Philosophy and the Patience of Film in Cavell and Nancy

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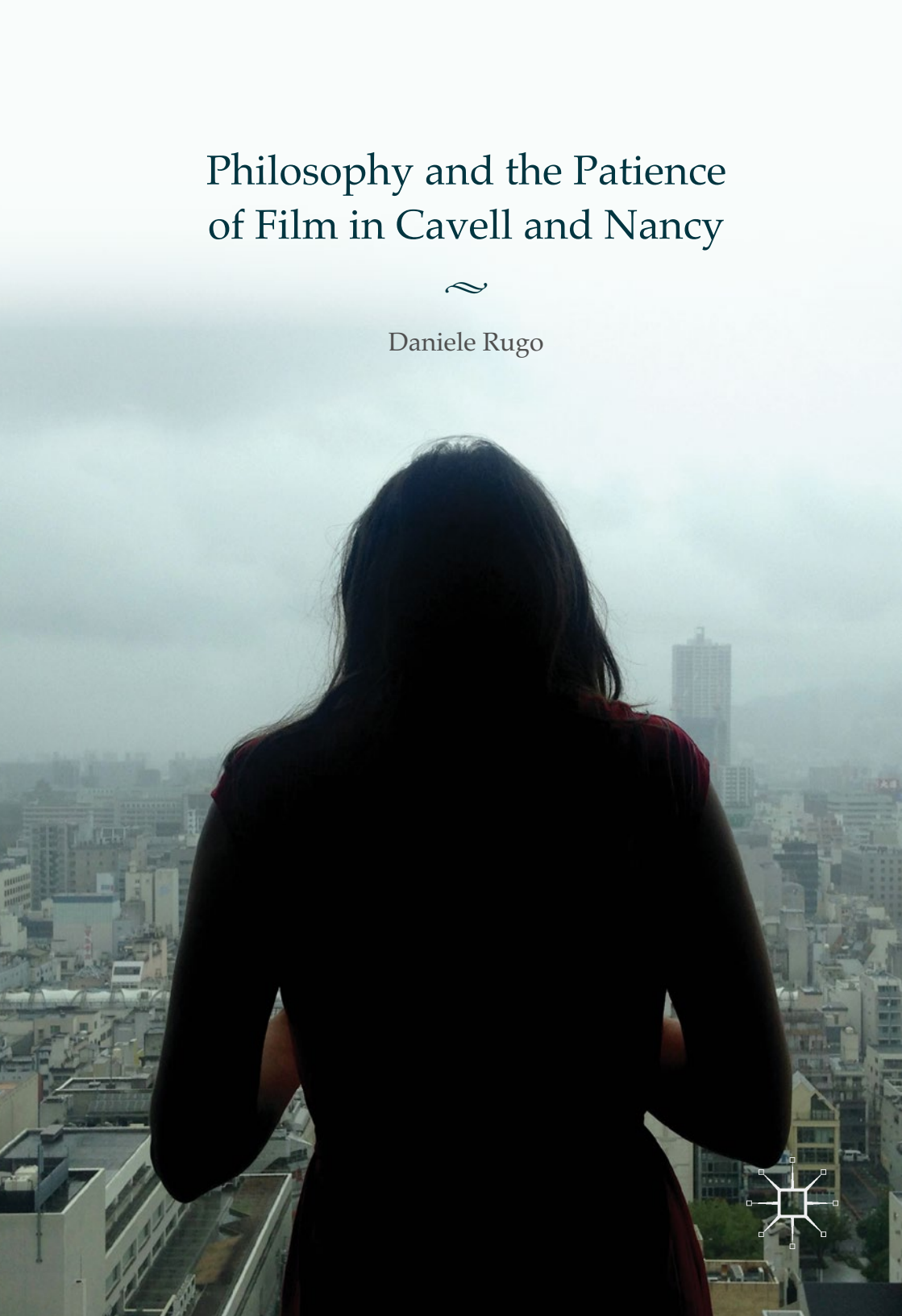

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To Abi

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Contents

Abbreviations

Stanley Cavell

CR	*The Claim of Reason* (Cavell 1979a)
ET	*Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* (Cavell 2003b)
IQO	*In Quest of the Ordinary* (Cavell 1988)
MWM	*Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cavell 2002)
NYUA	*This New yet Unapproachable America: Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein* (Cavell 1989)
PH	*Pursuits of Happiness* (Cavell 1981)
WV	*The World Viewed* (Cavell 1979b)

Martin Heidegger

BT	*Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962)
PLT	*Poetry, Language, Thought* (Heidegger 1971)
QCT	*The Question Concerning Technology* (Heidegger 1977)
WCT	*What is Called Thinking?* (Heidegger 1968)

Jean-Luc Nancy

AD	*Adoration: The Deconstruction of Christianity II* (Nancy 2012)
BP	*The Birth to Presence* (Nancy 1993)
CW	*The Creation of the World or Globalization* (Nancy 2007)
DC	*Dis-enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity I* (Nancy 2008b)
EF	*The Evidence of Film* (Nancy 2001)
SW	*The Sense of the World* (Nancy 1997c)

Ludwig Wittgenstein

PI *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1958)
PR *Philosophical Remarks* (Wittgenstein 1975)

Patience

Humanity, ever since it has existed, has shown a most surprising patience. Perhaps this should be said of all that exists, but the speaking existent gives this patience more visibility, thus making it more surprising. And indeed language opens up a horizon of expectation: it presents a reality not threatened by any deterioration over time, by any ageing. If I write here that it is *nice weather*, my reader understands me even if she sees rain falling outside her window. Hegel introduces this argument at the beginning of his *Phenomenology*. But we can add that for some, or in some circumstances, rain can represent what is called nice weather (one only has to watch *Singing in the Rain*). Without discussing what might be carried or revealed by each of the words used, the syntagm 'nice weather' on its own is capable of opening an expectation that exceeds all defined meteorological configurations.

In each occurrence—or performance, or enunciation—of words, a truly infinite expectation is opened: that of the presentation of truth, which is to say the expectation that the gap between the sign and the thing referred to will be utterly reduced. In this expectation, the infinite is opened simultaneously in both its dimensions: the interminable and the definite, or the potential and the actual.

But language does not only constitute a particular sphere or register of our experience. It fashions or irrigates our whole existence. The latter wholly engages sense, finds itself in sense, burns in it and is consumed in it, as it and for it. Language provides access to the sense that exceeds it, and in which it comes undone.

What is more, our existence does not take place away from others: that would be untenable because sense—some sense—must cross all the regions of the real. Sense is the sense of what is, insofar as what is *is*. Or better still, rather than the sense *of* what is, sense *is* Being insofar as it is (whatever 'Being' might mean—including, or above all, not being any being).

Everything is at stake, then, all the things of the world—as well as all the gestures of existence, all of its manifestations, its aspects, its genres: they all share in the expectation and promise of sense.

However, the actual infinite is constantly covered over and carried off by the potential infinite, since its actuality also serves to absorb the movement and tension that give sense its potential, its potency. The actual infinite is death (or any moment of interruption). Thus men think that they have nothing to wait for except either dying or surviving death indefinitely (a second possibility which by definition also includes death).

And yet they never stop waiting for a sense, never stop allowing this promise to be made to them—whether as instantaneous fulfillment or unceasing continuity. Such is their patience, which is infinite in both senses of the term. It *is* at every moment and in its constancy across time. Patience never ceases, except with suicide, which remains the exception even as it is unable *not* to haunt—in one form or in another—impatient existence.

Indeed, patience can only be gauged in light of the impatience required by acts, decisions, resolutions. Patience bears this impatience. It accepts worry; it accepts the haste that pushes it; it accepts ever-renewed, irritating expectation and the disappointment of promises lost, forgotten, broken. This is what gives human patience its impressive character. It *suffers* from waiting in the sense that 'to suffer' used to have: 'to bear', 'to endure'.

Enduring, duration: time is nothing but our patience, our passion of sense.

Jean-Luc Nancy
(translated by John McKeane)

Introduction

This work develops the idea that Cavell and Nancy's thoughts turn around a central issue: the problem of the world. This book traces a movement that opens with the entrance of film[1] into Cavell and Nancy's philosophy and leads to film's transformation of philosophical authority into a power of patience capable of turning our negation of the world into a relation with it. This relation can be said to demand a relinquishment of philosophical mastery. It is precisely this giving up of authority in view of the world that brings Cavell and Nancy to the study of film. Unfolding the specificity of their engagement with film the analysis aims to disclose the idea that film does not represent the world, but 'realizes' it. This realization provides a scene of instruction for philosophy.

While film is then approached from within a particular philosophical position its pressure produces a loosening of philosophical categories. As a consequence, film influences and interrupts the development of a conceptual gesture instead of merely illustrating its outline. The filmmakers and films that appear in this work are not made to fit into a canon. They compose a series whose articulation is sometimes suggested by the philosopher in question (Chaplin, Keaton, Cukor, Capra, Ophüls, Antonioni, Polanski, Makavejev, Kiarostami and Denis) and sometimes dictated by a particular insistence encountered in a film or in moments within a film

[1] The two terms—'film' and 'cinema'—are taken as interchangeable here, but 'film' will recur more often because of the preference accorded to it in the two main texts under analysis. Cavell's *The World Viewed. Reflections on the Ontology of Film* and Nancy's *The Evidence of Film*.

(Godard, Teshigahara, Allen, Rafelson, Farhadi and Ceylan). It is a matter of investigating how film and philosophy reopen for each other the sense of the world and our relation with it, establishing possible turning points, pressures exercised by one on the other.

The division of chapters responds to the demand of the overall argument to keep testing these directions, from philosophy to film and from film into philosophy in order to ultimately show a possibility for thinking as patience. The idea is that by proceeding in this way the mutual resistances between the two will engender the kind of friction that can ultimately provide a turning point.

Chapter 1 introduces the argument with a discussion of philosophy's attempts to 'get to the heart of things'. The analysis aims to develop the question—implicitly and explicitly articulated by Cavell and Nancy—'What can philosophy do?' For both philosophers the answer can be identified in a turn toward the concept of the world as that which rebukes thinking's inherent violence. Retracing paths opened by Heidegger and Wittgenstein, Cavell and Nancy understand the world as that which escapes representation and remains in excess of knowledge, therefore producing a releasing of philosophical authority. From this both thinkers invoke for philosophy an ambition for patience: philosophy finds its own gesture by affirming what draws it to work, what attracts it and sets it in motion. This abandonment of philosophy to an impulse that is not its own is the conceptual moment at which Cavell and Nancy turn to film, as if the friction between the two could produce a turn for thinking. The chapter defines the book's methodology not as the attempt to bring together two disciplines or two philosophers from different 'schools', but as the possibility to measure the distance between them and of each from the point that can elicit a renewal of thinking. This encounter then should produce not an acrobatic convergence, but a collision, a challenge and a release.

Chapter 2 is devoted to Cavell's argument that an acceptance of the world's conditions, of our separateness from it, is key for philosophy's work. Cavell's contention that the problem of philosophy is to accept rather than deny 'the truth of skepticism' is discussed in detail through the argument's dialogue with Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, but also through his engagement with Romantic poetry, Emerson, Thoreau and Heidegger. The intertwining of the problem of the world with that of knowledge-as-certainty is meant to expose the centrality of the notion of 'acknowledgment' for an understanding of the world. This analysis anticipates the possibilities of film to show us how *different* different things are.

Chapter 3 develops an exhaustive analysis of Nancy's enquiry into the sense of the world. Following Nancy's insight that Christianity originates in a conceptual turning point that precedes its historical manifestation, the chapter unravels the proposed connection between monotheism and atheism as reason's transformation of its own excess into the positing of a substance or organizing principle. The emphasis on thinking's quest for a principle beyond the world and Nancy's demand that we abandon ourselves to the world's sense is further clarified through his engagement with Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Gérard Granel. The world without given sense and divine guarantor leads to the idea of the surpassing of knowledge as decisive for man's relation to the world. This relation is activated in this context by reason opening to its own excess and opening itself up to *creation*, *adoration* and, most recently, *struction* (2014: 44). The chapter anticipates the idea that Nancy's work on film is motivated by a reflection on the absence of the world as an object of representation. Film thus becomes a conduct and regard for the world. The task for film becomes caring for the world and this care takes place precisely when something resists 'vision'.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the question 'how does film reorganize philosophy?' and attempts to find suitable paths for an answer by emphasizing how what is different between Cavell and Nancy, between philosophy and film, belongs together. Borrowing an expression from Heidegger's *Identity and Difference* here 'belonging has precedence over "together"' (2002: 38). Through an attentive reading of Cavell's *The World Viewed* and Nancy's *The Evidence of Film* the argument unravels the two philosophers' confrontation with the world of film. Two gestures can be said to intertwine in the philosophers' thinking of film: to recapture our relation to the world as one that is based not on knowing as certainty but on the reception of the singular; and to recapture thinking as that which is attracted and called for by the insurgence of the singular, by the seam(s) in experience. Nancy and Cavell then reverse the idea of cinema as completing the regime of representation stressing how cinema realizes the world, producing a step away from thinking as representation in view of what the book names *thinking as patience*.

In Chapter 5 the argument presents the interval between the world and film's realization of it as crucial for the emergence of the concepts of acknowledgment and adoration. By way of this insistence, the chapter assesses the ambition of the two concepts as Cavell and Nancy's endeavors to expose philosophy's pursuit of foundations to the pressure of the singular.

The chapter suggests how our longing for the unconditioned can turn from the wish to be freed of every conditioning into the patience to bear the condition of the world and the 'presentation' of its sense. The argument stresses how the reluctance to accepting film (the passivity it is said to impose) as having an intrinsic force of philosophical instruction resonates with a specific aversion internal to the work of philosophy. For Cavell and Nancy embracing film also shows philosophy its own repressions, illuminating within philosophy the denial of reception, a tendency to violence and resentfulness. It is abandonment to our romance with the world, abandonment to the response it claims from us, its contestation of our attention that gets us on the way to thinking. In its concluding section the chapter names this new demand and ambition of thinking a 'power of patience'.

