelligibility." In this sense, the political implication of Cavell's moral perfectionism can be more radical than it appears to be at first. This is a course of direction that I will experimentally take in this section in reconstructing Cavell's criticism of Rawls' theory of justice.

Fully accepting Rawls' principles of justice in the original position, which says that those engaged in institutions that satisfy them "can say to one another that they are cooperating on terms to which they would agree if they were free and equal persons whose relations with respect to one another were fair" (1990, p. 106), Cavell claims that "the full Utopia must give a place to Perfectionism in a way Rawls seems not to leave open" (Cavell 1990, p. 106). Cavell introduces this point as follows:

I assume that we know in the original position that any actual society will be imperfectly just; I assume, that is, that the theory of *A Theory of Justice* is composed only with knowledge available in the original position, and it says that existing constitutions are bound to fall short of what is just (p. 360) and that "the measure of departure from the ideal is left importantly to intuition" (p. 246). (Cavell 1990, p. 107)

There are two points made by the above passage. One is that Rawls' principles of justice as the object of our original agreement are *a kind of judgment* that we would *hypothetically* agree with *before* we actually enter a particular society, with an assumption that our actual society will fall short of being just. The other is that *our judgment* regarding the degree to which our actual society embodies the principle or departs from the ideal would depend upon our *intuitions* about the actual reality of our society. This means that there are two judgments involved here. Cavell then criticizes Rawls for leaving ambiguous the nature of *the intuition* involved in the second judgment; this is how Rawls could not leave a place for his moral perfectionism. For Cavell, these are two *different kinds* of judgment and the fact that Rawls treats them as the same in kind is the precise reason why there are flaws in his conversation of justice. Let me further clarify Cavell's point.

For Cavell, our judgment about how close our actual society is to the ideal of the Rawlsian justice is different in kind from the judgment about principles of justice in the original position. Cavell calls the former kind "reflective judgment" and the latter "reflective equilibrium" (Cavell 1990, pp. xxv-xxvi). According to Cavell, when the conversation of justice is directed towards the constitution of the original position, it ends when it arrives at *principled* judgments about the justice of the original position. Here, our intuition or judgment is checked or rationalized

⁴Thus, it appears that the politics Cavell has in mind is "a politics of bourgeois individualism."

by principles given, and the conversation ends in a state of “reflective equilibrium.”⁵ Cavell characterizes this kind of judgment as finding its derivation in a principle that is a more universal, rational and objective standard from which it achieves justification and grounding. On the other hand, for Cavell, “reflective judgment” in measuring the degree of one’s society’s distance from strict compliance with the principles of justice is in its nature similar to what Kant describes in his *Critique of judgment*. What is required in this judgment is the expression of a conviction whose grounding remains subjective but which expects justification from the universal concurrence of other subjectivity on reflection (1990, pp. xxv–xxvi). Thus, what is to be demanded from us here is our careful and sensitive attention to the actual reality and our relation to it, as a process of bringing out our present perception into our awareness. Cavell calls this “the aesthetic dimension of our moral judgment.” Cavell even claims that this “reflective judgment” is a function of taking the measure of one’s sense of compromise with injustice in one’s life within the actual institutions of our society.

Cavell’s complaint about Rawls’ theory of justice, therefore, is that Rawls mistakenly conflates the two kinds of judgment into “reflective equilibrium,” so as not to leave any room for our “reflective judgment” in the conversation of justice, which is the territory of his moral perfectionism. This is precisely what Cavell means when he says that “the full Utopia must give a place to Perfectionism in a way Rawls seems not to leave open” (Cavell 1990, p. 106). Then what exactly is wrong with this alleged mistake by Rawls? What is its consequence? According to Cavell, this misconception regarding the *nature* of the intuition involving our second judgment has a consequence of depriving us of a chance for “moral encounter.” What does he mean by “moral encounter”? It is a kind of encounter in which our consent or dissent to the society on the basis of this judgment is to be the very part of our conversation of justice as a starting point of the conversation.

Cavell says:

Now take Rawls’s claim that “the force of justice as fairness would appear to arise from two things,” one of which is “the requirement that all inequalities be justified to the least advantaged” (p. 250). Here is a further instance of the conversation of justice. Can it go forward? Those who are least advantaged are apt to put up with the way things are, keep quiet about it, not initiate the conversation of justice. Their silence may be a sign of demoralization, or it may signal a belief that whatever can be done for them is being done by *the normal political process*. But their mood may shift drastically with events, and resentment may flare. Rawls says, “Those who express resentment must be prepared to show why certain institutions are unjust or how others have injured them” (p. 533)—another instance of the conversation of justice. Show this to, converse with, whom? It may be part of the resentment that there is no satisfactory hearing for the resentment. I assume the force of requiring justification to the least advantaged is that those of greater-than-least advantage will be easier to justify inequality to: that is, all others, say us. But is this true? (Cavell 1990, p. 108)

⁵“Reflective equilibrium” is a term coined by Rawls as a state of balance or coherence among a set of beliefs arrived at by a process of deliberative mutual adjustment among general principles and particular judgment.

The above passage points out two critical limitations about Rawls' theory of justice as the conversation of justice. One is that the institutional arrangement based on his theory of justice tends to deprive the least advantaged of the position of empowered participants in the conversation of justice, by giving them an impression that "the way things are" is a *normal* political process. The other is that, in imposing on the least advantaged an obligation to *rationaly* justify their sense of resentment against unjust social institutions, Rawlsian liberalism tends to justify existing inequality to the least advantaged. Both limitations derive from Rawls' failure to understand the nature of the silence on the part of the least advantaged. Here, we can see that Cavell's criticism is directed to a much deeper mechanism of social injustice that the Rawlsian theory of justice is not designed to address, but rather tends to create as the result of its success.

Political philosopher Todd May's diagnosis of the problems with Rawls' theory of justice may be conveniently employed here to reveal the richer implications of Cavell's criticism above (2008). According to May, Rawls' theory of justice as "a distributive theory of justice" takes as the central issues "'who' has 'what' rather than how people participate in the creation of their common life" (May 2008, p. 5). Describing Rawls' distributive theory of justice as a theory for "passive equality" because it is concerned with "the creation, preservation, and protection of equality by governmental institution" (May 2008, p. 3), May holds that the animating idea behind this passive equality is that some form of equality is to be ensured by an institution for those whose equality is at stake; it is *to be given*, or at least *protected*, rather than to be taken or enacted by the subjects of equality (May 2008, p.18). This idea tends to lead citizens to be passive in the sense that they *demand* that government give or protect their right when they find it not properly provided. Thus, May claims that this notion of justice is oriented toward 'what people get' as opposed to "how they might act," and that it reinforces the normalizing process in accordance with the existing order of political arrangements, so that people tend to take the order as the natural part of their social condition (May 2008, pp. 5–6). In other words, it leads people to become blind to the political realm of power and its effects on people, i.e., neglect the problems of "oppression" and "dominations."⁶

Cavell seems to address something similar to this diagnosis of May's when he describes that the way the least-advantaged perceive society's violation on them is quite different from the way the Rawlsian society perceives it. Cavell focuses his discussion on Ibsen's drama *The Doll's House* by talking about the heroin Nora as a young woman who is married to a wealthy husband called Torvald. Cavell says:

Rawls says at the outset of his work, "Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override" (p. 3). But Nora senses herself to be violated and it is ..., violation that Emerson expresses in his totalizing work, "Every word they say chagrins us." And no one argues that the woman's violation or the philosopher's violation is to society's welfare as a whole, or to anyone else's at all. On the contrary, what they sense as their violation others may see as their welfare; that is part of

⁶More detailed discussion of the concepts of oppression and domination follows later in this chapter.

their sense of violation. The sense may be pathological. Emerson reports that “a valued advisor” suggested to him that his impulses, which he trusted more than “the sacredness of traditions,” may be from below, not from above (“Self-Reliance,” 149–150); and when Nora says to Torvald, “I must find out which is right—the world or I,” he replies, “You’re ill, Nora—I almost believe you’re out of senses.” I do not quite wish to apply to Nora’s case the words of the young Marx, according to which there is a position or “sphere” in society that “lay claim to no particular right, because it is the object of no particular injustice but of injustice in general” (“Toward a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right,” p. 72) (Cavell 1990, pp. 109–110).

Discussing Nora’s expressions of dishonor and outrage at the state of her marriage and the injustice of such an institution as marriage, Cavell tries to describe how a disadvantaged member’s expression about the injustice of the Rawlsian social institution can sound pathological to society, so as to be silenced. He says that society perceives what the woman experiences as violation to be a kind of her welfare; society may defend it in the name of paternalism of the benevolent government. But in saying that “this is part of a sense of violation” on the part of the disadvantaged, Cavell pinpoints a deeper problem of the supposedly just institutional arrangement, i.e., how it can operate over the minds of the disadvantaged, so as to be perceived by them in a different way. In other words, the supposedly just institutional arrangement is designed to violate the disadvantaged. This directly contradicts what Rawls claims in declaring “Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override” (Cavell 1990, p. 3).

So what sort of violation or injustice does Cavell have in mind? Precisely whom or what is Cavell blaming for this injustice or violation done to someone like Nora? Citing Emerson’s words, Cavell describes that “the impulses” from the disadvantaged who feel a sense of violation comes “from the below.” The impulses are also depicted as what Emerson trusted more than “sacred tradition.” Thus, it gives us an impression that there is something *just* about these impulses.⁷ And then, by bringing about Marx’s phrases, though with some degree of reservation, Cavell tries to assimilate the kind of injustice or violation at stake here with “the object of no particular injustice but of injustice in general” which cannot lay a claim to a particular right. What does Cavell intend to claim by citing the phrase “injustice in general”? I think we can interpret it as referring to the *internalized* powerlessness and voicelessness in someone like Nora, as an effect on her mind of the work of “the moral consensus itself spoken for by the respectable Torvald of the world in

⁷This account leads us to entertain the idea that “the impulses” may be something similar to Nietzsche’s “will to power” as a source of the life of greatness or glory beyond the life of mere living or surviving. It also indicates Emerson’s modernist tendency to celebrate our individualistic spirit as the source of a dissenting force. For Nietzsche, “will to power” is a basis for understanding motivation in human behaviors. Nietzsche’s concept of the will to power applies to all living things, suggesting that adaptation and the struggle to survive is a secondary drive in the evolution of animals, less important than the desire to expand one’s power as the source of human glory or greatness, as in the lives of Greek heroes, aristocrats or masters. It is well known that Nietzsche was familiar with, and influenced by, Emerson’s work. This is why Cavell links these thinkers’ thoughts in his essay on Emerson called “Aversive Thinking” in *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (1990, pp. 33–63). So my speculation here may not be so far-fetched.

us" (Cavell 1990, p. xxxvii), i.e., effect of our conformity to the order of status quo. It has the effect to make a person like Nora silenced and voiceless because her voice does not fit the rule of moral consensus dominant in the society. What should be noted is that Nora's voice is found unintelligible not only to Torvald *but also* to Nora herself. This is why Nora desperately confesses: "I must find out which is right—the world or I."

Thus, we may conclude, as May claims, that Rawls' theory of justice tends to neglect the role that power plays in society, and thereby to ignore how the ability and capacity of the disadvantaged to participate in the formation of their lives can be undermined by dominant moral consensus in the society (May 2008, p. 26). There are two ways in which this ability and capacities are undermined, according to May: "oppression" and "domination." For May, drawing upon Iris Yong's definition, "oppression" occurs when people are prevented from adequately learning or expressing their skills and feeling in socially recognized contexts that inhibits people's ability to play and communicate with others socially. On the other hand, "domination" means institutional conditions which inhibit or prevent people from participating in *determining* their actions or the conditions of their actions (May 2008, p. 27). In other words, we can say that oppression is a stifling of self-development, and domination is a stifling of self-determination. Even if Cavell would not quite agree with this line of analysis since he himself insinuates his reluctance to apply Marxist analysis to Nora's case, we can say that Nora is in a clear case of "oppression."

However, for May, "domination" is a much more serious problem that the Rawlsian distributive paradigm of justice tends to reinforce in our society. According to him, a benevolent dictatorship can provide the means necessary for developing one's capacity, but it does not allow us to participate in *choosing* the institutional arrangements that guarantee the adequate conditions for such a pursuit. The political significance of this conception of "domination" lies in the belief that it is not good enough for a just society to provide us with a condition where we live meaningful lives, where we can learn and express what is valuable to us without fear of oppression. Society should also provide us with conditions in which we are able to carry out our lives while participating in *creating* the conditions under which that carrying-out is to occur. For May, this ability to participate in the formation of institutional arrangements is necessary for the formation of democratic politics, and this is what it means to *be political* in an original sense of the word in the way Aristotle conceives in his *Politics* (2008, p. 28). Thus, May concludes that, by focusing on "distribution" rather than "participation," the Rawlsian distributive paradigm of justice functions *ideologically* to reinforce the process of *de-politicization* through a normalizing or leveling process of making people become self-assertive egoistic citizens indifferent to politics proper (May 2008, p. 1).

This concept of "domination" reminds us of Foucault's analysis of the relation between power and knowledge in modern society and makes us wonder whether "domination" is something we can completely overcome as modern individuals, as May seems to hope. Foucault would say that there are pervasive yet invisible effects of power relations in the Rawlsian society upon the formation of individuals'

subjectivity, effects which may operate on the everyday basis through our micro-social relations and processes. What is so original about Foucault's work, especially in *Discipline and Punish* (1995), lies in his observation and analysis of the domination mechanism to the extent that he finds the subtle, thin and fine-grained power exercised over us at the level of everyday life, as well as localized power that is so invisible that we cannot domesticate it. I think Foucault's concept of domination can be well applied to our diagnosis of Torvald's behavior.

According to Foucault, "domination" in the modern society no longer operates through unjust institutional arrangements that create power relations that affect individuals' minds. It operates directly over the formation of individuals as "modern subjects" through "the techniques of surveillance and normalization" based on scientific knowledge of man as a central procedure of discipline. This "disciplinary power," which is supposed to increase modern individuals' economic capability, has also functioned as an invisible mechanism for political subjection of them through the process of normalization at the level of everyday life. This normalizing gaze is what ultimately makes individuals function as elements of the whole society in the form of political subjection by classifying, qualifying and punishing them. It also forces modern individuals to internalize the same normalizing gaze not only in relation to others but also to themselves. In other words, "domination" is no longer attributed to the social arrangement of modern institutions but also to the internal conditions of modern subjectivity (cf. Kwak 1996, pp. 5–6).

With this critique of power relations as micro-politics, Foucault seems to implicitly touch upon a normative question of what we should do since the critique concerns the way in which the power relations have constituted "the way we are" and have thereby been embedded in "how we think," how we behave" and "what we are." In other words, the invisible and multi-leveled exercise of disciplinary power over modern subjects makes it inevitable for us to *locally* deal with the matter of domination, that is to say, for *each* of us to try to understand the way we exist, entrapped in historically specific and micro-politically various contexts. Thus, for Foucault, "being political" is not a mode of existence we tend to consider in a separate realm called "the public," as the Rawlsian political liberalist seems to assume. According to Foucault, we cannot avoid "being political" since power relations are embedded in the very heart not only of every human relation but also even in the way we think of ourselves (cf. Kwak 1996, p. 8).

This brief detour into May's and Foucault's ideas brings us right back to Cavell's moral perfectionism, and places his criticism of Rawls' theory of justice in a new light. Boldly put, we may say that Nora suffers from the condition of "oppression," i.e., stifling of self-development, whereas Torvald suffers from "domination," domination of disciplinary power over himself in Foucault's sense.⁸ But this supposedly objective diagnosis of each of their conditions does not seem to be Cavell's primary concern.

⁸Torvald's character as rational, meticulous, controlling and disciplined with his economic ability as a successful banker allows us this speculation without much trouble.

For what makes them unhappy is not this condition per se. What seems to be common between them, in Cavell's guide, is that they are *unintelligible* not only to themselves but also to each other. Nora *feels* intuitively that she is violated, but she cannot explain how this can be the case. And in saying that Nora makes "child-talk" or "out of senses," Torvald also does not understand what is going on in Nora's mind, and thereby does not know what is about to happen to his own marriage. The conversation of justice for the creation of a new condition for her marriage halts. In other words, what troubles them as a couple is not exactly unjust power relations, but *unintelligibility* about themselves in relation to each other, which is caused by unjust power relations that have shaped the way they are. This problem of unintelligibility seems to be the primary concern of Cavell's moral perfectionism.

The way Nora responds to the frustrating deadlock in the conversation of justice is now seen in a new light. She says "I must find out which is right—the world or I" (Cavell 1990, p. 110). Earlier, I interpreted it merely as a desperate exasperation about her unintelligibility to herself. Or it can be read as an open confession of her *acknowledgment* of her own unintelligibility to herself, which can already tell us something about what kind of person Nora is. But why does she need to find out which one is right? Isn't it obvious that the world is unjust, at least from her point of view? Why does she use this skeptical tone of voice in regard to her judgment about which is right, as if suspecting that it may be she who was wrong? What does she have to find out about the world or herself?

Cavell gives us an account that appears to interpret Nora's response as a moral perfectionist response. He says:

...I am not saying that all societies which intuitively depart from ideal compliance with justice should be walked out on, have the door shut upon them....I am claiming, rather, that the inevitable distance from ideal compliance is not to be accommodated to by imagining an argument of right and wrong that cannot be won and should not be lost....Then, if an argument should not take place, what should take its place? (Cavell 1990, p. 110).

According to the above passage, there are two ways of responding to the distance of our actual society from the ideal justice, which Cavell wants to deny as his moral perfectionist response. One is simply to walk away from the society as a response to this distance. For Cavell, this would be an attitude that *refuses* to acknowledge the *inevitability* of the distance in the Rawlsian modern society we all live in. The other is to try to make an "argument" about right and wrong in regard to "the distance." For Cavell, this response is made only by those who assume that such a distance should be *taken for granted* by both sides, i.e., the advantaged and the disadvantaged of the society. For the attempt to make an argument aims at finding a way to *live on* as citizens *in the face of* (or even despite) this distance by distributing the shares of formal responsibilities and obligations.

So, what is Cavell's moral perfectionist response to society's distance from the ideal justice? Cavell's answer seems to be: leaning how to find "the distance" *intolerable*. Cavell says: "my sense of my society's distance from the reign of perfect justice, and of my implication in its distance may become intolerable" (Cavell 1990, p. 110). This means that his moral perfectionist is someone who knows how to take "the

distance” as her *own* problem as a member of society, i.e., as a problem that she is implicated in, so as to be responsible for. Cavell says:

I note that Nora feels herself representative beyond herself, beyond personal resentment as it were (I assume no one supposes her, or Ibsen, envious of the man, her husband, for whom she feels pity and contempt as well as tenderness and rage); and representative, it seems to me, beyond the sphere of women. When Torvald says that he would endure hardship for her, but, “No man would sacrifice his honor for the one he loves, her reply, “Thousands of women have,” can strike one as almost casual, as if she is pointing only to the most incontestable or visible of examples (Cavell 1990, pp. 110–111).