Resistances

What hinders the encounter between film and philosophy then is a system of parallel resistances, between the two and within them. One way to put this would be to say that film neither provides nor helps the construction of formal arguments and is therefore excluded from philosophy, understood as responding to the claims of reason. Another way of putting the matter is to say that philosophy's claim to speak out of necessity and universality excludes any internal relation to film. Philosophy will always structure its discourse on the abstract and general, while film addresses the concrete and particular. Resistances coming from film tend to stress how a philosophical approach bypasses medium-specific questions. This criticism would imply that film cannot be read philosophically because this means reducing film to philosophy, stripping film of what is truly cinematic (devices and modes of expression, production processes and systems of distribution). This second option seems to restrict not only philosophy, but film itself. It also seems to delimit what counts as the cinematic, confining cinema to a set of established conventions and their application. The result is that this criticism commits itself precisely to the same generalized and abstract reading it accuses philosophy of. As Cavell points out, a view as to what constitutes the cinematic must be validated against specific instances, specific manifestations of conventions and their subversions in singular cases. It is impossible to decipher what exactly the cinematic is apart from its occurrence in specific films. These may appropriate modes that are until then not recognized as part of the

established canon of cinematic conventions. If the criticism is brought to the possibility of identifying the specificity of the medium, then philosophy is no blinder than any other discipline (including filmmaking itself). In order to identify what is specifically cinematic it would not be enough to reconstruct the technological genealogy of the medium or prophesize its future development. Specifying the sufficient and necessary features of the medium requires critical commitment to matters that are likely to precede and exceed the medium's invention and are equally likely to lead the analysis to a territory that cannot be merely cinematic, whatever the rubric contains.

There is then a second resistance this book inevitably encounters. The nature of this resistance is geographical or better geophilosophical. Cavell says that both *The Senses of Walden* and *The World Viewed* have been conceived as if Continental and Analytic philosophy had never drifted apart (CR: xvii). It is a defining gesture of Cavell's philosophy to attempt to heal the mutual shunning. Nancy in speaking of Cavell's work uses the image of an ocean becoming smaller, almost a pond. Some elements that join the two sides of the ocean are emphasized as a possibility to define differences and offer opportunities that do not dismiss but work through these differences. Cavell's constant engagement with Emerson and Thoreau and their being read alongside not only Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, but also Kierkegaard, Blanchot and Levinas operate under a similar aegis. A common inheritance (Descartes and Kant) and a prophetic anticipation (Emerson's clutching of lubricious objects as an anticipation of Heidegger's hand) bring the different developments together, allowing a dialogue, which also means the possibility to establish a distance. The lack of arguments in Thoreau, evoked by Cavell (IQO: 14), and the register of Emerson's writing explicitly accept the idea of philosophy as a set of texts to be read, rather than as a set of problems to be solved. However, Cavell reminds us that this choice of what philosophy can do at once associates and dissociates 'Emerson and Thoreau from the Continental tradition' (IQO: 15). What Cavell is saying could be reformulated as follows: there are many routes to philosophy; no route however is able to guarantee us access to philosophy 'itself'. The idea that terms of criticism are defining each attempt at philosophy implies that philosophy must, so to speak, be invented, each time anew, so as to invest in its own re-invention. In a sense one is always speaking and writing toward philosophy and never from a previously assigned place (something like a philosophical podium). Authority has to be earned, but it can be earned in manifold ways.

It cannot be transferred, but neither can it be withdrawn on grounds defined by previous standards alone. To sign one's discourse is in itself a gesture toward authority. The acceptance of philosophy goes together with the acceptance of new beginnings for philosophy, invention of discourses (such as that of Thoreau, Emerson, Heidegger and Wittgenstein). In the end Cavell writes 'each claim to speak for philosophy has to earn the authority for itself, say account for it' (IQO: 19). It is in this sense, in the sense of a search for a different way to account for one's own words (and as a consequence for philosophy) that Cavell and Nancy will be read together in this book.

CHAPTER 1

Taking Things to Heart

In order to be carried to the heart of things one is required to take things to heart. To follow a philosophical gesture all the way to the heart of things means taking and being taken by it, being led and affected, wholeheartedly. The philosophical gesture communicates nothing unless it also communicates what one could call an experience, an urgency, a passion. It is not a question of being convinced, but of being arrested and carried. It would be easy here to dismiss this pathos and accommodate it on the other side of the reasons that govern philosophy, making it philosophy's other. The problem is precisely that this logic of the heart returns, once repressed, and reclaims its place within philosophy.

It has perhaps been taken for granted, rather too hastily, that philosophy is not after our own hearts, that its achievement is precisely to be found in its neutrality, knowledge stripped of any interference. If this has been philosophy's achievement it has also been its idleness. If we are after the heart of things then we have to be able to leave our hearts aside and proceed with detached caution, removing our impulse and pulsation from it. This has been the legacy that an exasperated rationalism assigning to reason the powers and autonomy that were once God's has left us. In his own skepticism Blaise Pascal reinforced this trajectory. The famous fragment, 'the heart has its reason which reason itself does not know' (1999: 158), tries to reintroduce the logic of the heart by assigning to it equal force, but a force always operating in opposition to reason. For all this, reason has never stopped being after the heart of things; it has

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even deformed it in order to bring this heart a little closer. Thinking has always directed itself toward what exceeds it to the point of constructing out of this excess the principle of creation and the world. Reason lost sight of the fact that this principle was in fact nothing else than its own heart, its ability to be affected. Taking things to heart means at least this: to be carried into a force that discredits and unsettles reduction. Discarding this as its opposite, reason has insisted in positing a principle of all things, a One, which it then craved to and could not know. In so doing what remained unknown to reason was its own heart, not as that which it had to confront and give voice to in order to capture a foreign regime, but that which motivates it in the first place. The empty place that reason regularly filled with God, then with itself as Autonomous Principle, lamenting in the process the failure of our powers to know and belittling these powers' successes, was nothing else than the beat of its own heart. Philosophy ended up wanting what it was not ready to accept. It is not a matter of love, but of being disposed to a beat, to a pulsation, being carried and touched. Socrates' wonder and Aristotle's astonishment already prepared the way for an understanding of thinking as the reception of a demand, rather than as mastering objectification. We are led to the heart of things by this initial affection, which the philosopher aims to recover and rediscover. The words of philosophy are responses to this original passion and because of this they can never completely leave out a passion for things. And yet philosophy resists this; it prefers to think of itself as self-generating, self-positing, an absolute beginning. It forgets its own partiality, forgetting that its drive is not its own, but already a response.

Heidegger does thematize the heart to provide us with a turning point. The turn will be toward the heart of things. By taking philosophy as the taking of things to heart, one is led toward the heart of things. Thus intention becomes the inclination of a heart turned to the outside, and therefore not in control. Thus thought becomes a heartbeat that gives itself over, that is beholden, taken over. The heart then is nothing else than reason's innermost propelled toward the outside, intimately outside, so that what we thought as buried deep down is in fact already there before one is offered the chance to withdraw. The most intimate is the attraction we receive from the outside, so that the distinction does not arise yet, so that our hearts will be out there, at the heart of things. The heart is what is thus concerned, occupied, committed to what Heidegger calls 'the tidings that overtake all our doings' (WCT: 145). The heart, reason's most proper

leap, is not then reason's opposite, but its pulsating and patient attractiveness. We first become interested and focused through the heart's ability to be attracted, we take things up and what is taken up is not grasped and mastered, but given thanks to, addressed. The heart, committed before intention, gives itself over to a response, a patient response that opens itself for more of what comes, that wants to be beholden again and again. The heart of things will be in this way what one opens to and patiently attends to when one takes to heart, when one is so taken that one's intimacy is not concealed and protected, but responsive to the world. Responsiveness is not in view of a final, ultimate answer that would bring all responses to a close but patience, the power according to which no final answer will ever come. This *power of patience*, somewhere between passion and passivity, names the possibility to keep alive the tension toward what comes, making it inexhaustible, and through this assuring that what comes cannot be exhausted, grasped, manipulated, made secure. Patience releases what it receives so that it can receive it again.

To be after one's own heart is therefore the same as to be after the world, the heart of things that does not allow itself to be penetrated, not because its solidity admits no opening, but because it is already all there, made impenetrable only by our desire to penetrate it. Every philosophy cultivates the ambition to give itself over and yet vacillates in front this abandonment, as if this could belittle its accomplishment, distract its course, overshadow its ability to provide knowledge. To take things to heart is the philosopher's duty and the responsibility that the writing places on our reading. The rigorous and calm posture required by reading has to be accompanied by a leap into what the writing solicits: a singular experience of the world. The articulation of this experience, the response to wonder, is a gift philosophy has not always known what to do with, as if its heart were too accessible to warrant a search or as if this heart malfunctioned.

For Nancy and Cavell the gap opened by an irregular beating of the heart has provided an impulse for thought. Cavell opens his philosophical autobiography with these words, dated July 2, 2003:

> The catheterization of my heart will no longer be postponed. My cardiologist announces that he has lost confidence in his understanding of my condition so far based on reports of what I surmise as symptoms of angina and of the noninvasive monitoring allowed by X-Rays and by the angiograms produced in stress tests. We must actually look at what is going on inside the heart. (2010: 1)

Nancy approaches it this way:

> A heart that only half beats is only half my heart. I was already no longer inside me. I'm already coming from somewhere else, or I'm not coming any longer at all. Something strange is disclosed at the heart of the most familiar – but 'familiar' hardly says it: at the heart of something that never signaled itself as 'heart' […] This heart, from now on intrusive, has to be extruded. (2008a: 163)

The texts that record this gap are irrevocably biographical and philosophical, or better one because of the other. There the heart of things trembles with things taken to heart, and philosophy is set to work by an enforced patience. The sense is that philosophy is written here as the autobiography of our relation to the world.

Is this speaking of hearts, this retracing of the experience, simply metaphorical? Or does it suggest a broader parable, one that calls philosophy to rethink its authority not according to what it is capable of penetrating, but according to what it is capable of enduring? If philosophy has lost this sense of wonder, if under the pressure of what Heidegger calls representative thought it has lost the sense of how *different* different things are, then how can it get this sense back? If an excess of reason has produced unreasonable results, deprived us of the world, what could give the world back to philosophy? If it is true as Nancy writes that 'the philosopher has nothing to tell you that you don't already know and that s/he does not already know by means of all that is not "philosophy" in him or her' (SW: 36), then the task of philosophy cannot be accomplished by the technical refinement of its lexicon. If it is true, as Cavell says, that philosophy speaks of 'what we all know' (2010: 540) then its success cannot be measured by what it discovers. What then can philosophy do? Nancy and Cavell affirm an ambition for philosophy that implies the talent for reception. This book calls this ambition a *power of patience*. To say that philosophy is a power of patience does not mean that it withdraws its affirmation, but that it finds its own gesture by affirming what draws it to work, what attracts it. This abandonment to the impulse that is not its own is the condition of its constant self-scrutiny, without which philosophy knows only a freezing of thought. The contention in this book is that for Cavell and Nancy a crucial role in this reconfiguration of thinking is played by film. Both engage with film as the element that indicates to philosophy paths it has abandoned too prematurely. This abandonment is

precisely the conceptual point at which Cavell and Nancy turn to film, as if this distraction can provide an answer to philosophy's powers, as if the friction between the two could produce a turn for thinking. It is not then a matter of bringing the two together, nor of attempting an approach, but of measuring the distance between them and of both from the point at which or through which a turning can be elicited. If there is contact there will be friction and rather than a convergence being established, a 'space between' might open. (The two philosophers have saluted each other at least on one occasion.[1] The occasion was the degree honoris causa awarded to Cavell by the University of Strasbourg. In his allocution Nancy defined Cavell's thought as marked not by 'dialogue and reconciliation', but by 'the between itself' [1997a: 49].) This parallelism implies a further possibility, only implicit here. It gives one a chance to show that despite its tectonic rift, despite the many fault lines, philosophy still thinks of itself at times as responding to a single demand. This does not mean that one can bring everything together, but that the rift is perhaps not between continents but between voices, not a gap between schools, but the opening produced by a singular gesture that is at once an invitation to sharing and a resistance irreducible to geography and traditions.

The demand that brings philosophy and film to a productive friction can be heard in the words Cavell uses to frame his biography: 'telling the accidental, anonymous, in a sense posthumous, days of my life, is the making of philosophy, however minor or marginal or impure […] attaching significance to insignificance and insignificance to significance' (2010: 6). Can one still say that these accidents and their anonymity, these minor and impure tales that gather on film with the semblance of almost spontaneous greatness are unworthy of thinking, when our task becomes, as Nancy writes that of 'practicing the sense of the world'? (SW: 128).

A suitable place to start taking things to heart would then be a question, asked as if film and philosophy were still on two opposite sides of our intellectual landscape. The question could read as follows: When philosophers make ontological claims as to the nature of film what is it that these questions address, film or philosophy?

When Cavell talks about the ability of film to reveal all of what is revealed to it and only what is revealed to it, is he in fact responding to the preoccupation, shared by Heidegger, Emerson, Thoreau and Wittgenstein, that

[1] I would like to thank Philip Armstrong for alerting me to the texts that document this encounter.

we have lost the world and have become lost to it? This preoccupation voices the sense that film gives us an idea of this loss, while providing at the same time, a temporary, but not too temporary, reprieve. This reprieve is temporary because the loss of the world returns to haunt us after the film, but not so temporary because cinema points to the chance of a more consistent and enduring rediscovery of the world. In this sense one could say that cinema is an ontological event.

In a similar fashion when Nancy says that in film the taking of images is an ethos, is he referring to specific compositional structures or simply finding a way to articulate the idea that we are unceasingly committed to exposing the sense of the world? Since the sense of the world has now withdrawn from given significations, as we are at once absorbed by and called to respond to the world, the logic of this encounter is that of an intimacy that we can enjoy only by way of a distance. Film *automatically* produces this distance.