According to the passage above, the way Nora responds to her own *personal* problem, caused by her actual society's distance from perfect justice, is a moral perfectionist response, even if the direction she takes is the other way. She takes her own personal problem as society's problem, “representative beyond herself, beyond personal resentment.” Nora's desperate answer, “I must find out which is right—the world or I?” is not an emotional reaction from an envious and resentful woman, or a rational reaction from a self-righteous person who wants to find out a definite answer. It is a morally considered reaction from a person who finds herself deficient in understanding about the world or herself and in need of self-education.

Thus, we can say that, when Nora declares, “I must find out which is right—the world or I,” without jumping into a quick conclusion that “it is the world that is unjust!,” she is about to embark on a moral journey towards an *understanding* of what is going on in the world and in herself. She may find herself confused at the moment. Yet she does not take her *intuition* of having been violated as the only basis of her judgment about her own society, even if she trusts the intuition (as “coming from the below”). To suspend her first judgment in attempt to understand the situation is to take it from a detached point of view, as if it were not mine; this attitude is what entitles her to be *representative* of women, going beyond her own personal resentment, and representative of human beings, sacrificing their honor for the ones they love.

What Nora seeks as a moral perfectionist is not an argument she can win, but an understanding for her self-education, as Cavell describes above. So how would this response reopen “the conversation of justice” with her husband that has halted earlier? Cavell says:

I am taking Nora's enactments of change and departure to exemplify that over the field on which moral justifications come to an end, and justice, as it stands, has done what it can, specific wrong may not be claimable; yet the misery is such that, on the other side, right is not assertible; instead something must be shown. This is the field of Moral Perfectionism, with its peculiar economy of power and impotence. In moral encounter, unlike the scene of instruction in the newcomer's initiation into language and its culture, the exhaustion of justifications, the sense of something unacceptable, is reached first by the one out of authority, the position of pupil, or say victim; there is a cause, it is not dismissible as envy and not otherwise as incompetent in raising the cry of outrage. Then the alternative to persisting in the claim to be right cannot be, ...to say, “This is simply what I do,” and wait. ... that would not provide an alternative, but a reiteration of right. The alternative would be to find myself dissatisfied with what I do, what I consent to; it is not natural to me as my language is natural to me; yet it too cannot be changed by me. Here, as society's moral representative, when reasons suddenly, embarrassingly run out, I am left in the state of impersonal shame characterized by Emerson and Nietzsche (Cavell 1990, p. 112).

According to Cavell, Nora's moral perfectionist response as a political response, i.e., her enactment of change or taking an action for departure, is not in the form of assertion, but in the form of *showing* something. But showing exactly "what" to "whom?" The response is meant to show that moral argument or justification comes to end and that it is time for each to show something to the other. In other words, it demands Torvald to *show something*, instead of making an assertion about who is right or wrong. Nora has been desperate from her sense of obscurity to herself imposed by her husband's response. And her taking an action for departure comes with her desperate desire to make herself intelligible to herself as a way of *testing* herself. This action can be properly responded to only when her husband is able to show something to her (and himself). Cavell calls this moment, moment when something needs *to be shown*, "a field of moral perfectionism."

Interestingly enough, Cavell holds above that the subjective condition for moral perfectionism tends to be reached first by "victims" or "pupils," and he contrasts this condition with that of "moral justification" or of "institutional justice" which is this moral universe of the oppressor or right-claimers. Then, what would be the right-claimers' alternative to "a reiteration of right" if they are touched by Cavell's moral perfectionist spirit? Cavell says that "the alternative would be to find myself dissatisfied with what I do, what I consent to," even if it is *not* natural to me. What does this mean? Cavell describes the self-dissatisfaction as being "in the state of impersonal shame" as society's moral representative. Why is it *impersonal* shame? I think that it is "impersonal" because right-claimers like Torvald are not *personally* to be blamed for social injustice *in general* implicated in the misery of victims like Nora; they did not commit any particular action that causes the occurrence of the injustice. Yet, Cavell seems to hold that society's distance from the perfect justice still should be taken as *shame* to which each of us is morally *vulnerable*, if not morally *responsible*. But why should this be the case?

Cavell details a possible course of response that a person in Torvald's position may *show* after being touched by a sense of the impersonal shame as a member of the Rawlsian society:

Then, if, as is overwhelmingly likely, I continue to consent to the way things are, what must be shown, acknowledged, is that my consent, say my promise, compromises me; that that was something I always knew to be possible; that I know change is called for and to be striven for, beginning with myself. But then I must also show, on pain of self-corruption worse than compromise, that I continue to consent to the way things are, without reason, with only my intuition that our collective distance from perfect justice is, though in moments painful to the point of intolerable, still habitable, even necessary as a stage for continued change. Nora and Torvald are on opposite sides of this pain, divided by it; and I imagine that each member of the play's audience is to see this division in himself and herself (Cavell 1990, p. 112).

The passage seems to portray a *conformist* response. What is striking about it is the way Cavell characterizes it, i.e., "our continued consent to the way things are despite our sense of impersonal shame." On the one hand, Cavell *deplorably* describes how easy and tempting it may be for us to respond this way even if we are very well aware that any change for a better society should start with ourselves. He even describes the conformist response as a way of compromising or corrupting

one's own soul, since the way she exists is already implicated in unjust social arrangement and practices performed by society in her name. On the other hand, Cavell appears to portray the response with some *sympathy* when he says it may derive from one's intuition that the current imperfection of her society is "still habitable and even necessary as a stage for continued change," as if claiming she has to accept this imperfect society as her own in order to make any change to it at all. But what makes Cavell present the conformist response in this *ambiguous* manner? What exactly is he trying to say?

Cavell concludes in the passage above that the conformist response is what creates and sustains a division not only between two politically opposing parties within society, represented by Torvald and Nora, but also within any of our individual souls, as a division between two politically opposing voices. It may indicate that the condition for our conformist response and the division accompanied by it, whether they may be found *in* society or *in* an individual soul, are what we cannot get rid of *all at once* either as a society or as individual subjects. In other words, they may be the conditions which we should live with. And to the extent that we should live with the conditions, we cannot avoid being political in the sense of being partial.

How different is then Cavell's moral perfectionist response from the conformist response in the face of these conditions? What would the moral perfectionist *show* as a response to society's imperfection? Cavell says:

I think we may imagine Torvald's future in various ways, depending on how we imagine his eventual understanding of Nora. Here is a place from which we can perhaps usefully consider Rawls' principle concerning the adaptation of a plan of life: "A rational individual is always to act so that he need never blame himself no matter how things finally transpire" (p. 422). This is based on the idea that, if one does "what seems best at the time [then] if [one's] belief later prove to be mistaken with untoward results, it is through no fault of [one's] own. There is no cause for self-reproach" (ibid). This is a human advice, for certainly one may paralyze oneself with needless and useless self-reproach.... That Torvald is not exactly personally to blame is doubtless true enough, but how he picks up these pieces ["No man would sacrifice his honor"] is morally fateful for him as Nora's leaving is for her.... That possibility suggests the consequence that disturbs me about the advice to act so as to "insure that our conduct is above reproach" (Rawls, p. 422), which here I am associating with the rejection of Moral Perfectionism. (Cavell 1990, p.113)

Rawls's theory sets up the principles on the basis of which individuals can plan and govern their lives *rationaly*, i.e., in such a way as to stay beyond self-reproach. Of course, as Cavell acknowledges, Rawls' intention for setting up these principles is to save overly guilt-stricken modern individuals from "needless and useless self-reproach." I think that the passage above should not be read as Cavell's criticizing the Rawlsian rational individual. I don't think that Cavell considers himself to be *justified* in blaming the Rawlsian individual who plans her life in such a way as to avoid self-reproach. Cavell's description above just seems to show us how Rawls' theory of justice is designed to accommodate the modern form of egoism by setting up the (public) rules for moral boundaries between individuals with the principles-based allocation of moral duties and responsibilities, which in the end *could* set a limit on the moral *possibility* of the Rawlsian individuals. What Cavell tells us above can be viewed as twofold. On the one hand, there may be room for our moral possibility (toward others) *between* our "needless self-reproach" and our "impersonal

shame.” On the other hand, this room should be left to the territory of moral perfectionism, territory of individual’s soul-searching struggle for her moral decision on how far to consent (or not to consent) to the way things are and how far to take (or not to take) responsibility for her imperfect society as a member of that society. Thus, Cavell’s criticism against Rawls can be summed up as follows: Rawls frames his theory of justice in such a way as not to leave any room for moral space or possibility between “needless self-reproach” and “impersonal shame,” space that can allow us not only to materialize the underlying moral ambition of his theory of justice but also to envision a way to go beyond it.

This point of criticism is well shown in Cavell’s remarks on Rawls’ paper “Two concepts of Rules.” Here, Rawls makes an analogy between “games” and “morality.” Criticizing this analogy because “no rule can function in the moral life as the three strikes in the game rule functions in its [baseball] game,” Cavell says:

In the moral life the equivalent finality is carried not by a rule but only by a *judgment* of moral finality, one that may be competently opposed, whose content may then enter into a moral argument, one whose solution is not to be settled by appeal to a rule defining an institution; a judgment, hence, that carries consequences unforeseen or forsworn in games.

If I take your actions as slights or as treachery and refuse to endure them any longer, this judgment is itself my response and my responsibility....No judge or rule knows better than we, and we have no rules that will decide the issue or that will rule one of us out as incompetent to decide. This is why there is a moral argument between us, why it has its forms. No explicit promise would have been more sacred than our understanding, or given our supposed mutual trust, even appropriate (Cavell 1990, pp. 113–114).

Here, we can see that, for Cavell, morality is not about rules which allow us to reach the same conclusion on a certain issue if we faithfully follow them. It is rather about judgment which needs to be left to the individual in the end, being fronted by the character of the judge. Rule-governed moral argument may help us to refine our moral judgment, and our moral lives may also start to be shaped by a set of moral rules and our practice of them. But more often than not, the rule-governed morality makes it impossible for us to *become moral from within* or *become moral by living* by undermining the condition of our moral life since our moralized shame with automatic justification of our lives preempts our imagination to expand our moral boundary, so as to make us incapable of feeling ashamed of the way we are (Cavell 1990, p. 48).

Thus, for Cavell, the moral perfectionist is the one who strives to go beyond the given boundary and aspires to the unattained, i.e., life beyond the rules’ self-reproach, as a person who has “a capacity for self-criticism, the capacity to consecrate the attained to the unattained self” (Cavell 1990, p. 49). To unpack what this all means in a more concrete picture is our task in the following section.

Conversation of Justice for Equality from Within and Active Equality

What kind of *civic* quality would moral perfectionism cultivate for citizenship education? In order to answer this question, we should ask ourselves what kind of civic quality is required today for citizenship education. Cavell says from one of the

earlier passages: "In moral encounter,...the sense of something unacceptable, is reached first by the one out of authority, the position of pupil, or say victim; there is a *cause*, it is not dismissible as envy and not otherwise as incompetent in raising the cry of outrage"(Cavell 1990, p. 112). This passage suggests that in moral encounter, i.e., when moral justification comes to end, there is a tension or division between two politically opposing parties and that this tension or division is *not* just arbitrary, but inevitable; there is a *cause* for this tension or division. What kind of cause does Cavell have in mind? Would it be the social condition of inequality in power as well as in material resources? Given Cavell's long-standing work on philosophical skepticism, we can interpret "the cause" here as going deeper than this.

Let me speculate what kind of "cause" that Cavell would mean here on the basis of my reading of his work on philosophical skepticism. One of the common ways of encountering our inner division in a public debate is seen when we witness the depth of radical incompatibility among various conceptions of the good life even in well-intended and fair-minded discussions over pressing social issues such as abortion and religious rights or critical ethnic and cultural conflicts. The problem, which causes us a sense of frustration, at least from Cavell's moral perfectionist's point of view, would not be that we do not see the difference among various viewpoints. We *do* see it if we are open-minded enough to see others' viewpoints from an *objective* point of view without directly imposing our own upon theirs. We can see that I have my point and she has her point, and we can even see where and why we diverge from each other. Yet, when we try *fully* to take into account both positions, to compromise into a single vision, we find it almost impossible; the more critical is the issue in question to each of us, the more difficult is it for us to reach agreement on it. Why is this the case? What is wrong with us? Is this anxiety caused by the pseudo-problem that comes from our misguided epistemological or political ambition to establish one right answer in a demonstrative manner, as Richard Rorty so grandly criticizes as the source of the misguided problem of epistemology-oriented modern philosophy (Rorty 1989, pp. xiv-xv)? So should we not be bothered at all by this anxiety?

Of course, either political negotiations to secure firm boundaries within which one is safe from interventions by others, or pragmatic ways of relieving actual conflicts between us, can reasonably be sought. This may be to what the liberal political discourse through the moral justification of conceptions of justice aspires. But, no matter how useful they may be in keeping society functioning, this cannot be the whole concern from the educational viewpoint. What is educationally important, but generally neglected by the politically convenient and socially useful approaches, may be the *kind of spirit* in which we should take the theoretical incompatibility of different conceptions of the good life. Of course, no matter how reasonably and sympathetically I try to understand another's viewpoint, there seems to be a certain point where I have to say "I cannot take your point of view anymore" because my taking my own position is what makes me *who I am*; it is like saying, "I do see your point, but there is nothing I can do about it because I am I." Mutual understanding halts at a certain point and I have to helplessly turn my back on her opinion. What seems to be at stake here is not just epistemological, but the *existential* impossibility

of mutual understanding. Thus, we can say there is a *genuine cause* for me to be *disappointed* with the way I am. This is exactly the moment that I take as educationally significant, the moment in which what Cavell calls the “moral encounter” is expected to take place.

I think that what underlies self-disappointment at the moment of moral encounter can best be described by what Cavell calls “the philosophical problem of privacy.” Cavell says:

I take the philosophical problem of privacy, therefore, not to be one of finding (or denying) a “sense” of “same” in which two persons can (or cannot) have the same experience, but one of learning why it is that something which from one point of view looks like a common occurrence (that we frequently have the same experiences—say looking together at a view of mountains, or diving into the same cold lake, or hearing a car horn stuck; and that we frequently do not have the same experiences—say at a movie or learning the results of election or hearing your child cry) from another point of view looks impossible, almost inexpressible (that I have your experiences, that *I be* you). What is it I cannot do? (Cavell 1976, p. 262)

Cavell’s question above can be rephrased as follows: Why does what I can see from an objective point of view look impossible from my subjective point of view? Why does my judgment as the third person not affect my judgment as the first person? What is wrong with me? What exactly am I missing about another’s experience by being this way? Putting Cavell’s question this way, I mean to parallel the philosophical problem of privacy with the political problem of disagreement between two parties. For Cavell, a genuine moral encounter takes place when this philosophical problem of privacy is brought into one’s consciousness as a way of responding to the political disagreement at issue. Thus, we can say that the self-reflexivity underlying the philosophical problem of privacy is precisely one of important civic qualities that are required for the citizens of pluralistic liberal democratic society.

But how is this consciousness of the philosophical problem of privacy supposed to work out as a *political* response? How is it developed into the moral psychology of Cavell’s moral perfectionist? Cavell says:

Nietzsche goes on: “Thus only he who has attached his heart to some great man is by that act consecrated to culture; the sign of that consecration is that one is ashamed of oneself without any accompanying feeling of distress, that one comes to hate one’s narrowness and shriveled nature” (Schopenhauer as Educator, p. 163). The perfectionist idea of culture is projected in contrast to this idea of “one’s own nature.”.....Since the task for each is his or her own self-transformation, the representativeness implied in that life may seem not to establish a recognition of others in different positions, so to be disqualified as a moral position altogether....And I think we can say: Emerson’s writing works out the conditions for my recognizing my difference from others as a function of my recognizing my difference from myself.

... The love of the great is, or is the cause of, the hate of one’s meanness, the hate that constitutes the sign of consecration (Cavell 1990, pp. 52–53).

The above passage tells us that for Cavell’s moral perfectionist morality is primarily about oneself and one’s own life, rather than about others and others’ lives, as a way of being consecrated *to* (one’s) *culture*. What does he mean by being “consecrated *to* (one’s) *culture*”? I think that the term “culture” as the basis of morality

tells us that morality is not only a code of good conduct but also a way of being that involves every aspect of one's soul by way of making one's self intelligible to oneself. Cavell reiterates this as "that aspect of moral choice having to do, as it is sometimes put, with being true to oneself" (Cavell 2004, p. 11).

How then can we be *motivated* to be moral in this sense in the first place? According to the passage above, we can be motivated by our attachment to someone or something great. This attachment then creates in us a sense of shame or disappointment with ourselves or a sense of aversion to our own narrowness and shallowness, for example, at the discovery of "I am I" as described in the philosophical problem of privacy, which in turn demands self-transformation for us. But what does this demand for self-transformation have to do with a *political* response as the recognition of others in different positions? Cavell suggests above that the main concern of his Emersonian moral perfectionism is not the recognition of others in different position, but the recognition of *our own difference from others*, and that the recognition of our own difference from others can be obtained by way of recognizing *our own differences from ourselves*. Thus, what gives a *moral* force to the moral perfectionist's political response is the recognition of our own *otherness* from ourselves. Here, we can see that Cavell's philosophical problem of privacy is closely related to his philosophical problem of self-relation. Let me be more specific about this interpretation.

In his early work *The Claims of Reason* (1979), Cavell argues for philosophical (or educational) significance of our disappointment with ourselves in the form of the philosophical problem of self-relation (Cavell 1979, pp. 383–393). Right after his discussion of other minds, especially others' pain, where it was said that it is still *I alone* who feels pain in myself, and that it is still *I alone* who knows what is going on beneath my skin, no matter how willingly and sympathetically another acknowledges my pain, Cavell asks: what is the point of discovering that "I am I?" Is this an attempt to make an exception of myself, demonstrating something metaphysically profound and unique about my own case? In an attempt to show the significance of this self-discovery, Cavell seems to draw on something precisely contrary to it.

If we look at this discovery – "I am I," as an answer to "Who am I?" – does it settle the question? It does not seem so because the answer "I am I" sounds empty, not conveying any information. But Cavell asks us whether "I am I" is entirely empty as a response to the question "Who am I?" According to him, it instead opens to us a whole number of questions about self-identity in a more radical and unsettling form. For the conclusion that "I am I" in response to the question of "Who am I?" brings to our consciousness our relation to ourselves by raising a series of questions – of course I am I, but who am *I*, by the way? Do I know myself? Where am I from? – precisely because it sounds to us an empty answer. For Cavell, this skeptical conclusion about one's identity, i.e., "I am I" as a disappointing discovery about oneself, is worth being cultivated for the educational purpose because it will make a difference to one's own relation to oneself. Thus, let me reconstruct his argument more carefully in order to see how the skeptical conclusion that "I am I" can be developed into the recognition of our own *otherness from ourselves* and what the educational significance is of the latter.