Terms and Conditions

Both philosophers are coming to film from different 'terms of criticism'. These shape their philosophical commitments and direct their pressure and insistence on a particular understanding of the demand of thinking. Their approach to film should be understood from these terms. This is not surprising inasmuch as film on the whole does not form part of the formal education of professional philosophers. One could perhaps conclude that while articulating their ontology of film philosophers are always first of all engaged in a definition or redefinition of their own terms of criticism. Film could in this sense be a way to test how far these terms reach, how much the conditions that occupy their philosophical identity can affect one's intellectual sensitivity. However this sensitivity can express itself through the writing of film only insofar as it takes into account what happens when film passes through a philosophical identity, challenging what philosophy can do.

There is a condition that seems to present itself even before these terms of criticisms are announced. By and large an education to philosophy does not (yet) include cinema. In the absence of scholarship one finds an *anecdote* that defines the encounter. These anecdotes, moments of experience, give the encounter a striking feature, a naturalness normally foreign to philosophy. This natural relationship with cinema could be (still) called cinephilia. One finds explicit references to this in Badiou's visits to the

Cinémathèque in Rue d'Ulm (2013: 1), in Ranciére's watching Ray's *Run for Cover* (1955) on a makeshift screen in the back room of a restaurant in Naples (2011: 7) and in Cavell's quarter of a century spent going to the movies as part of a normal week (WV: xix). The retelling of the anecdote gives the philosophical discourse on cinema its 'origin'. Cavell writes that his education owes more to movies than to books (1994: 131). The time spent in movie theaters occupies such an important part of his life that *The World Viewed* is described as 'a metaphysical memoir' (WV: xviiii). This natural relation occupies the place left vacant by the lack of an established canon against which to read films philosophically. It also provides a number of pedagogical benefits: the memorability of movies is shared, therefore suitable for conversation; the absence of descriptive principles imposes commitment to the very experience of what is on the screen. These conditions–call them commonness and immediacy–do not just establish coordinates for the illustration of ontological, aesthetic or ethical questions, they inform these very questions. Reciprocation of and faithfulness to one's experience are as problematic as longed for in philosophy.

The anecdote establishes the conditions of the encounter as non-mediated, granting (or questioning) the right of philosophy to speak about film. The step that follows the telling of an anecdote is normally occupied by an almost opposite exercise that aims to establish the right for film to be spoken about philosophically. This encounter reveals something that could be briefly summarized in two points:

– The conditions for the encounter are to be determined, meaning that the encounter is at first non-philosophical, natural, and therefore its conditions themselves appear non-philosophical. Philosophy has to establish its right to speak about film, either by leaving the space opened by its natural encounter with it–a space that stretches between commonness and immediacy–or by doing something with it. In return this decision defines one's terms of criticism, the orientation of one's philosophy. Commonness and immediacy are terms philosophy is bound to find either suspicious or productive. The affirmation and denial of commonness are perhaps no more popular among philosophers than they are among all of us. A certain understanding of these two terms will therefore orient one's approach to film or deter this approach altogether. The tension between an act of love (amateurism) and an act of knowledge assures a constant fecundity.
– The right of film to be handled by and through concepts also remains to be determined. Film has to be granted the right to be spoken about in

philosophical terms. This preoccupation is voiced by questions such as: How is it that something providing so much pleasure to so many people (philosophers included) can bear the (sometimes unpleasant) weight of philosophical questioning? What makes this questioning necessary, recommended or even possible? If there is an affinity or productive friction, then this has to be found again by removing film from its availability or by doing something with this availability. Film's availability suggests its status as a commodity, a form of mass entertainment. This suggests that the immediacy of entertainment itself is incapable of raising questions. This readiness and availability point to complementary possibilities: philosophy should guard itself from film and its criticism should warn us against film's dangerous seductions; philosophy could use film to popularize itself, to show to ordinary men and women those results they cannot understand in its own terms. Removing film from its availability would perhaps also mean considering only a certain type of film, a selected elite produced with assured aesthetic seriousness, devoid of the marks of the market and capable therefore of raising questions as profound as the profoundest philosophy. On the other hand those determined to do something with film's availability will need to conquer a different corner. The task here would be to affirm that it is possible, recommended, even necessary to see that film is by itself already too serious a matter, too pervasive a fact to be reducible to a channel for philosophy. The reason for this seriousness would be found in the possibility of film to invite philosophy to speak. This reversal will configure itself as an insistence on film's immediacy as calling for philosophy's response. The idea will have repercussions on what one understands philosophy to be and what gives philosophy its right to speak: Is philosophy to be accepted precisely because it is not available, obscure and esoteric? If philosophy is something that can be produced only in private quarters–today, but perhaps not for long, these are called Universities–if its education cannot be popular but at best popularized, if it has to shun public displays and remain a clandestine companion, what gives it the right to speak of things that matter to everybody? It is not a matter of dismissing the fact that as Cavell writes 'there is a beauty that is realized only in granting an alarming difficulty' (ET: 2), but of understanding what this difficult beauty stands for. The answer as to whether film is serious enough to sustain philosophical interrogation would then take the following shape: film bears the burden of thought by provoking thought, by starting questions and providing answers which in return resonate within philosophy, by pressing philosophy against the heart of things. This however should not be taken to simply say that *film thinks*.

> The buzz the formula produces seems at once to renounce too much and to ask too little of film. It is difficult to shake from it the impression that film's highest ambition should be to think. Moreover, since the expression is often pronounced in a tone of discovery it suggests that 'to think' comes to resolve the question of film, as if we knew with certainty what thinking does (then why has every philosopher of the modern era redefined thinking in a different way?). In other words, to say 'film thinks' assumes that one knows what thinking is, while the very idea of philosophy's encounter with film has to do with our being less than certain as to what thinking means.

The outrageousness in thinking that film is eligible for an encounter with philosophy, qualified to sustain philosophy's interrogation, becomes in turn a question for how outrageous one can take philosophy to be. In different ways Cavell and Nancy resolve the question of film's right to be talked about philosophically by resolving the issue of philosophical outrageousness. This outrageousness shows up as rage, thinking as grasping, violence brought to the world, but it can equally manifest as the consequence of philosophy's turning away from all this, undergoing a conversion. In this second sense philosophy is outrageous precisely because it renounces and exceeds the measure provided by foundation and ground. For Nancy 'it is only at the limit that one can try philosophy's luck' (2008c: 15). Cavell writes on the other hand that philosophy is inherently outrageous, since 'it seeks to disquiet the foundations of our lives and to offer us in recompense nothing better than itself–and this on the basis of no expert knowledge, of nothing closed to the ordinary human being' (PH: 9).

Patient Distractions

It is precisely this ordinariness that brings cinema into philosophy in a way that is both problematic (philosophy is not ready to receive cinema) and immensely provocative (in the sense of a continuous invitation to voice something new, to find a voice at the limit). One could then say that it is through the question of the ordinary that philosophy encounters film, both because philosophy encounters cinema as part of ordinary experience and because ordinary experience is the material of film. The ordinary is the material of film in the sense that it is its subject, one which fulfills its promise to, as Cavell puts, let the world exhibit itself. The undramatic, the fidgety, the abysses of routine and the boredom of

dailiness, the restlessness of the body are prominent subjects for film. They almost come to define what cinema gives us: Bogart's prowess with cigarettes and his having to be taught how to whistle, Bacall's handing out an empty glove in place of her hand, a blanket becoming an insurmountable wall, a faulty door triggering a moment of erotic recognition. On film ordinary gestures become signatures. Film's insistence on the ordinary shows its ability to transform the most ordinary situations into something out of the ordinary, teaching us 'how *different* different things are from one another' (WV: 19). By missing out the everyday, by lacking a mode of perception oriented toward the ordinary, one is bound to miss out on the best of film. To use Cavell's words 'I understand it to be, let me say, a natural vision of film that every motion and station, in particular every human posture and gesture, however glancing, has its poetry' (1984: 14).[2] To fail to recognize this, to fail to guess 'the unseen from the seen', requires the greatest power of avoidance. While recapturing the sense of Baudelaire's thoughts in *The Painter of Modern Life*, Cavell writes: 'film returns to us and extends our first fascination with objects, with their inner and fixed lives' (WV: 43). Nancy articulates a similar thought by assigning to film the power to capture what Heidegger calls *Bewegtheit*, speaking then of film as 'the disclosure of a look in the middle of ordinary turbulence' (EF: 22).

One can perhaps then rephrase this by saying that the ordinary as material is the subject of film (it is what films are about) but also that it is its medium (what film works with). The question of film's relation to the ordinary is at once ontological and ethical, it is directed to this world here, both as what is given to us and as what always has to be rediscovered. Then the question of the ordinary world (this world here) becomes itself the question of the meeting between philosophy and film.

Perhaps this can be put another way: it may be that the philosopher goes to the movies in order not to think philosophically, to distract herself or himself from philosophy or to test whether philosophy can sustain itself on a distraction, happen in and as distraction. Cavell reminds us of how Hume invoked distraction as a therapy against what he called philosophical

[2] Even abstract films, I am thinking here, for example, of the works of Duchamp, Man Ray, Snow, Sharits, Brakhage, Frampton, proceed precisely by amplifying the ordinary beyond recognition. The movement of everyday objects propelled into uselessness by the double exposures and rayographs in *Emak-Bakia* (1926) or the hot plate and family pictures of Frampton's *Nostalgia* (1971) do not deny this relation; if anything they investigate its least visible possibilities.

melancholy. His distractions were a dinner, a game of backgammon and a conversation with friends, after which philosophical matters seemed 'so cold, and strained and ridiculous' (1985: 316) that he felt he could not find his heart. For Cavell distraction is a reaction to the malady of skepticism (IQO: 172), a recommendation to overcome philosophy's annihilation of the world. Alexander García Düttmann writes that 'to think is always […] to do something other than think, other which is not something else, it is to distract ourselves without for that renouncing thought' (2000: 115). Is this a picture of film? Of philosophy? Of their encounter?

As Cavell confesses in the Foreword to *The Claim of Reason* philosophy never ceases to work itself into irrelevance, by subjecting the one who undertakes this work to 'doubts about the character of one's talents, or conviction, or interest, or about one's taste, or lack of it, for arguments that forever seem on the wrong ground' (CR: xxi–xxii). In *The Sense of the World*, Nancy shows philosophy to be both finished (as representation, system, principles) and unfinishable (the excessive character of its questions responds to the demand of sense as such) (SW: 22–23) and haunted by a latent, structural madness. This manifests itself as a double-sided obsession with sense (call it the heart of things). On the one hand philosophy has the possibility of following the force of sense right to the point where it becomes capable of practicing sense's excess (as a salute, welcome, adoration). Nancy calls this philosophy's possibility to practice 'an assumption of responsibility for and to this excess' (SW: 19). This is philosophy's madness as a thought for the world, 'tracing out of all these testimonies of existence in the world, each one singular and singularly exposed to its end' (SW: 120). On the other hand philosophy is always exposed to the mania of 'a signifying appropriation of sense' (SW: 80), an appropriation that throws it into a despairing melancholy. This drive to enclose what cannot be appropriated reduces sense and the world to nothing. This work focuses on how the encounter between film and philosophy can return philosophy to a patient reception of the world's excess, beside itself in a sane sense.

For the later Heidegger philosophy stands for the obfuscation of thinking. For Wittgenstein philosophy should learn to leave everything as it is. Therefore a gesture is needed to regain thinking from philosophy's repression. If we said that cinema provides for philosophy a way out of an impasse, can this gesture still be philosophical? Can film operate this redemption? What would philosophy's reception of it look like?

CHAPTER 2

Cavell and the Conditions of the World

Views

The title of Stanley Cavell's first work on film—*The World Viewed*—contains a deliberate Heideggerian resonance, one that aims to evoke in particular Heidegger's treatment of the world in *Being and Time* and *The Age of the World Picture*. The double emphasis on the world and on viewing echoes Heidegger's idea that the world is the most neglected of philosophical concepts. For Heidegger this decisive concept remains covered up by philosophers' insistence on the duality between substance and extension. In *Being and Time* Heidegger insists that the world needs to be understood as the referential system Dasein is originally disclosing and disclosed to, involved in. The composite expression Being-in-the-World responds precisely to this need of removing the world from the blind alley traditional ontology operates in (BT: 94). Heidegger substitutes Descartes *substantia*, *intellectio* and *extensio* with disclosure, involvement and concernful dealing. Dasein and the world are given to one another. Therefore the argument prepares the way for Dasein's confrontation with the world not in terms of knowledge of objects therein encountered, but in terms of original familiarity, referential structure, context of relations, assignment, being-with. The construction briefly summarized here leads Heidegger to write: 'the "wherein" of an act of understanding which assigns or refers itself, is that for which one lets entities be encountered in the kind of Being that belongs to involvements; and this "wherein" is the phenomenon of the world' (BT: 119). The question of the world and of our implication with

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it has been mystified in traditional ontology by removing man from it and as a consequence removing the world from man, turning our commitment to the world into a matter of knowing objects in a container. Once the issue shifts from absorption within a referential structure to objects to be known then the question of the world is passed over.