According to Cavell, to say that “I am I,” as the skeptical conclusion about the condition of human separation, is to say that I cannot just *not* know or have no relation to myself, while any other is someone whom I may just not know or have no relation with. In other words, the discovery that “I am I” can mean the realization that I am *fated* to stand to myself in some relations in which I may or may not stand to others, the realization which makes the contrast between myself and others in a particular way. In this sense, for Cavell, ignorance (or otherness) of oneself is something each of us must work at. Thus, it can be said that the skeptical moment of saying “I am I” is the moment at which I realize that I cannot just not know myself since I am *fated* to or *inevitably* stand in a certain relation to myself.

However, Cavell also holds that “saying that I cannot just not know myself amounts to saying that I am the one who is fated to have, or to begin with, an *average* knowledge of myself” (Cavell 1979, p. 388). I think that this *averageness* refers to two facts about my knowledge of myself in everyday life. One is that I *already* know myself in orienting and comporting myself in everyday life; I am *already acquainted* with myself without having been introduced to myself. Another way of saying this is that, unlike in a relation to others, there is no reciprocity in a relation to myself. This means that, while I can stand in various relations to myself, e.g., of hating or loving myself, of being disgusted with or proud of myself, in which I can also stand to others, I can love myself without being jealous of myself and I can forgive myself without apologizing to myself. I am already too close to myself to treat myself as I treat others. The other is that this *averageness* in my knowledge of myself also refers to the fact that my knowledge of myself in everyday life is always in a *pervasive* and *vague* form. This means that, although I am the only one who knows what is going on inside me, this does not mean that I explicitly know who I am or why I am doing this or that. Cavell adds: “And doesn’t this [saying that I am fated to have an average knowledge of myself] amount to saying that I am the one who is fated to keep myself in a certain (average) *ignorance* of myself?” (Cavell 1979, p. 388). The average knowledge I have of myself can be said to be *passive* knowledge because I have it only in a *pervasive* and *vague* form; I am merely committed to it without knowing how and why I am committed to it. In this sense, it can be said that I am fated to keep myself in an average ignorance of myself when I am fated to have an average knowledge of myself.

According to Cavell, the skeptical moment’s discovery that “I am I” can develop into another disappointing self-discovery, that “I am no one,” if I am led to see that I am fated to keep an average knowledge or ignorance of myself. For the discovery that I am committed to an average knowledge of myself, without knowing how and why, suddenly sheds a light on the objective condition of myself; that is, the fact that I am thrown into life without my agreement, the life to which I am fated. In other words, I come to realize that I am *inevitably* yet *unjustifiably* imprisoned in the relation to myself (my body) whose identity is subject to cultural and historical contingency. Disappointingly enough, I only *happened* to be my body without any *necessity*. Suddenly, I feel I no longer know who I am and there seems to be no key to my identity; I am a stranger to myself. Thus, for Cavell, the skeptical moment at

which I say that "I am I" can be the moment at which I realize the groundlessness of my selfhood. This may be the same moment when Cavell's moral perfectionist recognizes "my differences [or otherness] from myself." And this recognition of one's own strangeness to oneself tells us that there is no reason to think that my own otherness is more privileged than others' otherness in relation to me; now I am demanded to be indifferent and impersonal to myself.

But for Cavell, this realization does not make me completely free from the fact that "I am I." I am still fated to stand to myself in some relations in which I may or may not stand to others. But the realization of the groundlessness of my selfhood leads me to have a certain perspective on my relation to myself. Cavell tries to exemplify this kind of self-relation below:

I can, for example, sometimes gain a perspective on my present pain. It still hurts; I still mind it; it is still mine; but I find that I can handle it... Is there something that could give me a perspective on my human nature as such? And would this be a perspective from which I see myself in the same way, or from the same distance, as I see the other? Could I, for example, see myself as a stranger? This need not be a case of seeing the strangeness of myself, though that might help my perspective. It would be a case of seeing that I have not met myself; it happens upon me, the knowledge comes over me that I have not. I would then have an occasion for taking an interest in myself; it would be an occasion for interesting myself in something more than I have already heard about myself (Cavell 1979, pp. 433–434).

According to this passage, to take an average position on my own pain as a special relation to myself is to take it as if it were *not* mine, while knowing that it *is* mine. Notice that Cavell relates the gaining of this kind of perspective on one's own pain to the gaining of a certain perspective on one's human nature as such. Moreover, he tells us that to have this perspective on oneself (one's human nature) is to *know oneself* in the sense of having the ability to make oneself an *other* to oneself and of learning something about oneself one did not already know. It should be noted that this is by no means a process of knowing from one's own case. It is not making one's own case exceptional. In this sense, I do not have to make myself known to others. On the contrary, while I ask of myself a perfect passiveness or a lucid waiting, "the knowledge comes over me that I have not."

Cavell characterizes two distinctive features of this new kind of self-relation. One is that making myself an other and finding myself a stranger to myself is not an act of my *will* but something that "happens upon me." According to him, this means that, in this new self-relation, I am not in control of myself (my pain) in the sense that I stand to myself (my pain) in the role of a master; I (my pain) am (is) not subject to my will. But I am in control of myself (my pain) in the sense that I am at one and in harmony with myself (my pain) as in the accomplishment of a virtuoso performance or in acts of love. In this sense, we can say that to make myself a stranger to myself is a way of *taking care* of myself. However, according to Cavell, to make myself an other to myself is also a way of *taking an interest* in myself. This is the second feature of the new self-relation. But what does it mean to take an interest in oneself? When we are interested in something we are inclined to examine it further. Thus, we can say that to take an interest in oneself is to engage in a kind of quest for oneself.

Cavell says that the quest for oneself consists in "our inattention to or distraction from our (immediate) 'experience'" (Cavell 1988, p. 25), which is what Cavell calls

“absent-mindedness.” For Cavell this “absent-mindedness” refers to “our polar and simultaneous ignorance of what is happening to us and of what we make happen such as our suffering and our acting” (1988, p. 25), such as trying to be deliberately indifferent to our own pain. I think it can be described as a radical break with oneself, a qualitatively different break as a form of self-transformation. And this becomes a source of qualitatively different sense of inter-human solidarity, involving a break or partial replacement of an earlier or narrow tie to oneself. According to Cavell, what is characteristic about this deliberate ignorance of our own immediate experience is that it is associated with two distinct desires. One is “our wish to conceive of ourselves as meant to fly, to make beelines back to something,” (Cavell 1988, p. 25), rather than as meant to arrive at a certain destination. The other is our care about “bringing something home.” I think that the following phrase from the citation above can give us a sense of what “bringing something home” means: “It is still hurt; I still mind it and it is still mine but I find I can *handle* it.” To bring my pain *home* can mean to live up to the private conversation within myself – “I can handle it” – by making this conversation my own. Thus, it can be said that our care about “bringing something home” refers to our effort to *realize* our quest for ourselves in everyday life in the form of care of one’s self.

I think that the rehearsal of the self-skepticism opens the moral perfectionist to “a limit-attitude” in Foucault’s terms (Foucault 1994, p. 315), which seeks to investigate one’s limits of the necessities by asking such questions as what is given to us as universal, necessary, obligatory and what place is occupied by whatever is singular, contingent and the product of arbitrary constraints, in regard to the way my identity is formed. This attitude tends to cultivate the care of one’s self in which I engage in the free activity of testing what is given to me as bounds of reason and which in the end leads me into what we can call freedom of my existence where I can feel “I can handle my problem.” Here, we can see that, for Cavell, the aim is not to eliminate the conflicting forces and desires within the self in the form of self-renunciation or self-transcendence, but to be able to govern them in such a way that one can serve the objective of living while manifesting an ethos of freedom in one’s life as “an aesthetics of existence” (Norris 2006, p. 138). I would call it a different sense of freedom or autonomy from the Kantian notion of freedom or autonomy as self-determination. Freedom here is not to be identified with an individual’s possession of a causal power to initiate action by an act of will in some way independent of antecedent causal conditions, but with a certain kind of self-realization, i.e., becoming what you are, having the will to be responsible to oneself. Thus, we can say that “my recognition of my difference from myself” leads us into a new kind of self-relation based on this new sense of individual freedom. And it seems that “the recognition of others in different positions” as a political response is inherent in this self-transformation since being able to be a stranger to oneself is not very different from being able to be a friend to strangers.

Let me turn to a more specific description of how the self-relation of Cavell’s moral perfectionist is closely related to her recognition of others in different positions, especially other members disfavored by society. Calling it the moment of morality when the conversation of justice in the form of moral justification comes to an end, Cavell takes it as a moment when a “moral encounter” between two

politically competing parties is to be demanded and rehearsed. For Cavell, through this encounter each party has a chance to learn how to recognize the other by *showing something* and learning how to *be human* for oneself. Cavell says:

...the moment of morality at which the conversation of justice stopped, where each side knows all the other knows, each is compromised by the promise of justice, and no specific wrong can be voiced and no appeal to the structure or rules or institutions is sufficient to establish right. I said the conversation cannot go on—there is nothing to say—unless something is shown, by the one before whom the cry of outrage is raised, the one favored enough by society to represent it. It is the moment represented by the overcoming of divorce in remarriage comedy, which implies that in my view this comedy presents marriage...as an emblem of society, in contrast to, say Locke, in his *Second Treatise*, for whom the marriage and the parental bonds contrast with the bond of society. The fact that in the comedies the couple at the end, at their reconciliation or resumption, are isolated from society, not directly reconciled to, or resuming with, society as it stands—are a rebuke to society as it stands—is an interpretation of their society. The fact of their isolation marks society as itself incompletely socialized; tolerably, but discontinuously, well ordered. We might say that between those groups or pairs bound by ties of justice, there are uncharted areas..., suggesting an understanding of the perfectionist's call for freedom demanding a new consecration to culture (Cavell 1990, p. 117).

This passage shows the way both parties, depicted as a couple, can create a new public space where their private interpretation of society is confronted, reconciled and resumed, in such a way as to rebuke their society as it stands. There are two things to be noted above about the nature of this space. First, mentioning the remarriage comedies he makes use of for his philosophical discussion, Cavell holds that marriage can be seen as an emblem of the *public*, rather than that of the private, which is contrary to the classical liberal view of Locke's. Here Cavell seems to problematize the way the classical liberal view defines the terms "the public" and "the private," and suggests a new way of viewing their relation, which I find more appropriate to the condition of post-modernity where members of society are highly individualized subjects.⁹ Yet, second, this public space is considered not as an *actual public* space where the couple lives but a kind of *virtually public* space that is *temporarily* isolated from the society as it stands. It is the space where the couple as members of society temporarily withdraw their consent to their society as it stands, as if it were a gesture of rebuking it.

This means that this space can be seen in its nature as "public" and "private" at the same time. It is "public" in the sense that each party within it is supposed to make her

⁹Zygmunt Bauman claims in his book *The Individualized Society* (2001) that for the individuals of post-modernity, individualization is a fate, not a choice. In this individualized society, we are all engaged in "life politics." This means that we, standing and falling individually, are "reflexive beings" who look closely at every move we take and are seldom satisfied with its results. Somehow, however, according to Bauman, the reflexivity does not reach far enough. In this world of life-politics, "the public" in the classical liberal sense is colonized by "the private" in the sense that public interest is reduced to curiosity about the private lives of public figures, replacing the art of public life with a public display of private affairs. Thus, the idea of the subject as citizens in this individualized society may require us to conceive the idea of liberating the public from the private, liberation internal to the individual, to create the individualized public in response to the privatized public. Cavell's moral perfectionism as described here can be seen to suggest this line of thought. For Bauman's words, see chapter 3 and 7 in *The Individualized Society* (2001).

interpretation of society being answerable for *the society as hers*; it is her public responsibility as a social member (Cavell 1979, p. 23). Yet it is “private” in the sense that one’s decision to consent to or dissent from the society based on this interpretation is what one promises *to oneself* to live up to through one’s own life (Cavell 1979, p. 25). This is why Cavell calls this space “uncharted areas,” where one’s “new consecration to culture” is demanded from each one of us as a (moral perfectionist) member of society. Cavell’s emphasis on “culture” here can be understood in connection with the search for intelligibility as a member of society, search for direction in the scene of the dark place of “uncharted area” in which we have lost our way.

I think there are a few distinctive characteristics of Cavell’s account of “moral encounter” as a conversation of justice, especially in regard to citizenship education. First, it shows how two parties from opposite sides in society can meet, converse with, and educate, each other in such a way as to grow *equal to* each other as friends. Of course, there is always a chance of falling-out in the conversation, i.e., one party’s deciding to leave the other and go her own way, which is the case with Nora and Torvald. Yet, the conversation still seems to bear a weight of friendship in the sense that it could resume, break or dissolve the relation between two parties. As long as the conversation relies on something like friendship, even the break-off could be educational; for what is at stake in the conversation is to help the other *find her own way*. During the conversation, I am challenged by the other to open up my everyday commitment to society as a member of society and to make sense of it, especially in relation to the other’s pain and suffering, as if the threat to my own moral incoherence and political compromise comes from my own sense of obscurity to myself. Here, the other party helps me *find* my own way, rather than getting me to *take* the way. In this kind of conversation, neither of the two is in a more privileged position than the other in regard to finding one’s own way; they are in an equal position in finding their own way.

Second, in a “moral encounter” as Cavell describes, we are concerned with learning how to become human for ourselves. Cavell adds in his discussion on Nora that “Nora’s imagination of her future, in leaving, turns on her sense of her need for education whose power of transformation presents itself to her as the chance to become human” (Cavell 1990, p. 115). Then, he concludes that “this is moving to claim one’s humanness, follow the standard of the true man, to follow the unattained” (Cavell 1990, p. 115).¹⁰ What should be noted is that the motivation for Nora’s departure from Torvald is a desire to claim to her *humanness*. And we can say that this desire to claim her own humanness is the very source of her aspiration to be a moral perfectionist. In other words, her motivation as a desire to claim her humanness allows her a human voice as a moral perfectionist, which is exactly what makes her *equal to* her husband as a

¹⁰Here, we can ask, “What does Cavell (or Emerson) mean by ‘true man’?” Is there such a man? I think that, for Cavell, without presupposing any kind of essentialism, the humanness of his moral perfectionist has to do with the ability to achieve self-knowledge, i.e., to see *oneself* in such a way as to grasp the possibilities of the world in a transformed light (Cavell 1990, p. xix). Cavell also views humanness as a capacity to have a perspective on oneself *as divided or halved by the two worlds*, intelligible and sensual in Kant’s terms, with a possibility of our further self, and our “beyond” (Cavell 1990, pp. 58–61).

member of the same society. We can see how the three concepts, "being human," "being moral" and "being equal," are correlated in Cavell's picture of a moral perfectionist as a man of culture. I think that this picture of moral perfectionism enables us to see how *equality from within* can be achievable in Cavell's moral vision of society.

Third, the moment of "moral encounter" can also be described as the moment of the formation of "the political" in the sense of "the founding of the city." For Cavell, "the founding of the city" is "about what makes a rational animal fit for conversation for civility" (Cavell 1983, p. 84). By being challenged to ask ourselves who we are and what order of political association we are committed to in such a way to push ourselves to the limit and horizon of the human or society, we in the "uncharted areas" tend to create and form "the political" in the sense that it "does not move from me to you but hovers over the borders between us, between in and out" (Norris, p. 90). Cavell describes the creation of this sense of "the political" as *the public* because it allows us "the overcoming of narcissism, incestuousness, and cannibalism" (Cavell 1983, p. 84). I think that "the political" in this sense is likely to cultivate a moral psychology that would well accommodate politics for "active equality" in May's terms, i.e., equality of participating in *determining* one's actions in our lives as well as the social conditions of one's actions, which the Rawlsian institutional arrangement tends to weaken. For, at every moment of "moral encounter," we are led to shape the character of our society by asking ourselves our own relation to society at it stands, which can be seen as an indirect way of participating in the discourse on the ordering of political arrangements in our society.

However, it may be more accurate to say that moral perfectionism will give the city its character and form by forming the characters of men and women as members of society through moments of moral encounter. For Cavell, this transformation of men and women in their characters is, first and foremost, essential to democratic politics because, as Emerson said, "training," "character," and "friendship" are required "for democracy as preparation to withstand not its rigors but its failures, character to keep the democratic hope alive in the face of disappointment with it" (Cavell 1990, p. 56). Here, we can see that Cavell takes his moral perfectionism as playing a role of "tinkering," in Oakeshott's terms, of the failures of the Rawlsian institutional democracy by being "an even keel for a ship set sail on a boundless and bottomless sea" (Oakeshott 1996, pp. xv). Or, more radically, his moral perfectionism can be characterized as an essentially anti-institutional force that ruptures the otherwise relentless trend of the dominant culture which silences from the political process all those who have not been born into power.

Conclusion: A Picture of the Cavellian Citizen: "Bourgeoisie with a Desire to Go Beyond Bourgeois Morality"

Is Cavell's moral perfectionism politically conservative or progressive and elitist or egalitarian? And what sort of citizen would his moral perfectionism cultivate if it is applied to citizenship education? The discussion so far tells us that the conventional

categories for a political position do not fit Cavell's moral perfectionism. His moral perfectionists look politically conservative when they consent "from above" to the society as it stands, claiming its necessity as a stage for continued change. But they also look politically progressive when they find through their intuition "from below" their society's distance from the ideal justice *intolerable*. On the other hand, moral perfectionists sound elitist when they are described as craving the good of high culture exclusive of others. However, they also look egalitarian when Cavell describes the life of culture as the life with the capacity for self-criticism or self-intelligibility that each one of us is entitled to have. The life of culture is "exclusive" only in the sense that it is good only for the person living the life.¹¹

This may be why Cavell simply describes his moral perfectionists as "revolutionary" in their practice of philosophizing and as "honoring democracy," rather than being democratic, in their self-transformation. But this may also be why Cavell confesses that his moral perfectionists see their lives *without* justification. According to Cavell, his moral perfectionists would consent "from above" to the society that makes both their and others' lives possible, meaning that they acknowledge their being compromised by the persistent failure of democracy and the shameful condition of the society. For Cavell, this is the same as moral perfectionists' acknowledgement of their *partiality* as human individuals. Cavell describes:

...living as an example of human partiality, ...one who is not everything but is open to the further self, in oneself and in others, which means holding oneself in knowledge of the need for change; which means, being one who lives in promise, as a sign, or representative human, which in turn means expecting oneself to be, making oneself, intelligible as an inhabitant now also of a further realm [the realm of the human]...and to show oneself prepared to recognize others as belonging there; as if we were all teachers or, say, philosophers. This is not a particular moral demand, but the condition of democratic morality..... So that conformity is not a mere lack of community, but its parody, learning and teaching the wrong thing of and to one another. The price of liberty is our subjection to eternal vigilance (Cavell 1990, p. 125).