Throughout Cavell's work one finds a constant, if at times silent, acknowledgment of Heidegger's influence, which at times rivals in significance the one exercised by Wittgenstein. However when it comes to the thinker of *Being and Time* the approach is fairly oblique and rarely—with some notable exceptions—Cavell embarks in an open conversation. However the appearance of Heidegger in the title inevitably serves as a clue to understand the design and ambition of *The World Viewed*. The motivation for this inclusion harks back precisely to Hiedegger's notion of the world and to his critique of Descartes. These two elements—not alone and not exclusively—seem to set the framework for the questions Cavell studies in his first work on film. Following this trajectory one could say that the book on cinema is devoted to the question of the world, in particular to the intersection at which the world is lost to us and we are lost to it. If then the aim here is that of tracing what role film plays in Cavell's philosophical gesture, the attention should turn primarily not to what Cavell writes about cinema, but to what leads him there. What then does the title say? The title names primarily the world. It does therefore identify as a primary concern the question of the world. This concept is as stake in the volume as much as the question of film. It is in fact that from which film becomes a philosophical question. It suggests an intimacy between the world and film, but in suggesting this intimacy it inevitably makes of it a problem, an issue and a field for conceptual discovery. The question that demands to be asked then is, why would this be a problem? Why would intimacy with the world require conceptual investigation, why does it call for philosophy? Thus before asking anything about film the book asks of our relation with the world, our knowledge or involvement with it. Since Cavell notes that this is a book of philosophy, the answer to this question will have to provide a philosophical motive (WV: xix). In turn an exercise of philosophical criticism is needed in order to understand how this problem has emerged, what philosophical habits it has instructed and what, if any, solution it has called for. Cavell's movements seem to follow this trajectory: the question of film is asked by Cavell under the aegis of the question of the world; the prominence of the concept of the world emphasizes an intimacy with the question of film; in turn this allows

for the emergence of the question of intimacy with the world as itself an issue, perhaps the issue. This framework suggests that the philosophical approach to film begins in Cavell with a preoccupation with our intimacy with the world. It is to this that one needs to turn one's mind in order to better understand the conceptual demands placed by film on philosophy and vice versa. Without this exercise in philosophical criticism the emergence of film in philosophy fails to become the problem it is. One would then lack the means to understand the justificatory tone Cavell often employs when introducing film in his philosophical discussions and, more importantly, one would remain deaf and blind to the encounter between philosophy and film, and therefore be left with the impossibility to assess the gift they bring to each other. It was already said that if something is to be done with the relationship between philosophy and film this needs to be acknowledged in what emerges from specific terms of criticism adopted by singular philosophers. For Cavell intimacy with the world is not merely a problematic that attracts him to the serious study of film, but that which allows film to become an integral part of his overall philosophical project, not simply in the sense of being integrated within a previously confirmed set of concepts but as a term that animates and unsettles all others. Outside of this work the relevance of film for this particular philosophy would be lost to us and would remain as a more or less accomplished, more or less necessary appendix. As part of this effort it becomes important to understand that the collaboration between film and philosophy takes place both at the level of film's mechanisms (its essence as existence) and in terms of film's instances (its existence as revealing and constantly altering what one takes as its essence). These mechanisms and instances produce a new self-reflective position for philosophy, one from which the opportunity opens to unsettle philosophical procedures and redirect the way in which one understands the work of thinking. This would mean reading film under the pressure of philosophical thinking and philosophy under the pressure of the manifestations of film, its arrival at a particular moment and the arrivals produced by it.

In its second term then the title associates the question of the world with the idea of viewing. This association presents a specific situation, for the title subjects the world to views. The title reflects thus as much on the concept of the world as on the idea of vision. It points to the fact that 'ours is an age in which our philosophical grasp of the world fails to reach beyond our taking and holding views of it, and we call these views metaphysics' (WV: xxiii). Cavell is addressing here the idea that our relation

with the world is constantly reduced to a worldview, a narrowing down of experience, and therefore contrary to philosophy when this is understood, as I take Cavell to understand it, as devoted to the opening up of experience. For Heidegger the formation of worldviews always conflicts with philosophical work and represent a debasement of it. In the *Contributions to Philosophy* Heidegger writes of the disappearance of philosophy under the pressure of worldviews: 'with the rise of "worldviews" there disappears the possibility of a willing of philosophy, so much so that the worldview must ultimately resist philosophy' (2012: 32). Cavell keeps this debased metaphysics in mind. Our relation with the world in terms of views we hold of it distances us from philosophy, and makes the work of philosophy impossible. The consequences though are not simply felt in philosophical work. Inhabiting worldviews implies a narrowing down of experience, resulting in a limitation of questioning, a channeling and arranging of experience in a predefined direction. Worldviews thwart our relation to the world, make the world smaller, and make us fixated. A way of seeing becomes *the* way of seeing. Wittgenstein insists that his philosophy not be confused with a Weltanschuung (PI: §122).[1]

The passage that shows the connection between the world and the idea of viewing also crucially shows the link between the question of the world and modernity. The question of modernity is crucial to Cavell's understanding of what makes the problem of the world available, what makes it into a philosophical problem, but also to his understanding of the methods of philosophy, of philosophy's relation to itself. Therefore the effort the book devotes itself to could be understood as an effort to confront modernity. Confronting modernity means committing oneself to the specificity of the philosophical questions that emerge there, to respond to the pressure modernity exercises on philosophy; it means committing one's own thinking to what becomes of philosophical thinking in modernity and to what this change imposes on philosophy. By bringing together the two passages, calling our age the age of worldviews and defining worldviews as emerging in modernity, one could read then 'our age as modern'. That our age is modern shows that our intellectual demands and our conceptual adventures take place within the horizon set by modernity, but also in and as the undoing of modernity. Confronting modernity therefore implies inheriting problems and questions that we may perceive as unfamiliar precisely because too familiar. These are problems that we inhabit

[1] See also Genova, J. (1995), *Wittgenstein: A Way of Seeing*. New York: Routledge.

without awareness. The point here is to show that for Cavell our thought is indebted and this indebtedness itself should be explored in order to illuminate the conceptual figures and ways of speaking we use, the form of life we have. Our thought may come from far away, but what comes from far away is much closer to us than we are ready to admit.

The word 'viewed' also calls attention to the conditions under which we see the world and the world lets itself be seen. By emphasizing the world's visibility Cavell is not simply aligning the world with the mode of film's reception, it is not simply the prominence of the visual in the cinematic (films are watched more often than they are listened to or read) that is important. The idea of the world being viewed points also to a mode of knowledge, a mode of apprehension that epistemology employs to find out what the world and our relation to it are. In this sense the idea of views of the world doesn't invoke the holding of opinions (views), the forming of worldviews, but suggests rather the idea of vision and behind this that of seeing, keeping in sight, checking with the eyes. Here again the analyses of how film shows the world and of how we receive (see, watch) the world in films become available only once Cavell's emphasis on viewing and seeing has been clarified. The world offers itself to view, to ocular investigation; human creatures want to *know* the world with their own eyes. This seeing is itself dependent on the understanding of the world as a set of objects and on a further step made by traditional epistemology. Not only the world is a container, but in its investigations traditional epistemology turns the world itself into an object among others. What is scrutinized by vision is therefore not only an object within the world, but the world itself as an object. By investigating an object as standing for the world, what the epistemologist demands to see is the world itself. What Cavell calls traditional epistemology (the reference is mainly to Descartes) sets up ocular scrutiny as the exclusive method of our knowledge of the world. The title *The World Viewed* therefore invokes epistemology's focus on the evidence produced by vision in determining our relation to the world. How seeing translates into knowledge (or fails to) is one of the main concerns Cavell's critique of modern philosophy devotes itself to. Modern man establishes the exclusive prominence of vision in assessing his relation to the world. Seeing the world becomes the original mode of knowing its existence. The tradition's obsessive invocation of seeing and the mechanisms according to which it operates play a crucial role in Cavell's philosophy. The enquiries into the origin of film, into its myth of totality, into its fulfillment of man's age-old craving for the real, its relation

to painting and photography can be articulated in Cavell's thought only moving from epistemology's obsession with seeing something. The same catchy definition Cavell provides of film in *More of The World Viewed*—'film is a moving image of skepticism' (WV: 188)—cannot be heard in its implications outside of the ocular proof demanded by the tradition.

The Skeptic's World

In *The Claim of Reason* Cavell summarizes the dilemma the traditional epistemologist works himself into when trying to prove the existence of the world as following essentially from two gestures: the epistemologist fixes the world and invents the senses. It is in this double error that one can trace the trajectory of modern skepticism inaugurated by Descartes in his study. In other words the unsurpassable impasse that Descartes confronts is inevitable, but the inconsolable feeling he derives from it is of his own making. This situation signals on the one hand the possibility of overcoming the sense of despondency derived from the impasse and on the other the acceptance of it as natural to and pervasive of human thinking itself. Throughout his writing Cavell insists that the task set by skepticism cannot simply be bypassed and that its 'curse' cannot simply be overcome and silenced. Skepticism inevitably appears in human thinking every time this sets itself on a quest to know the world in terms of certainty. Cavell alters the picture of Wittgenstein as essentially moved by the urgency to refute skepticism, instead providing a reading of the *Philosophical Investigations* as an attempt to affirm the skeptical thesis as undeniable, while shifting its weight, in order to avoid disappointment and the sense of failure with human knowledge. For Cavell the skeptic not only comes from our same conceptual schema, but affirms something true to us all, his conclusion achieving, while denying a fact of human existence. The problem then does not reside in what the skeptic achieves—his conclusion does illuminate something about our relation with the world—neither in his point of departure—he shares our same experience of the world—but in what he constructs along the way. What is produced during the investigation is problematic because it imagines as a discovery what is in fact an invention. The reason why skepticism cannot avoid taking its conclusion as a curse lies in how the skeptic reaches this conclusion. The skeptic's conclusion—what Cavell calls 'the truth of skepticism' (CR: 241)—looks to him as the collapse of knowledge and therefore as the unconditional disappearance of our relation with the world because the conditions under which this conclusion

appears have already eliminated what the skeptic was trying to find out. Once this procedure is investigated in its various steps then the conclusion itself looks productive rather than stifling.

Fixing the world and inventing the senses are part of the same gesture through which the skeptic casts the world away and seals himself off from it. His conclusion is therefore that knowledge fails.

What does Cavell mean when he writes that philosophers fix the world in order to discover that human knowledge fails to prove the world's existence? As mentioned Cavell understands Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* as providing not a refutation of skepticism, but a shift of its conclusion. Wittgenstein is therefore not saying that skepticism is wrong, but that skepticism's thesis—we can never know with certainty of the existence of the world—is a natural possibility, revealing that our origins can't be checked and that thought and communication are *given* to us in our forms of life. Cavell writes: 'in Wittgenstein's work, as in scepticism, the human disappointment with human knowledge seems to take over the whole subject' (CR: 44). To say that Wittgenstein and skepticism share the same concern is to say that Wittgenstein's criteria, their limitation and our disappointment with them, reveal the truth of skepticism, showing why the skeptic succumbs to his own investigation. Philosophy causes a crisis that it is nevertheless able to cure. The crisis, forcing the philosopher to fix the world, erupts from the failure to support and resolve the demand that if we can know something then we can know everything, that if a claim to know something succeeds then all of our knowledge succeeds. The failure turns the investigation into the evidence that once a claim fails then all knowledge collapses. It is important to note that for Cavell philosophy is a mode of questioning anybody can enter at any time; whether one enters it or not depends more on the mood than on a particular expertise. As a consequence skepticism in Cavell's thought should not be understood simply as a product of Cartesian doubt, but is entered every time we—professional philosophers or not—get caught asking: 'If we can't know this with certainty, then how do we know anything?'

Cavell sums up the procedures of skepticism in three questions:

> How can the failure of a particular claim to knowledge (seem to) cast suspicion on the power of knowledge as a whole to reveal the world?
>
> Why are generic objects universally (apparently) taken as the examples which traditional epistemologists investigate?

> How can we reconcile such convincingness as traditional investigations have (which, I am assuming depends upon the apparent ordinariness of their reflections about apparently ordinary problems) with the fact that in an ordinary (practical) context their question about generic objects would seem absurd? (CR: 129)

By following these three questions Cavell arrives at three features of skepticism: discovery, conflict, instability. The first refers to the sense of *discovery* the skeptic has at the end of his investigation; the *conflict* is the one produced with our ordinary assumptions by this discovery; the *instability* refers to the fact that the attachment to this discovery is constantly faltering, hesitant and crashes every time we return from the study to our ordinary involvement with the world.

The model of this structure emerges for the first time in Descartes' *Meditations*. Here Descartes insists on the ordinary nature of his doubt. The doubt comes from the many false opinions accepted 'in my childhood' (1996: 12). In order to destroy these 'large number of falsehoods' (12) it should be enough to find in each of them some ground for doubt, because reason naturally instructs him to abstain from 'opinions which are not completely certain' (12). The falsehoods have been caused by the senses and experience has proven that 'the senses occasionally deceive us' (12). What is under consideration is therefore a doubt over a set of natural beliefs, which ordinary experience has shown to be false. The senses that have grounded the acquisition of these beliefs are then proven to be an unstable source of knowledge. Those ordinary experiences, commonest things, which are believed to be the most distinctly known, even those, precisely those, are not known. Among the commonest things is a ball of wax, whose sensing does not tell us enough about what sensing wax is and therefore what wax is. Cavell provides a compressed account of Descartes' progress:

> Here are reviewed the elements of the epistemological investigation […] the rehearsal of familiar beliefs; the recognition that these must ultimately be founded on seeing, touching, etc.; the production of a belief about a generic object in terms of which to test this foundation; the discovery that the senses alone are not, as we had formerly "believed", adequate to knowledge; and then the question "So what do we know?" or "Then how do we know anything about the world?" (CR: 131)

In order for these procedures to work, to be reasonable and therefore apply to all common knowers, they have to be entered naturally, using

the same method anybody, without specific know-how, would use. This reasonableness is attached to the philosopher's reasoning being as conventional as that of any ordinary person. His considerations are based on no particular observation and arise in no extraordinary circumstances; they should be available to all, confirmed in our dealing with the world. In other words the doubt has to be reasonable according to our everyday lives and the reasoning in the sequence 'claim', 'request for basis', 'basis', 'ground for doubt'—whose goal is to confirm or overcome the doubt—should equally be understandable within ordinary, public conditions. The doubt itself has to be reasonable. It has to be based on an experience we all at one point or another are likely to be pricked by. In order to raise the question of the existence of the world one must have a reason, must have undergone a real experience that forces the emergence of the question. The philosopher has no doubt undergone this experience because for him the question is there, he cannot ignore it any longer; the question obsesses him. What are these experiences? They are experiences responding to the impression or feeling that even the simplest claim to knowledge (a generic object) under optimal conditions (a best case) cannot be proven. The impression or feeling the philosopher's reasoning gives expression to may not be one that arises in practical context, but is nonetheless a natural experience, one which precisely removes us from the practical context.