In the last sentence, Cavell emphasizes "eternal vigilance" for the freedom of the moral perfectionist. But "eternal vigilance" to what? I think Cavell means "eternal vigilance" *to oneself*, one's conformity to the way things are. For Cavell, what protects us from this conformity is the practice of being "a philosopher" who is constantly aware of her human partiality, so as to acknowledge the existence of others who would complement her own partiality and who belongs to the same realm of the human. In this sense, the reason we need to live together despite differences and disagreement derives from our limitations and partiality as humans. We are all equal in this respect as well.

Thus, Norris concludes that Cavell proposes "an existential politics of anti-hegemony, one that questions every attempt to foreclose discussion through appeals to common sense and its sense of the possible" (Norris 2006, p. 91). We can also conclude that Cavell's moral perfectionism involves a politics of self-(trans)formation as essential to a democratic politics. And this practice of self-transformation as a

¹¹For Cavell, the good of culture is not certainly maximizable or transportable to other lives, but is not inherently unjust, requiring favored shares in the distribution of the good (Cavell 1990, p. 51).

territory of moral perfectionism is also the territory that is always and already politically charged in Foucault's sense. Thus, in Foucault's view, *to be ethical* is to realize that there is always something unthought, namely, power, in the present mode of our existence, and then to try to move beyond the present mode of our existence, knowing that we never completely overcome it. In this sense, for Foucault, to be ethical is to resist the way we exist, knowing that we cannot overcome it, and to resist the way we exist is to go back to ourselves with self-suspicion and self-criticality. Foucault calls it "care of oneself" (cf. Kwak 1996, p. 9), which is exactly the same as Cavell's idea of moral choice as having to do with "being true to oneself" (Cavell 2004, p. 11).

Here, we can see that Cavell's moral perfectionist citizen is a kind of person who goes beyond the given boundary and aspires to the unattained, i.e., life beyond the bourgeois rules of self-reproach, as a person who has "a capacity for self-criticism, the capacity to consecrate the attained to the unattained self" (Cavell 1990, p. 49). Cavell also describes this person as someone who has humanness in the sense of being able to have a perspective on oneself *as divided or halved by the two worlds*, intelligible and sensual in Kant's terms, with a possibility of a further self, and a "beyond" (Cavell 1990, pp. 58–61). Thus, we may conclude that Cavell's moral perfectionist as an essayist represents a form of subjectivity that is "utopian" and "critical" since "the way she is" is not a mere effect of the operations of power but implies a mental space critically distanced from the circulating ideologies and discourses of institutions of power. She is orientated to multiple potential selves or identities without fully losing a sense of direction and autonomy.

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Chapter 8

Conclusion: The Essay Form of Writing for a Tragic Form of Subjectivity

Lukács seems to well capture below the aspect of modern condition that has long shaped modern subjectivity since the Cartesian modern consciousness was developed:

Someone has died. What has happened? Nothing, perhaps, and perhaps everything. Only a few hours' grief, perhaps, or months; and then everything will be calm once more and life will go on as before. Or perhaps something that once looked like an invisible whole will be torn into a thousand shreds, perhaps a life will suddenly lose all the meaning that was once dreamed into it; ... Something is collapsing, perhaps, or perhaps, something else is being built; perhaps neither of the two is happening and perhaps both. Who knows? Who can tell?

Someone has died. Who was it? It does not matter. Who knows what this person meant to another, to someone else, to the one closest to him, to the complete stranger? Was he ever close to another? Was he ever inside someone else's life? Or was he just a ball thrown this way and that by his own wayward dreams, ... And if he really meant something to someone, what was it? How, through what quality of his, did it happen? Was it the result of his particular character, his own weight and essence, or did it come about through fantasies, unconsciously uttered words, accidental gestures? What can any human being mean to another?

Someone has died. And the survivors are faced with the painful, forever fruitless question of the eternal distance, the unbridgeable void between one human being and another. Nothing remains that they might cling to, for the illusion of understanding another person is fed only by renewed miracles, the anticipated surprises of constant companionship; these alone are capable of giving something like reality to illusion, ... (1971, p. 107)

What struck me so deeply about the above poetic portrait of the modern condition was young Lukács' *tragic* ethos of calm acknowledgment about the human condition underlying modern life. In this ethos, I found something ennobling about us. So I wondered whether this ethos or attitude could still be part of our modern experiences as a response to the god-forsaken nihilistic age of fragmentation. This means that I asked myself whether we can find a way of cultivating this tragic attitude in such a way as to be developed into a new notion of subjectivity. It was exactly what motivated me to make an attempt in this book to formulate a new notion of subjectivity by drawing upon Lukács' and others' writings to make it

available for our educational thinking and practice. As if pointing to the condition of this tragic notion of subjectivity, Lukács announces: “God must leave the stage, but must yet remain a spectator; that is the possibility of tragic epochs” (1971, p. 154). This is the same condition presupposed in the discussions for a “post-secular” approach to education throughout this book.

I set up two main questions in the introduction: the first one about a new mode of doing philosophy and the second one about an essay form of writing as an educational practice. Now, let me briefly give a short version of the answers. First, let me summarize what particular mode of doing philosophy I can now propose after faithfully following the spirit of two thinkers, Lukács and Cavell, from their philosophical practice. What is shared between them in their philosophical practice may be described as threefold. First, a deep concern underlying their philosophical practice is similar to the classical Hellenistic philosophers’ concern, i.e., that one’s philosophical practice should relate to the question of how to live as a first-person ethical/spiritual quest for happiness. Second, both of them attempt to *newly thematize* this idea for their (post)modern contemporaries *by the very way* they do philosophize. In other words, they are *performative* in their philosophical practice in the sense that “the message” they intend to deliver and “the way they deliver it” are in the same structure. They act on the message they intend to deliver as a way of delivering it or they deliver the message by way of demonstrating it themselves. This is why we can find in their writings their own unique *voices* and *styles*. Third, they consciously experiment with their writing-form as a way of testing-upon-themselves or doing self-try-out in their philosophical practice. I traced back their literary experiment to the “essay-form” conceived by Montaigne, the Renaissance French philosopher. Here, we can see there are deep similarities among the three thinkers in their underlying philosophical concerns, practices, and styles that cut across their different eras.¹

So, how can we characterize this essay form of writing in the end? This is the second question set up in the introduction. I regard the essay form of writing as distinctively *educational* in its nature and *(post)modern* in its form. It is educational in the sense that the activity of writing itself engages the writer in the business of “self-(trans)formation” in relation to the question of how she is. It is (post)modern in the sense that the writing addresses one’s life-question not directly but *by way of* talking about what is called “the text,” i.e., a book, art work, or other artifact that already exists; no exclusive self-authorship is allowed. It is also educational in that “reading” and “writing” as the constitutive elements of this activity² engage the reader with the text she reads in such a way as to lead her to recover *the person*,

¹I sometimes express this original sense or Montaigne’s sense of the essay as “the *essayist* form of writing” to avoid possible confusions since “the essay” as a common term these days tends to refer to an article written in an *academic* form, which is exactly the form of writing that these essayists oppose in advancing “the essay” as a literary genre.

²It should be noted by this point of my argument in the book that “reading” and “writing” are inseparable in the essayist form of writing since essay writing is always about the reading of the text that already exists.

psychological, biographical and emotional, in her. It is also (post)modern in that *the person* to be recovered is shifted into a state of *being-between-two-worlds*. In this transition, the text that is read by the reader plays a *mediating* role for the self-recovery or self-(trans)formation, as a quasi-transcendent object through which the reader is led into a certain form of limits-experience, i.e., an experience of the limits of the rules of the speech act, such as the limits of rationality or readability. This limits-experience is exactly what invites the reader to self-knowledge about the human condition, and the self-knowledge is what enables her to learn how to take the condition *in certain spirit*, i.e., tragic ethos, which has a de-centering effect on the modern self, especially on its Machiavellian elements. I think this sort of limits-experience has been generally unavailable for the secularized mind of the modern individual. Thus, we can characterize the essayist form of writing as a practice of *individuating* the modern self in such a way as to *de-secularize* her mind.

What is the educational implication of my proposal about the essayist form of writing? Or what kind of contribution can this proposal make to contemporary philosophical discourse of education? My primary motivation behind this proposal lies in finding a new pedagogical practice of writing that can, even partially, replace the currently dominant practice of writing employed in secondary and tertiary education today, that is, the academic form of writing. The latter has long been taken seriously in modernist education as a means by which students' mastery and comprehension of material can be assessed. In the academic form of essay writing, students are asked to explain, comment on, or analyze a topic of study in a structured format; successful communication and position-taking in the discursive form are the keys to this practice. The aim of this writing-practice is to cultivate the mind in relation to true bodies of knowledge that *represent* their respective referential fields or domains of reality. The virtues of the form of writing lie in showing the impartiality, objectivity, and universality of what is claimed.

This standard form of academic writing as a *theoretical* discourse has been challenged for the last few decades by philosophers of education from various lines of post-modern camp for its underlying quasi-positivist and rationalistic assumptions and prejudices.³ This has led to philosophical explorations of alternative forms of writing and methodology for educational research and philosophical writing.⁴ My project in this book can be taken as aligned to this line of critical contemporary discourse, that is, discourse on the critique of the rationalist tradition in our academic field, although my idea about the essayist form of writing is intended to propose specifically as an alternative *pedagogical* practice, rather than as an alternative research practice. I am critical of the academic form of writing, especially when it is taken as the only pedagogically valid practice in school, because the

³See Wendy Kohli (1997) for an early discourse on this line of critique.