There are two such experiences: an experience articulating a sense that for all I know I know nothing of the world; another suggesting that I am surrounded by false presences. The first experience details our frustrated response to being proved wrong precisely when we had no reason to doubt our knowledge (Cavell cites as examples the transcription of a phone number followed by the surprised acknowledgment that the number is wrong or the failure to identify a specific sound when I was certain of my familiarity with that sound and ability to name it [CR: 140–142]). The frustration occurs precisely because the obviousness of our knowledge, its clarity to us, is suddenly and plainly contradicted by the world. We hold a piece of knowledge whose intimacy is important to who we are, and yet the world repudiates us. Its source checked and the anger gone, the frustration leads us to recognize a leap, one of the wrong sort, made in the wrong direction and brings us to conclusions as to how much knowledge relies in fact on erroneous assumptions. It is not difficult to see how this experience produces a similar procedure to that of the traditional epistemologist: I have a sense that something in my experience is amiss, that my knowledge in

this particular case (for all I know a best case) is proved wrong, I conclude that knowledge itself, as a whole, rests on problematic grounds (erroneous assumptions, misleading leaps). However these cases simply lead me to be more attentive, not to take things for granted, to abandon a certain rigidity, perhaps a certain attachment to myself. As Cavell writes, these cases prove that 'human beings are fallible', not that 'we suffer metaphysical ineptitude or privation' (CR: 143).

The second type of experience is perhaps more telling. I have described it as one of being surrounded by false presences. It could also be described as one of being sealed within a world of appearances, while the world of things in themselves lies a step beyond, unattainable. In this case what disappears is not my knowledge of the world, but the world itself. The world recedes and I am left with its shadow, or with a sensation of failing constantly to grasp reality itself. In this frame of mind—more likely to be achieved in 'peaceful solitude', undisturbed, alone with my thoughts—I will be asking questions about the existence of a generic object, one which I can't identify according to specific features (I do not have criteria for its identification). Once I am in this frame of mind and once I am presented only with generic objects I will have no choice but to conclude that the world is in fact inaccessible. Cavell writes that 'the world drops out' (CR: 145). On my own, trapped by the suspicion that I deal with appearances, confronted not with specific objects but with materiality itself, I see the world receding from my senses, hence from my capacity to know it. Materiality itself is what I would like to know, what lies behind the curtain of this show I deal with every day, and the exemplary cases I find for it, a table, an envelope, a tomato, simply confirm my worst fears.

These two experiences stress how conclusions such as the ones reached by Descartes could emerge for us in our ordinary experience, once the right frame of mind and right setting are provided. They are not completely foreign and therefore prove the naturalness of the philosopher's reasoning, the possibility that this reasoning extends to us. At any time I could see my certainty about a best case being contradicted—and feel that my knowledge is too rigid or that I am too attached to it—or feel I am essentially participating in a counterfeit world, unable to reach the original. However, are these conclusions stable enough to throw me completely off the kilter, to show that my assumed sanity is in fact madness? Do they really hold the generality and obviousness they seek and which once achieved cause the world to drop out?

Cavell answers that 'the conclusion does not detach itself from the experience of the investigation' (CR: 160). In order to understand why an investigation that is apparently natural, rooted in experiences we all have, produces a conclusion that seems unnatural once brought outside of the investigation, Cavell looks at the basis offered by the traditional philosopher to respond to the request (How do I know there's a [generic object] there? Because I see it, by means of the senses). The basis for the claim to know is the right one, the one anybody would provide when confronted with the object chosen by the philosopher, a generic object, one I can't identify according to this or that property. However what emerges from the investigation—what leads to the philosopher's conclusions—is that 'to see' in this case is brought to contrast not with 'what I have on authority or know by inference' (CR: 164), not with other bases for a claim to know, other ways of knowing, but with what the object is in itself or how it *really* is. The philosopher however has not started with this experience; he has started with the normal, natural, conventional ways in which a natural knower would ask 'How do you know?' and the answer 'Because I see it'. It has been said before that the significance of the philosopher's investigation resides in its being reasonable, available to all of us. However following Cavell one finds out that the traditional philosopher uses ordinary claims to prove their inferiority. He starts by using the concept of seeing as the most basic way to know and concludes using it as a basis for a particular claim, to know the thing-in-itself. One is therefore faced with a shift: the philosopher begins with something that he then dismisses in order to reach his conclusion. If the basis—'Because I see it'—is not entered naturally—in keeping with our conventional ways of using the expression—as the philosopher had promised, then the expression of doubt itself, its ground, cannot be taken as fully natural. Cavell suggests at this point that what needs to be shown to counter the philosopher's doubt—the validity or naturalness of which, once granted, will lead us to the catastrophic conclusion that the world drops out—is that 'he does not mean what he thinks he means by words whose meaning is shared by all masters of the language' (CR: 193). To show that he does not mean what he says implies to assess whether the claim 'you do not really see, because you do not see all of the object' responds to the ways in which we normally say that we do not see an object. To say that we do not see an object, that an object is not in full view amounts to say that something hides it, conceals parts of it, or that the object is turned away from us. The philosopher's quest should therefore be assessed according to one of

these conditions: there is another object that covers what I am trying to see; a part of the object can't be viewed from the position I am in at the moment. If the philosopher is then following the expression 'You don't see all of it' as we ordinarily mean it, he must mean a definite object we claim to exist and some definite part we claim not to be visible from a definite position. But in insisting that we can't see the back half and in then drawing his conclusion the epistemologist is in fact taking the world to be a moon or our position within it to be fixed, we can't move to see the other side of the object. As soon as we move then the discourse on the invisibility of the part becomes invalid. It is this that makes the epistemologist basis unnatural. Our world is not the moon and our position is not fixed; we can move, we can act, our senses are not disconnected from our ability to act. Apart from the way in which the philosopher conducts his investigation, objects *can* be seen: I can remove whatever is obstructing my view or ask someone to do so; I can adjust my position to see the other side or ask someone to turn the other side toward me or use a mirror. The description holds only if we distort our life with objects, we fix the world and invent the senses as independent of a body. The conclusion is therefore not *of* our world, in which we are not rooted to one position, and not *of* our senses, which go with our capacity to act.

There is one more point that needs to be investigated. The philosopher produces a particular example whose investigation seems to be conclusive for knowledge as a whole. But what is the nature of this example? Cavell asks, 'is the example the philosopher produces imaginable as an example of a particular claim to knowledge?' (CR: 205). It has been said that the philosopher asks about generic objects and asks about the conditions of knowing in general. Can we understand from his procedure what he means? In other words, does he give us enough elements to understand what motivates him to say what he says? To ask whether we do or do not know something one must express a set of circumstances under which it would make sense to ask and to answer something about something. In his investigation the philosopher is led to speak as if it wasn't him the one who speaks, as if it wasn't a human being at all, but someone outside of our world, perhaps an angel, perhaps an alien, perhaps a divine creature. A context must be imagined, provided, explained, a voice must be heard in the words we are asked to understand. What Cavell is reproaching to the traditional epistemologist could be put as follows: you cannot say something on the basis of what we ordinarily say and then mean something else than what we ordinarily mean. At this point the expression 'fixing the

world' takes on a different meaning. When speaking outside of contexts, as if we were not human beings, we attempt to speak as if we were not involved in what we are saying, as if we had no responsibility over our words and, abandoning our position as speakers, we hope that the world will provide an answer. Because the world remains silent, we construct a picture of it that confirms our quest. We try to get the world to tell us what it is in itself, as if the world were an extensive desert open—but only partially—to ocular scrutiny. We fix the world as one in which objects have parts they keep away from us. We invent the senses so that they do not align with our bodies anymore, but are entrenched in a specific position. Once we have substituted the world we inhabit for this picture we then fasten discoveries and facts about this picture to the world we inhabit. The latter has however now dropped out—it has been engulfed in the picture of it we have created. This new world is a projection of our investigation and any discovery about it will as a consequence really only be a discovery about what we have projected on it. The world we live in is still there; but we have decided to bypass it, we have stepped into our own investigation, leaving the world behind. In this case one calls discovery what is in fact a denial. It is not by chance that when entering his meditation the philosopher is alone (Hume emerges from his study and famously finds in the company of friends a rebuttal of skepticism). The wish to speak outside of the commitments that speech demands, outside of the conditions that give sense to what we say can be called a dismissal of the human. This dismissal and its associated wish to live in a *better* world—a world closer to the thing-in-itself—happens once we feel sealed off from our ordinary dealings with the world, from the 'forms of life' which provide us with the criteria for our concepts, their applicability and validity. Once the philosopher has put himself in this position and has decided to speak outside of human ways of speaking, despite having entered the investigation precisely to clarify an experience all humans are able to articulate in ordinary terms, he is inevitably chasing absolute concepts, for only these would be satisfactory. If the philosopher is contrasting 'seeing' with 'really seeing' and his 'object' with the 'thing-in-itself', then he has inevitably to invoke the idea of something that is absolutely present to the senses and of the senses as endowed with an absolute way of knowing. The concept of knowledge the philosopher is after is not only one looking for the existence of objects, but one that aims to affirm their existence with certainty, absolute certainty. What the traditional epistemologist is then led to do is to relinquish his power as investigator, powers afforded by our ways of living and speaking,

our being together, the tolerance and resistance of language, the presentation of contexts and the projection of words into new contexts. It is these powers that allow the philosopher to speak in the first place, to enter his claim naturally, for we are all capable of understanding—finding a context for—expressions such as 'to see something', 'to see all of something', 'to see part of something'. Once these expressions are removed from the circulation of language in the world, between us, then they become incomprehensible and impossible to satisfy. The meaning of the words forming the expression is still there, but one loses the ability to reach for the ways in which they are meant. There is no speaker behind them anymore, there is no more audience to receive them, the point of their being said is propelled beyond us. The world itself is asked to pick up the request and provide an answer, but the world without our ways of inhabiting it cannot satisfy the demand. What becomes of the world once conceived in this way, once I have effectively abandoned my position in it? The world becomes an object and this is what fixes it in yet another sense. It is only with objects that I can find an outside position from which to scrutinize them. Knowing becomes then a way of possessing the world, of seeing all of it, what it *really* is. In this process human existence is then what gets in the way rather than what allows us to relate to the world. In order to obtain certainty the philosopher dismisses human existence and our ways of relating to the world. In the philosopher's investigation *we*, including the philosopher himself, become the obstruction to knowing the world, not because we are ignorant, confused or shallow, but simply because essentially we do stand in the way of the transformation of the world into an object; we block this possibility by our dealing with it on a daily basis. The philosopher finds his attempts unsuccessful because the existence of the world—and therefore any evidence that can be brought to prove it—is strictly connected with our taking the world as meaningful in particular (conventional) ways and providing descriptions of it, of our experience of it, as part of what our existence is. This entanglement of the world with our experience also bars the way to our mastery of it. To say that the world is not an object is also to say that (our) epistemology and ontology do not coincide. Mastery of the world constantly stumbles upon not only the rules of our language, but the significance of our interactions. The vision of total penetration, which should guarantee mastery and perfect intelligibility, requires for the philosopher also total isolation ('undisturbed solitude'), from which the world becomes a mere object, divorced from existence. To this effect Cavell writes:

> The experience is one I might now describe as one of looking at the world as though it were another *object*, on a par with particular envelopes, tomatoes, pieces of wax, bells, tables, etc. If this is craven, it is a craving not for generality (if that means for *generalization*), but for *totality*. It is an expression of what I meant when I said that we want to know the world as we imagine God knows it (CR: 236)

The knowledge the philosopher is aiming for turns out to be an intimate connection between the world as object and an isolated and rooted position outside of it. As Mulhall writes: 'the philosophical sceptic's specific yoking of concept to context stands revealed as having been produced by a vision of the world as animate in a very specific way, as making claims upon him within a relationship of exclusive intimacy' (1999: 148). The skeptic becomes jealous, feeling the world has addressed him and has then failed to continue the conversation, leaving him with a sense of impotence, isolated and lost for words. From this point on, the skeptic cannot let the world go; what he wants to reduce is not his distance to a particular feature or object in the world, but the world's separateness itself, the very distance that makes relation possible. In so enacting his desire for possession, the skeptic loses the relation to the world and, having already cast himself away from others, feels his condition to be catastrophic, the way back to the world being barred, the world itself having become not a meaningful site for relation, but a desert island of ineluctable exile. The sense of desperate urgency the skeptic finds himself in at the end of the investigation appears then self-inflicted and the coldness of the world, a world now carved out of eternal boredom, crafted from within the investigation itself. The only conclusion that would satisfy the traditional epistemologist is a totality of facts or things, but this totality does not exist, since it must be reduced to the conditions according to which we can say anything in particular and these conditions themselves do not amount to a totality. What the skeptic wants to overcome is separation itself, the externality of the world, but this fantasy proves self-defeating: without separateness there would be no relation. The skeptic, similarly to the jealous, wants to erase precisely the condition that founds relatedness; once this is erased there is nothing to relate to. The satisfaction of absolute intimacy proves therefore impossible to obtain since it implies the overcoming of that which permits intimacy, separate existence. The disappointment is inevitable and it is also what gives skepticism its affective, emotive slant, a slant which supports the idea that its conclusion, rather than being refuted, should be listened

to, heard in its passionate inflection. Rather than being treated as an incomplete picture of the certainty of human knowledge, whose reach and accuracy could be verified otherwise, or whose practical strengths could be exercised outside of the philosopher's doubt, the skeptic's conclusion could be read as an excessive desire for the world, for the certainty of its love. This excessive desire, unrequited, attempts to reach even further and returns empty-handed. Cavell pictures thus the skeptic as a jealous lover thwarted in the quest for possession, exclusivity and mastery, whose desire for unprecedented inclusion leads to seclusion. The conclusion should be that our relation to the world is not one of knowing, in particular not when knowing is understood as certainty as to the existence of the world as an object of controlling desire from an isolated position. Cavell seems to imply that what ultimately governs the skeptical impulse with regard to the world is not different from what, at times, govern our relation to and negation of others once subjected to our desire for knowledge. What is at stake in both cases is something else than mere intellectual anxiety. If this is the case then our knowledge does not fail; it should rather be reoriented. This is what Cavell means by saying that Wittgenstein does not refute skepticism, but shifts the focus of its conclusion: in what way does our knowledge participate in the world? From this it follows that the insight coming from the skeptical conclusion, once its weight has been shifted, is that our relation with the world is one that cannot discount the fact that we are involved with it, that knowledge, while metaphysically inconclusive, unable to master a totality, tells us how we live in the world and what the differences are between different things. However the skeptic's argument is one that can neither be ignored, nor settled once and for all. Our relation to the world remains a problem, perhaps the central problem and what Cavell calls 'the truth of scepticism'—that our relation to the world is not one of knowing as certainty—keeps agitating the sense and the direction of philosophizing. Cavell admits to this sense of mystery, but warns that the limitations of knowledge, rather than being failures of it, should not be felt as stifling, but as stimulating. The cost of wanting to impose certainty as our way of knowing the world, the cost of wanting to master what is beyond mastery is the world's death as the responsive field of our interactions and expressions and our death to it as creatures capable of meaning what we say. The quest for total intelligibility is an attempt to account for origins and to substitute this quest (which produces horror because it cannot be gratified, origins cannot be checked) for our attunement, for the shared nature of our existence together. The result of the

skeptical investigation of the world is the death of the world at philosophy's hands, our loss of interest in it. If the skeptic's gesture is death-dealing then one of the tasks of the reorienting of its conclusion would be to restore life to the world. Such recovery, such demand for revival and rebirth, would imply change, a change also to philosophy's understanding of itself and of its work. The attempt to reverse this process of mastery would not be directed toward 'new rage of irrationality' (MWM: 325), or toward ignorance or indifference, but toward a different understanding of knowledge, what Cavell calls *acknowledgment*. Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Romanticism are said to be trying exactly this by turning the question back to us, by asking us to assess ourselves. Instead of wanting to know the world by fixing it and inventing the senses the demand here is to take into account our conditioned circumstances, therefore acknowledging our need and interest in the world, our being drawn to it and to its separateness. Acknowledging the world would in this case amount to investing in it, taking an interest in—rather than denying—its existence as separate. It would require our involvement in it, the patience to bear the singularity and variety of the objects we encounter. The death of the world at the hands of philosophy has four different aspects: the philosopher fixes the world so that it appears like a moon, cancels what makes relation to it possible at all, abandons the specificity of the world he lives in, loses interest in it. One could conceive this relation, this understanding of the relation, as an activity pushed too far, manipulating an object to the point where the object melts in our hands, becomes impossible to hold. One would then be moved to understand this relation as an appropriation, recuperating both meanings of the word. The skeptic's investigation would then be a making proper, turning the world so to mirror what he wants of it. What the skeptic wants of the world is for it to become his own, exclusively enclosed within the one object under scrutiny. Only if appropriable would the world become proper, satisfying, interesting. The philosopher loves the world as *proper* and as *property*. What would contrast this murderous gesture and open up different modes of participation? What could bring the world back to life? Could this be done philosophically?

Eyes Happily Shut

It has been said that the preoccupation philosophy occasions as to the failure of our knowledge is produced in an experience available to anybody, in a particular mood and given the right setting. If this preoccupation is

natural there must correspond to it a way to rearticulate it so that the skeptic's conclusion while unavoidable in that particular mood can become the occasion for a rethinking of our relation to the world. It has been said that the skeptic's demand for undivided attention from the world, which ends up in the loss of all attention and in despairing privacy, is a form of love—call this love captivity (trapping both the lover and its object, pushing them in opposing directions) and its consequence apathy—then a recalibration of this love may reveal and produce a different relation. However this also implies that one will always have to sift through the sentiment, that its ambiguity can never be settled once and for all, that control and release derive from the same yearning. Is philosophy still meant to be found—as its name gives us to think—somewhere between love and knowledge?

Twice in *The Claim of Reason* Cavell invokes the idea of falling in love with the world. The first passage occurs in a discussion of Wittgenstein's response in the *Philosophical Investigations* to the skeptic's question as to whether his professed certainty isn't in fact blind acceptance. The skeptic wants to know whether accepting that certainty can be of different kinds does not perhaps reveal that his interlocutor is in fact shutting his eyes in the face of doubt, thus dodging the question rather than settling it. Wittgenstein answers that the eyes 'are shut' (PI: 224). The passage from Cavell reads as follows:

> 'They (my eyes) are shut', as a resolution, or confession, says that one can, for one's part, live in the face of doubt […] It is something different to live without doubt, without so to speak the threat of skepticism. To live in the face of doubt, eyes happily shut, would be to fall in love with the world. For if there is a correct blindness only love has it (CR: 431).

Cavell suggests that Wittgenstein here is responding to the voice of intellectual conscience and opposing to it the voice of human conscience. The validity of this response is not generally conclusive, but may be individually (and even collectively) so, hence Cavell speaks of it as a confession or resolution. The discussion unfolds in the context of knowledge of other people's pain. The interlocutors are considering the possibility of knowing someone's pain, with Wittgenstein granting that one can be as *certain* of someone's feelings as of a mathematical operation ($2+2=4$), italicizing the word 'certain' to refer to the validity of the word's use in both contexts. Wittgenstein adds that the 'two' certainties cannot be brought

to rest on the same ground and cannot therefore be compared, the mathematical used to invalidate the other, referred to as psychological. Their difference is logical, resting on the ways we speak, on our form of life, the given, accepted one. There could be then at least two ways of understanding these eyes happily shut: the eyes are shut not because doubt is being ignored, but as a way of articulating one's position in the face of skepticism; the existence of doubt is something I admit and yet one I cannot counter with more knowledge, with more information, but only by readdressing the significance of my knowledge. I don't pretend to be certain; I accept there are limits to certainty. The expression may also be used to say that while I doubt at times, my eyes open to it, this is not alive for me now, not alive enough to collapse this particular certainty. I cannot exclude the possibility of doubt and yet this possibility does not destroy me. The eyes are shut and happily so. 'Happily' here refers not to 'blessed with ignorance', but to the possibility of happiness, a possibility that is human to deny and equally human to achieve, a possibility that can only come from facing doubt (albeit differently). The eyes are humanly shut; the happiness derives from the ability to accept that this is part of our own humanity. If they are humanly shut, then they are naturally shut, in the midst of life, of our engagement with the world they are closed. The resolution or confession translates for Cavell into responsibility for this happiness, the responsibility to accept the persistence of doubt, without succumbing to it, without letting it close my eyes altogether, the possibility to be reminded 'that the world is wonder enough, as it stands' (CR: 431). This responsibility implies the resolution to participate in the human conversation, confessing that this conversation is my own and that my existence in it has to be declared, that the extent of the agreement between us has to be measured at each step. My eyes will not be closed in front of specific, particular doubts; they are however closed in the face of the totalizing one, the one that arises when I confront the world as a generic totality and that cannot be settled unless I become an observing outsider (God). They are shut to the abyss of generic doubt and so open to this world. In short what the passage seems to propose is to substitute the picture of intellectual limitedness with one of metaphysical finitude. In this case falling in love with the world may seem to be a solution to skepticism, a way of inhabiting the world without succumbing to the skeptical impulse. It declares the impossibility of living skepticism, of living it in myself, of having any choice about the matter. This difficult passage becomes perhaps clearer when rephrased a few pages later: 'I have to close my eyes to,

somehow bypass, the presence of doubts that are not mine, of "possibilities" that I have not ruled out' (CR: 438).

The second passage on love occurs some twenty pages later and reads:

> There is a human being, a way of being human, not insanely, in which an innocence and purity toward the world, if not exactly a mature love, allows an evenness in it or readiness for it that would not understand the exclusive or compressed stake in a best case; a being for whom any object might be as good as any other, in a world in which any might be loaded. This is the way of the clown, especially in his photogenesis, in what becomes of him on film, particularly in the figures of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton. No case of externality is best for them because every case is best; this world is best, since no other is imaginable […] But to live thus without escape is to be up to being the one who gets slapped, to being one for whom dignity does not depend upon standing, to be beyond expectation. (CR: 452)

Here the possibility of falling in love with the world implies a readiness for the world, a readiness that emerges from innocence and purity, taking every instance to be a best case and thus interesting oneself in singular things as if their availability could satisfy our interest and provide a proof of our possibility to exist with the world as such. The clown takes externality itself to be a case for joy. The availability of objects, the possibility of their reception and transformation in our hands, the endless possibilities to shift their plane of meaning, the ingenuity their significance and its displacement provoke, provide an inhabitation of the world that keeps doubt at bay. The best is simply my life with objects, which I am constantly ready for, which does not require preparation, loneliness or apathy. It occurs every day and each day I can reinvent it. Cavell seems to suggest here that the clown is capable of inhabiting the world despite knowing that this goes beyond what our senses deliver and therefore begins his dealing with the world by taking into account the enormity of this limitation, without being frozen by it. The clown's routines manifest a capacity for both ecstasy and grief, for submission to human limitedness and—within that submission—a realization of happiness even in worst cases. The flattening of worst and best cases makes the clown the one who cares about the world, finds his interest in it worth sustaining despite the knowledge that collaboration with the world does not in itself guard one from uncertainty, from momentary collapse. This view expresses itself as a full anticipation of skepticism. It is knowledge of its conclusion that makes one ready for comedy, the abyss may open at any time underneath our feet,

it might have already opened. It is precisely because the abyss is always there, not denied, not ignored, not covered, that the effect of comedy—this type of comedy at least—produces a catalogue of absorption and survival strategies (the Spinozian prowess of the body, the imagination of happiness, the perception of the everyday as susceptible of transfiguration through simple gestures, the declaration of powerlessness, from which one can always run, the wall becoming a door, the door providing yet another opportunity, intactness preserved by camouflage).

However Cavell adds that this pure and innocent readiness implies a counterpart: it disposes one to get slapped, deposing one's dignity and expectation. Elsewhere Cavell writes that 'the tragedy is that comedy has its limits […] Join hands here as we may, one of the hands is mine and the other is yours' (MWM: 339). On the one hand Cavell seems to praise Chaplin and Keaton for their ability to live in full view of the skeptical conclusion and on the other he traces an impossible innocence in their condition, which becomes impossible to share, not an example, but a limit case. The human condition cannot constantly be lived in this mode. So while taking every case of externality as the best, being faithful to this tree or that stone, shows a possibility of surviving skepticism without simply ignoring it, there is a second element to this attitude. I take Cavell to welcome the possibility of a slap, of a less commanding attitude to the world. As he puts the situation of the male protagonist in the comedy of remarriage, one must be able to show 'that he is not attempting to command but that he is able to wish, and consequently to make a fool of himself' (PH: 32). The possibility to make a claim that is not commanding but accepting of the command of otherness, the expression of a wish, is part of the transformation of the skeptical obsession. The slap has to be accepted in the economy of living; making a fool of oneself is part of our ability to express desire, to confirm our interest. However to be beyond expectation reduces us to a state in which we are likely to forego elements of our involvement with the world, deny our standing in it, relinquish our declaration of existence. A further hint that the position of the clown is not entirely possible is Cavell's pairing of it with the figure of the child. Something we would deny ourselves in this condition is the occasion of erotic encounter. Innocence in the form of virginity and immaculacy is the situation of the female of most classical romances. In these the father of the female protagonist functions as a guardian, who fulfills his obligation by preventing marriage. In the remarriage comedy the idea of innocence and virginity while at times applied to the female lead—and

often associated as in *The Philadelphia Story* (1940) with the pretention to be god-like or statuesque, made of stone and marble—is also the state the couple has to overcome in order to rediscover happiness, interest in each other and the world. The original affinity is a natural one—the characters have grown up together—and this must be abandoned in order for a mature, accepting affinity to be released. Growing up together, being like children to each other, does not reveal the extent of their mutual (in) dependence. Cavell comments on *The Awful Truth* (1937), following a scene in which Irene Dunne plays the sister to her husband, Cary Grant, that what is necessary is 'to recognize that we are also strangers, separate, different; to keep our incestuousness symbolic, tropic, so that it joins us, not letting it lapse into literality, which will enjoin us' (PH: 260). The invitation to make ourselves vulnerable has to show the awareness that being forever able to laugh might imply being forever laughed at. My imagination and manipulations of things, my endless circling around the abyss, my taking any object as any other risks turning me into the one who can't forego childhood. Is this really different from the philosopher's trying to elicit a response from the world, from the object, without situating himself in it? How is this different from asking the world to respond to our questions, to take the answer out of our mouth? The line of demarcation between falling in love with the world and demanding objects to respond, devoting to them a 'hyperbolic attention' (2003a: 8), is at times difficult to trace. The skeptic's quest for mastery and the clown's unbearable innocence can be seen to overlap so that one doesn't know whether falling in love with the world is healthy or part of the same skeptical malady. While maintaining a strong sense of his own receptiveness to the world, the clown dismisses the threat with a serene, heedless wipe-out; on the other hand the skeptic repudiates the world out of sophisticated unfeelingness. One remains a child and can't escape that situation; the other surrounds himself with the boredom of those who have seen it all. Both seem to long for something, either for things as they were or for things as they really are. Ultimately both in their inventiveness or exasperation take any object for any other. Is there another way?