⁴The discourse on alternative methodologies and writing-forms has been one of hottest research topics for the last decade in the fields of philosophy of education and curriculum theories. Narrative inquiry, phenomenological method, autobiographical method and others have been suggested as alternative forms of educational research and writing. To see the trend of current scholarship on this topic, refer to: Peters (2009), Ruitenberg (2009), Bridges (2003), and Bridges and Smith (2007).

purity of language that it tends to cherish can be a token of educational limitation rather than educational possibility, closing students' intelligence and sensibility against innovation.

Tracing the rationalistic form of modernist discourse back to Descartes as originally developed, I am sympathetic to the idea that our preference for the rationalistic and analytic style of philosophical writing may be "based upon a presupposition that the skeptically minded, rationalistic, Anglo-Saxon professional middle classes are going to stay in power" (Barthes 1987, p. 12). Even if I don't *fully* buy this politically reductionist diagnosis about the contemporary dominance of rationalistic discourse, I share with it the underlying worry about the rationalistic discourse's unintended tendency towards *conformity* to the middle class mentality and sensibility. Thus, any anti-conformist educational practice may need to leave room for an alternative procedure and style of writing. This is why I propose the essay form of writing in Montaigne's sense as an alternative to the rationalistic model for our pedagogical practice.

We can say that these two forms of writing, academic and essayistic, are expected to cultivate two different forms of subjectivity. The essayistic form of writing invites the play of a more *fluid* subjectivity than does the academic form. While the academic form of writing tends to demand us to take a disengaged and objective attitude to ourselves and the text we read or write, the essay form of writing tends to cultivate in us a more engaged and committed relation with ourselves as well as with the text. But it does not mean that the essayist form of writing invites us to cultivate a more subjective or narcissistic self-relation. It also requires us to take a certain distance not only from ourselves but also from the text, yet in a manner different from the manner required from the academic form of writing. I will use Cavell's term "unattachment" to describe the manner required by the essay form in contrast to "detachment" by the academic form.

Characterizing "renunciation in action," one of teachings in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the ancient scripture of Hinduism, with a doctrine of "unattachment," Cavell (1972, p. 117) warns us that we should not take "unattachment" as the same as "disinterestedness" in what we do. Cavell rather takes it as a form of being *interested in* what we do. This indicates that there may be a kind of state where we are still *concerned with* the fruit of what we do, albeit with impartial or unselfish interest. In fact, "being concerned with" or "interestedness" is already a state of relatedness to something beyond self with the capacity for concern and for implication. Thus, Cavell says that "unattachment" requires us "the self's capacity to mediate and to stand between itself and the world" (1972, p. 117). Making an analogy from this distinction, we can say that a state of "detachment" is a state when I am in control of myself in the sense that I stand to myself in the role of a master; I am subject to my will. On the other hand, a state of "unattachment" can be described as a state when I am in control of myself in the sense that I am at one and in harmony with myself as in the accomplishment of a virtuoso performance or in acts of love. In the latter, the knowledge tends to come over me when I am in a perfect passiveness or a lucid waiting. I think this best characterizes the "unattached" nature of subjectivity in relation to oneself or the text, required and cultivated by the essay form of writing.

Subjectivity or self-relation in the form of “unattachment” is not a kind of state that we can retain forever once we have achieved it. It is rather a kind of spiritual state that we need to ceaselessly seek due to our tragic condition of human life; it is inseparable from one’s existential struggles. It is also a state of being that we need to *experience* along with our ever-lasting concentrations and struggles through our painstaking effort to understand ourselves in relation to the world in our everyday lives. Thus, we can say that the essay form of writing can be a good pedagogical practice through which young students can develop this spiritual state as part of their selfhood.

Given the phrasing “spiritual state as part of their selfhood,” my educational approach for the essay form of writing may be thought to fall into the recent discourse of “spiritual education,” because this term tends to be used as a catch-all for a wide range of approaches that reach beyond the secular. The recent discourse of “spiritual education” tries to draw its educational insights from the positive impact of religious experience on the development of the whole person. While religious institutions may be committed to nurturing spirituality as understood in religious terms, that is, via faith in God or religious confessionality, public education institutions may translate these into secular terms and pursue them as a goal just as enthusiastically as do religious institutions. Working with generic descriptions of spirituality whose primary concern is anthropological rather than theological, they share the claim that spirituality has something to do with holistic involvement in knowing: emotion, intuition, faith, and compassion complementing objectivity and rationality. The aim of this “spiritual education” approach in general focuses on students’ emancipation from the limitations imposed by the brute forces of nature and the instrumentalism of modern society (Ota and Chater 2007). And “spirituality” is often conceived as a non-religious term where it sits happily with such phrases as “the quest for peace” (Cully 1984), “mystical experience” (Westerhoff and Eusden 1982), and “a way of knowing” (Palmer 1999). Each advocate for these ideals proposes that the final outcome of spiritual education is the integration of the person internally as well as with the rest of the cosmos, accompanied by ensuing activity to establish social justice, community, and freedom.

My essayist post-secular approach is quite different from this mystical or romanticized line of spiritual education. The spiritual education discourse embraces many different approaches, with different accounts of spirituality, religious and secular, rational and mystical. Most educationalists combine aspects of each approach, subsuming different faith traditions, or reflecting no particular tradition at all. This eclectic approach for the cultivation of the whole person tends to lead to *therapeutic* activities, like “mind-control” in yoga or the romantic awakening of children’s natural sense of awe and wonder, as in the Philosophy for Children movement. It suggests that this sort of spiritual education approach, in spite of the grand claims that are made, is not sufficiently deep or sustainable to affect students’ being and lives.

Here are some distinctive differences between the spiritual education approach and my essayist post-secular approach. The spiritual education approach is interested in *exposing* students to something mystical, spiritual or transcendental, so as to allow them to *experience* it. But my approach is focused on getting students to

understand the mystical or spiritual experience they have been just exposed to, or to *learn how to respond* to it, whether it may be aesthetic, religious, or spiritual in its nature. Being asked to watch and question their *own* experience, and to re-create a sequence of sensations from the inside, following their experiences and sensations from instance to instance, students are led to pay *full attention* to what is present to themselves. The peculiar advantage of this educational approach consists not so much in strengthening our knowledge and understanding as in softening and refining our *taste* and *sensibility*. In other words, my approach can be described as a way of cultivating the *humanity* within themselves, which gives students a *deepened* understanding of the meanings of their (inner) experiences or beliefs in such a way that they can respond to it as human beings. Thus, the kind of spirituality I am concerned with, if it can be called spirituality at all, refers to the way we personally respond to our experience with the world as well as with ourselves in the form of *self-reflexivity*. In this sense, my post-secular approach still belongs to the humanistic tradition.

This *humanistic* character of my post-secular approach may look as though it has something in common with the recent discourse of “emotional literacy” or even of “caring ethics,” at least in its approach to the practice of teaching and learning. These two approaches highlight interpersonal sensitivity and emotional responsiveness not only as an effective pedagogical virtue but also as an educational aim. The term “emotional literacy” was coined and popularized in the 1990s in the field of positive psychology, especially in the UK. This discourse stresses the importance of the ability to understand, express, and manage one’s own emotions as well as to respond to the emotions of others in personal development or the development of spiritual values. On the other hand, offering her caring ethics as an alternative approach to traditional rationalist education, Nel Noddings emphasizes caring and responsiveness as constituting a capacity to establish caring relations with others. For her, this caring relation is the most important thing for our educational practice. Against the traditional approach to education, Noddings claims that “the living other is more important than any theory” in education (Noddings 2005).

My humanistic post-secular approach is different from both approaches, and this extends to its implications for practices of teaching and learning. The discourse of emotional literacy, as is usually the case with psychological theories, is designed to give teachers and students *technical prescriptions* about “what we should do” in order to understand better their emotions, heighten their self-esteem, attain balanced emotional control, and so on. My approach is not committed to giving such prescriptions; it is rather committed to providing teachers and students with a set of insights that can affect their whole perspective on teaching and learning. It emphasizes deepened self-understanding in regard to *the fundamental condition* of “how one is” and “what one believes” that can be brought about only through being questioned or challenged. It is intended to promote the cultivation of our inner sensibility that makes us responsive to pains of others *by way of* making us more aware of *the way we are*. What distinguishes my approach from caring ethics is that, while the latter is concerned with a caring relation *with others*, my approach is concerned

with a caring relation *with oneself* – better put, with “a care of the self,” with the classical connotation this phrase carries.

On the other hand, unlike the traditional care model that Noddings identifies in Allan Bloom (1987) or Robert Maynard Hutchins (1969), which she criticizes for its grand gesture of raising big questions with great books, my post-secular approach treats the theme of care as a more personalized and democratic manner. This means that it does not lend great books its traditional status of exclusive privilege in the way that Bloom and Hutchins grant. It rather treats great books as “strangers” to us through whom we come to find ourselves as strangers. In other words, great books, if introduced as a text for teaching using my approach, are treated as valuable not for their own sake, but for their pedagogical role, i.e., mediating students with the world as well as with themselves for their self-understanding.

Given the degree of abstraction developed in my exposition so far regarding the main characteristics of post-secular approach to education with the idea of the essay form of writing, it will take a lot more work to be done in the future to make this approach more concrete and employable on the level of classroom teaching. But I hope my proposal laid out as it is can be taken seriously and thereby tested by others in terms of further exploring an educationally more plausible model which can respond to educationalists’ concerns today in both the East and the West who are facing the post-secular condition. I also hope this proposal can give educators some pedagogical implications for the culture of schooling and classroom teaching in general by leading them into a perspective on education that enables them to see old educational ideas and traditions in a new light.

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