How *Different* Different Things Are

In *The Avoidance of Love*, a text largely devoted to a reading of *King Lear* and inaugurating Cavell's adventures into Shakespearean tragedy, the argument over the world is again paired with the investigation of the problem

of other minds. Cavell's move away from the tradition and method he, by philosophical training at least, belongs to takes an even more explicit direction once the possibilities of literature are made to feed back into his philosophical terms of criticism. One can't say that the move is necessarily toward the European side of the philosophical drift; rather Cavell seems interested in carving a space in between, one which doesn't renounce either positions without fully embracing them. The temptation to assimilate him to the French-German tradition is as strong as it is facile. While Cavell's frequent foray into the literary understood as a particular tone in philosophy and his declared indebtedness to Heidegger seem enough to warrant a systematic adoption, much of his philosophy is devoted to the question of America (in reaction also to what is taken to be and therefore what is taken not to be 'American Philosophy') and his attempt is to position himself somewhere in between the two, or as he writes 'within the tear in the Western philosophical mind' (1994: 4). This positioning is itself a fully articulated philosophical gesture and aims at questioning the split within the philosophical community, without longing for unity, but rather moving within and sometimes filling in, the gaps. By assimilating Cavell to European thought one does not simply lose sight of some crucial features of his thought—the idea, for instance, that philosophy can be done by anybody given the right mood—but bypasses the possibility to understand something about the drift, to hear from Cavell's conceptual preoccupations what has happened to philosophy. This brief excursus is necessary not only to clarify what has been argued so far in terms of the substantial unity between the problem of other minds and the problem of the world, but because Cavell's interest in literature and in the literary could be taken prima facie as a leap into the canon of European philosophy. As Cavell says, what is at stake in (his readings of) Shakespeare is still what 'inhabits the void of comprehension between continental ontology and Anglo-American analysis' (MWM: 323).

In the text mentioned, Cavell frames *King Lear* in the following terms: 'the world normally present to us […] vanishes, whereupon all connection with a world is found to hang upon what can be said to be "present to the senses"; and that turns out, shockingly, not to be the world' (MWM: 323).

The cornerstone of Cavell's reading of Shakespeare is therefore the idea that the characters in the tragedies all confront the same task: the overcoming of knowledge. In the case of Othello knowledge is haunting,

moving him to a craving for possession, hence to murder; in the case of Hamlet it is cursing and agonizingly private. In the case of Lear a piece of knowledge has to be accepted to restore sanity and to avoid punishment. The problem of Lear is that he can't accept, while the world demands to be accepted. But, Cavell asks, 'what is this "acceptance", which caves in at a doubt?' (MWM: 324). It has been seen that the acceptance of the clown turns every object into any other and therefore prepares him for a slap. If the clown is commendable for his readiness to revive the world through interpretive power, his deliberate collapse of bread rolls and shoes grounds his view in childhood, placing him at the edge of the human conversation. The problem with the clown thus rests on the mode of this acceptance. To stop and think about the world, to accept and respect it, rather than turning it into play would be a different form of acceptance, one that moves us closer to the demand for the 'appropriateness of my response' (CR: 441) Cavell is after. The passage that invites this intuition occurs in a section where Cavell is discussing again the overlapping between material skepticism and the problem of other minds:

> Why shouldn't one say that there is a required appropriateness with respect to each breed of thing (object or being); something appropriate for bread, something else for stones, something for large stones that block one's path and something for small smooth stones that can be slung or shied; something for grass, for flowers, for orchards, for forests, for each fish of the sea and each fowl of the air; something for each human contrivance and for each human condition; and, if you like, on up? For each link in the Great Chain of Being there is an appropriate hook of response. I said that one's experience of others puts a seam in experience. Why not consider that experience is endlessly, continuously, seamed? Every thing, and every experience of every different thing, is what it is. […] I am interested, for example in the perception or vision of how *different* different things are from one another (CR: 441–442).

This long passage has a decisively Emersonian and Thoreauvian tone and focuses not simply on the alleged dissimilarity between other minds and external world skepticism, but on the appropriateness of our ordinary responses to the singularity of things in the world. The conceptualization Cavell offers is one that proposes, now explicitly, to assign to our relation to the world the same terms used in our relation to other human beings. The conceptual transfer was already in view in the discussion of the skeptical conclusion as one essentially motivated by jealousy and suspicious

possessiveness. There the skeptical craving for the world was explained in terms that shifted attention from the cognitive to the emotive side. The intellectual rigor of the skeptic was read as an affective obsession, an inability to let go of the world, to accept that its separation from me is what instantiates the relation in the first place, what makes our involvement with it, interest in and commitment to my adventure with it possible at all. The skeptic was said to be willing to sacrifice the world if this does not conform to his desire. The result of this sacrifice is the disappearance of the world, both from our knowledge and from our range of interests. In reversing desire Cavell continues then with this association.[2] In keeping with the general plan of the concluding part of *The Claim of Reason*, which sees Cavell tracing the symmetries and asymmetries that run between the two facets of skepticism and separating the two only to offer a possible reconciliation, this passage—as the one about clowns—comes in the midst of an analysis of other minds' skepticism. The notion that dominates this section is that of *empathic projection*, introduced to describe our identification of others as requiring something more than seeing them. The something more that is required is the fact that when confronted with human beings we do not apprehend them simply as having the correct human features, we do not simply recognize *what* they are, but that someone is *with* us. We are with someone, responded to and responsive. The notion suggests a feat of cognition that allows me to project myself outside of my confinement from you and establish kinship, taking into account our present condition and the affinities and variations of our histories. While I can and naturally do step outside of my confinement by projecting empathically, I cannot step outside of my projections; they are historically grounded and offered to the present. Others however can step inside my projections and change their course, offer their existence otherwise than I have projected them, demand a different kind of acknowledgment. The projection has therefore two functions: a discerning one that opens up the possibility to see others as minded, as having something similar to what I call my inner life; a reactive function that affords me the possibility to answer to

[2] William Desmond traces a series of parallels between epistemological problems with regard to the externality of the world and the human other running in German philosophy. From Kant's transcendental solipsism to Fichte's and Hegel's philosophical knowing as the culmination of the dialectical trawl, all these resonances, inherited, reverse or subverted, contribute to showing Cavell's own move from knowledge to acknowledgment. Desmond, W. (2003). *A Second Primavera*: Cavell, German Philosophy, and Romanticism. In R. Eldridge (Ed.), *Stanley Cavell*: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

the demand for recognition. This demand is not settled once recognition has happened, once my response has reached the other, at the opposite it triggers something like an occasion for a *conversation with the singular*. The gesture or attitude the expression defines allows at one and the same time the emergence of this externality as a human being and my response to the singular demand that the other casts on our relatedness. This shows that this attitude is never purely cognitive and extensively self-reflexive, always localized. In turn the singularity of such response makes explicit that were the response to fail to elicit a furtherance of our relation it would not as a consequence make it impossible for me to respond to others. It would not impede also the one I am responding to from relating to other people. If one were to measure one's responses to others as having to comply with a general form, regardless of histories and presents, then one would precisely miss this response (this is a feeling modern literature and film—Kafka, Walser, Melville, Losey, Gilliam are only the most notable examples—registers in the recalcitrance of bureaucracy, its inability to respond to *me*, the implacable stubbornness that keeps inviting me to capitulate to the generic; this has often both tragic and comic effects and shows itself to be a central possibility of our lives). In *The World Viewed* Cavell writes: 'I know I am here; you know I am here; you know that I know I owe you the acknowledgment. Why isn't that enough? […] Because what is to be acknowledged is always something specifically done or not done' (WV: 128). In empathic projection the knower and the known are singled out and this eliminates the possibility of a generic response, but also makes the possibility of a 'best case' difficult to embrace. To this effect Cavell says that our everyday positions with regard to others is precisely one in which I am in each case asking whether the someone I am presented with and present myself to could stand as a best case. And so does the other. Each relationship will ask the question (the parent, the lover, the best friend) and each relationship will only be able to define terms that are intrinsic to it, but cannot be easily generalized. If there is something like an unrestricted response, a more fulfilling way of projecting empathy this will not count as the best case, but at most as a best case given these conditions. Cavell concludes then with a question 'Mightn't it be that just this haphazard, unsponsored state of the world, just this radiation of relationships, of my cares and commitments, provides the milieu in which knowledge of others can best be expressed? Just *this*' (CR: 439). When a given case fails my projection the others do not vanish. Perhaps I fail to express my interest in them, but I do not stop projecting. The failure

to respond is just what it is: an omission, a withdrawal, and counts as a failure precisely because what is at stake is a creature that projection denotes as a candidate for humanity. Empathic projection is not merely a cognitive procedure. The extent, the character and the tone of my response define the degree of my projection. My own projection singles me out too, it befalls me, if I hedge it I hedge myself, I fail to single myself out, I am the basis of my knowledge of others. Cavell concludes that in failing to express knowledge of others, in failing to know them I am the problem. My mind is what stops me not theirs. At this point Cavell's decision to avoid defining the notion with greater precision looks deliberate. At one point Cavell asks: what do I know of the basis of empathic projection? It is not a human capacity that lies between dreaming and seeing; it is not guaranteed by a non-human Outsider (the knowledge of this non-human entity would have no knowledge to judge on, no knowledge apart from the one I can provide it with). What I can know of that basis is what I can know of my own limit. This conclusion has to be seen in connection with Cavell's discussion of soul-blindness and private language. My inability to see the other rests not on the impenetrability of the other's body, but on my unwillingness to interpret it: 'what hides the mind is not the body, but the mind itself – his his, or mine his, and contrariwise' (CR: 396). This recognition leads me to the knowledge that my failure to acknowledge is my own, like the avoidance of the knowledge produced in relation to the world. The conclusion is not a return to human finitude, but some insight into my own, call it spiritual, ignorance, the ways in which I am willing to expose my own humanity. I might have to reconceive my categories, to see the rebuke mounting, to see my trust betrayed, my hatred repaid with love, my declarations silenced by silence, my jokes produce a frown and my seriousness expose me to mockery, but the seam has been affixed. The division the projection produces is not something I should deny, in view of a more complete or holistic picture of my relation to others; rather it is part of how I can distinguish the difference between different things, starting with humans and non-humans.

A Life More Ordinary

At this point one can return to the original question and see whether the notion of empathic projection could suggest something Cavell implies in our falling in love with the world. Empathic projection allows us to see the difference between different things; experience affixes its seam at each

time, in each encounter with the other. This perspective can effectively be shifted from the conditions of our relating to others to the conditions of our knowing the world. If this is the case, then the question of knowing the world becomes a question of following the seam, as it is produced 'endlessly, continuously' in each experience, in each thing, in each singular encounter with it. From this encounter with singularity we can recover perhaps an interest in the world, a love that avoids both the slap given out of jealousy and the one received out of gullibility. In *The Claim of Reason* this parallel and its possibilities do not develop beyond the embryonic stage, and the interest Cavell expresses 'in the perception or vision of how *different* different things are from one another' remains an abeyant ambition. As things stand, Cavell abandons the suggestion ('but at the moment what interests me') and moves onto an extended analysis of the passive version of skepticism to see what that could reveal in relation to my knowledge of others.

In order to follow our considerations on falling in love with singularity it is worth moving to the third strand announced at the beginning (the other two were Wittgenstein and Heidegger): Romanticism. It is worth recalling the closing passages of Part II of *The Claim of Reason*, where after having admitted that a certain intuition as to the mystery of the world's existence provides much of the content worked out in two of the philosophers he is most indebted to (precisely Heidegger and Wittgenstein) Cavell continues: 'To be interested in such accounts as accounts of the cost of knowing to the knowing creature, I suppose one will have to take an interest in certain preoccupations of Romanticism' (CR: 242). These preoccupations bring together love for the world, the question of childhood, the singularity that seams experience and philosophy's reworking of these conceptual tangles. As it can be imagined this trajectory never stops returning to skepticism, to Wittgenstein's criteria and to Heidegger, while broaching a number of avenues and offering a series of resolutions that are implicitly evoked, but mostly unfulfilled in Part II and Part IV of *The Claim of Reason*. Acknowledging the world, accepting it as Cavell puts it for Lear, implies acknowledging our life within it, opposing the tendency of the Cartesian philosopher to prepare himself to thought by seeking seclusion and isolation, delivering his investigation outside of human contact. As a consequence this acceptance, strictly connected with our rewarding others and ourselves with *humanity*, teaches differences, showing us also how these differences are in fact already there, in those pockets of language that are available and yet remain unexplored. In the continuation of the long

passage on the seaming of our experience and before moving on ('but at the moment what interests me…') Cavell thus motivates his interest in difference: 'it points up the condition underlying the ease, call it naturalness, with which we name and know things' (CR: 442). This addresses an idea at work in most of the thinkers Cavell leans against. It takes the name 'forms of life' in Wittgenstein, 'original disclosure' in Heidegger, 'ordinary' or 'near' in Emerson and Thoreau. Cavell uses all of these terms, emphasizing not simply their givenness but their shared nature. It is to forms of life that one stops and starts again. They are to be accepted. To accept the world, our original disclosure to and of it, is not simply to submit oneself to it, to being slapped. This submission, this passivity, has to be qualified. The background to the epistemological investigations Cavell works through in *The Claim of Reason* contains a metaphysical intonation, one whose aim is to show that our intimacy with the world, our indebtedness to it, depends on the acceptance of the form of life we inhabit. In one direction this points to the inaccessibility of origins ('in very few cases have we been present at a thing's origin, a thing we nevertheless know as well as we know anything!' [CR: 63–64]), the lack of ground we encounter once we attempt to seek what sustains the naturalness of our ordinary existence (in the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein says that 'explanations come to an end' [§1] and when this happens one can only say '"This is simply what I do"' [§217]; Heidegger writes 'It depends on us, so it is said' [1996b: 128] and resorts to Leibniz to show how the principle of reason—'nothing is without reason'—shows in fact that reason is groundless). In another direction this points to the sharing of our existence. Existence makes sense—but this sense is also constantly broken in, suspended—because it is shared and because its publicness is something one has no choice about. It belongs to me and at the same time I am subjected to it. The ground is only our sharing or refusing to share specific conventions, the naturalness of their application depends on us, on our playing with them each and every day. What Cavell calls our attunement is not diminished by disagreement, if anything disagreement provides further evidence that there is something (an attunement) to disagree about. If this wasn't the case we could all go our own different ways, without encountering quarrels, criticisms, reproaches, without having to put up defenses and continuations of our points. The need for continuation, for the protraction and permanent instability of our exposure underwrite Cavell's arguments on ontological and moral issues. It is within this context that one should read Cavell's

passage in his analysis of projecting words in new contexts: 'There are no explanations which are, as it were, complete in themselves' (CR: 184). My examples and my rephrasing, my metaphors and paraphrases, my précises and guarantees will serve me only up to a point. Beyond this point, there is myself, having to express once again, out of my own present and context, out of this singularity, my consent or dissent to our shared life. Every time I rely on the publicness of language and conventions, I am also relying on the singularity of my position, and by relying on it I put it at stake, I confront the possibility of rebuke. Cavell shows then that I am the one responsible for realigning my needs, fantasies, relations, utterances and that covering this responsibility by transforming finitude in an intellectual lack ('I can't *really* know') implies renouncing the world. Accepting that it depends on us, assessing the extent of our implication and submission to what depends on us, might as well inject some new life in the world and this is how, as Critchley points out, in Cavell's reading of Wittgenstein and Heidegger 'the ordinary is not a ground, but a goal' (1997: 119). This is also how Cavell conceives of Romanticism's conception of itself: 'the quest for a return to the ordinary, or of it, a new creation of our habitat; or as the quest, away from that, for the creation of a new inhabitation' (IQO: 52–53). The return to the ordinary (whether in Wittgenstein, Austin or Wordsworth) is not the preservation of common beliefs we hold about the existence of the world and of other humans, but an invitation to contest that acceptance.

However if skepticism and its conclusion—what Cavell at times calls 'the denial of the human', the self-stupefaction by means of which we cover up our self-scrutiny—are a possibility for all of us ('nothing is more human than the wish to deny one's humanity' [CR: 109]) then at least one possibility to inject life in the world is foreclosed to us. The possibility that is prevented by our rigidity is that of self-projection. As Desmond writes: 'Projection seems to imply that we can breathe life again into what is lifeless. But what if we too, those who breathe, are equally under the spell? […] self-projection would be again the spreading of the death-in-life' (2003: 158). Our acceptance then has to be of a different sort. It has to be first of all an acceptance that we are, as it were, lifeless. This first acceptance will prepare us for the second one, the acceptance of the world. In his analysis of Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* Cavell puts it in terms of learning *to be loved*: 'I take what might be called the poem's moral in something like […] to let yourself be loved by all things both great and small' (IQO: 56). The reversal is revealing once compared with the

insistence on the two types of love analyzed earlier, the jealous and the innocent. What is decisive here is the need to be loved, to bear the weight of love. Wouldn't this lead us straight to animism? The question of the pathetic fallacy is clearly one that matters to Cavell. He is aware that by overlapping the two types of skepticism, by folding one on top of the other, making knowledge into jealousy and jealousy into a craving for knowledge, one risks running into the pathetic fallacy. The consequences of this gesture have of course to be measured in relation to our central question here: what of the world? Can we accept it? Can we bear its burden? Can we find a way to revive it from the death-dealing blows of our intellectual dagger? There are two elements to this question at this point. The first is: how are we to accept the world if we negate ourselves? (What is it we negate about ourselves?). The second is: how do we accept the world without turning to the solution provided by animism? What could our love—neither jealous nor jejune—come to? What of *being loved*?

Cavell announces this turn to Romanticism in *The Claim of Reason*, but leaves it unresolved. There Cavell gives a number of clues to the fact that his 'discoveries in the regions of the sceptical problem of the other are, rightly understood, further characterizations of (material object) skepticism' (CR: 451), but withdraws from that anticipation, because it lies further than the book actually goes. The turn to and return of Romanticism seems to give that anticipation fuller—if not final—articulation. In the opening pages of *In Quest of the Ordinary* Cavell explains the reason for his resistance to Romanticism in *The Claim of Reason*. Cavell writes that moments and lines of Romanticism 'kept pressing for attention in the fourth part of that book […] While I tried at each of these outbreaks to give expression to this pressure (for future reference, so to speak) I felt it was threatening the end of my story' (IQO: 6). However this luxury can no longer be afforded, the pressure has become irresistible. What in other words has become irresistible is Romanticism's response to the skeptical conclusions and in particular to the question of our lost intimacy with the world. Cavell motivates his turn to Romanticism as one that is intrinsic to the horizon of his own terms of criticism. As he puts it few pages later in relation to the partaking of our ordinary lives in skepticism 'to find what degrees of freedom we have in this condition, to show that it is at once needless yet somehow, because of that, all but necessary, inescapable […] is the romantic quest I am happy to join' (IQO: 9).

What emerges again throughout Cavell's writing on Romanticism is the idea that the truth of skepticism—our relation to the world is not

one of knowing—cannot and should not be simply refuted, or repressed. The possibility of a recovery from skepticism should on the other hand be seen as an attempt to turn skepticism away from the picture it has of itself. By posing the question 'How do we know what we know?' and generating the particular anxiety the philosopher finds both unexceptionable and unpreventable, skepticism also dictates the path of recovery from this anxiety. That a path of recovery is opened is internal to the quest for knowledge proper of skepticism. However the recovery therein prompted invites denials of doubt, refutations that tend to substitute the traditional epistemologist's suspicion over ordinary beliefs and the ordinary use of our senses, with a newly found certainty over them. These attempts end up producing an even more radical version of skepticism. They do not eliminate the question, they prolong the anxiety.

Our recovery of the world and of our own humanity from the epistemologist's doubt has to redefine the task that prompts skepticism and re-appropriate its conclusions. The trajectory that needs to be converted presents itself according to this narrative: the skeptic considers his ordinary experiences and his ordinary uses of the senses and finds that in these considerations a reasonable ground for doubt emerges; the doubt insinuates itself to the point where he can't determine whether he is awake, dreaming or hallucinating. At this point the doubt has taken hold of him and he has to consider it. Not simply he has to consider it as an option among others, but this doubt now presents itself as absolute, it pervades his faculties as a knower leaving no room for escape. The investigation thus begins and one object of knowledge (a generic object) under the most propitious circumstances (which include loneliness and separation from the world) is taken as a stand-in for the entirety of knowledge. A ball of wax causes knowledge itself to melt.

Descartes writes that this doubt belongs to maturity, to a stage of life past which nothing can truly overturn our beliefs. He declares: 'I began to wait until I should reach a mature enough age to ensure that no subsequent time of life would be more suitable for tackling such inquiries' (1996: 12). Descartes' recovery is suggested in the *Cogito, Ergo Sum*. Since he is a thinking thing, he then further wonders what causes his ideas. Following the path of causality he then arrives at the thought that there must be an idea that is capable of producing all the ideas he possesses. This idea must be God, a supremely perfect being. This idea itself must emanate from an externality. This externality is the actual existence of the perfect being, God. This perfect and thus necessarily non-deceiving God provides Descartes

with the proof of his existence. The recovery then depends on our depending from God. Were the existence of God to become a problem, Descartes would be thrown back into doubt. Hume's voyage is equally frightening and his escape equally unstable. One begins again with the memory of past errors and presumably therefore with a moment of maturity at which these errors have to be confronted. The sense of 'apprehension', 'despair' and 'melancholy' brought by the 'disorder of the faculties' is even more explicit in Hume's *Treatise*. Man appears as an 'uncouth monster' in forlorn solitude, 'disconsolate' and stuck between a barren rock and a boundless ocean (1985: 311–312). A contrasting but reinforcing picture of monstrosity is presented by Hume's figuring (some) men who escape '*total* scepticism' as angels 'covering their eyes with their wings' (314–315). Man is then left to ask himself 'Where am I, or what?' in deepest darkness and deprived of the use of the senses. The recovery from this picture of (intellectual and physical) mutilation is afforded by nature in the form of a 'lively impression of the senses' and by a game of backgammon. Outside the study Hume finds his own humanity again and now the skeptical investigation appears as a useless 'abuse of time'. But this repression, as it is bound to happen, returns, and ultimately Hume says 'in all the incidents of life we ought still to preserve our scepticism' (317). The alternative to this is superstition, whose consequences are more dangerous than those of philosophy, which are, after all, 'only ridiculous'.

Othello's murderous recovery also situates him between a barren rock and a boundless ocean. The recovery from skepticism as dictated by skepticism's understanding of itself demands more knowledge (or knowledge different from the one humans can have) a sense that there will be a different type of knowledge that could lead us to certainty. As long as one tries to prove that certainty really is what one is after, one inevitably extends the inconsolable anxiety of skepticism. Intimacy with the world cannot therefore rest on more knowledge. It is this task that has to be transformed by diagnosing its origin. The origin of our apprehensive disappointments with language and the senses derive from a sense that they do not reveal the world in itself and therefore do not reconnect us with it (after we have sensed its disconnection from us). This is what a recovery ought to respond to. For the Romantic poets this takes the form of a response to Kant's argument on the limitation of knowledge and the request for a new maturity, different from the one both Descartes and Hume thought to have achieved.

The Romantics' response to skepticism thus is a response to Kant's attempt to settle the question, to remove the scandal of philosophy, by

drawing a line beyond which human understanding cannot reach. Cavell summarizes Kant's findings by drawing from the German philosopher's *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. The summary outlines five points: experience is constituted by appearances; appearances are of something else, which cannot appear; only functions of experience can be known (categories); the something else appearances are of cannot be known. Reason is drawn to think about this unknowable ground; and therefore it reveals there its necessity. This limitation of knowledge also works to secure it. The Romantics' work—at least according to Cavell—starts precisely from a double reception of Kant's settlement. This reception runs between satisfaction and disappointment. In order to secure knowledge and our relation with the world, Kant has to give up the possibility of knowing the thing-in-itself. Human knowledge is directed at appearances of things-in-themselves and should content itself with this. The ground of appearances—what they are of—is beyond our reach. Things as things cannot be known, the world as world can only be glimpsed in the appearances we have of it, and these glimpses from our experience give us the intuition of the existence of a ground of things-in-themselves from which the elements of our experiences draw their existence. The Romantics—those discussed by Cavell at least—take this as the lawful way of becoming intimate with the world, but lament the fact that our original demand was for more intimacy, more world. The satisfaction, Cavell says, resides on the other hand in Kant's recognition that reason does crave for this other world of things-in-themselves and that limitation is tolerated but also bound to be confronted by an impulse to realize its overcoming. The region beyond the line is attractive and invites our doubling; we are at once lawful and illicit. The Romantics look to inherit this worldlessness and our desire to close the gap as a way to redeem philosophy through poetry, expressing it in terms of our dissatisfaction with ourselves, our being dead to ourselves. If we are part of the problem of the vanishing of the world, then we are also part of the project of converting it, of returning to it. It is this romantic thought that may compel philosophy to think about its own redemption. How are we to understand the idea that we are part of the problem? What strategies are available to us to see through this problem and to move a step closer to the acceptance of the world?

Cavell looks initially at Emerson's essay *Fate*. Here Emerson writes of a new maturity. Cavell asks us to think of this not only as a biographical note. This new stage of the life of the individual figures and asks for a

new stage for humanity, a different awareness. In *Fate* Emerson speaks of the key to this awareness as a solution to the mysteries of human condition, 'one solution to the old knots of fate, freedom, and foreknowledge'. Cavell draws a parallel between Emerson and Kant's use of the term *conditions* and stresses the centrality it has for both. In Emerson the term doubles up and is employed to ask what the conditions are of our being conditioned. These conditions provide a reopening of the question of fate. In the opening passages Emerson describes fate as 'irresistible dictation'. If we are dictated, thus powerless, then something must be thought as doing the dictating. Cavell hears in dictation, as in condition, a relation to language. He deploys here a mode of reading that parallels that of Heidegger, devoting much attention to the semantic resonance of words. Dictation resonates with talking as commanding, while condition with talking as conversing. Cavell concludes that 'the irresistible dictation that constitutes Fate, that sets conditions on our knowledge and our conduct, is our language, every word we utter' (IQO: 39). Once the association between dictation and talking has been (interpretatively) established, then fate becomes language and language becomes our fate. At this point the question as to whom or what does the dictating assumes a different sound. It is not chance then that conditions us, not an alien destiny that makes humans fated. If language is our fate and if language is ours then it is our own speaking that sets the terms of our being conditioned, our relation to the words we offer to and receive from one another. We are engaged in a struggle against ourselves, against our inheriting language and being forever indebted to this inheritance. We struggle with the acceptance of our inheritance, not because we should rather refuse it but because, knowing it can't be refused, we should attempt to own our words, express in them our new maturity: singularity derives from indebtedness. In short, and rephrasing some of the arguments developed so far, we are condemned to meaning and the worst we can do is to try to speak as if the words were not part of who we are, did not engage ourselves fully and completely. What is Emerson's solution then to the fact that we are our own conditioning? Emerson says that it depends on us and that the conditions of our captivity are the same as the conditions of our freedom from it. Emerson gives us his writing as exemplary of this struggle with ourselves, the co-appearance in language of dependence and autonomy. Once we enter the struggle and become mature enough to understand that what we depend on is internal to who we are, a matter of responsibility for our own words, then we are a step closer to the world.

The second strategy Cavell turns to is the one enacted by Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria* and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. What already appears in the conclusions of Cavell's reading of *Fate* becomes even more apparent in his analysis of Coleridge. The Romantics are proposing redemption through writing. This writing works as an endless response to itself, making, for instance, Emerson arduous to receive. This constant responsiveness is the sign that redemption can only come from endless responsibility. It is their writing out of their lives, offering themselves as examples that will ultimately be redeeming. What this writing incorporates then is, as in Emerson, the sense that we are part of the problem that Kant felt as a scandal to philosophy. In the *Biographia* Coleridge expresses his debt to the writings of the mystics for giving him the 'presentiment that all the products of the mere reflective faculty partook of death' (2008: 232). Cavell brings this passage together with two others. The first one occurs in Coleridge's description of the 'secondary Imagination' where objects *as* objects are said to be fixed and dead. The second contains an explicit admission of Kant's inheritance: 'the writings of the illustrious sage of Konigsberg at once invigorated and disciplined my understanding' (232). Reading together these three passages allows Cavell to draw the conclusion that here Coleridge is interpreting death as brought to the world by our categories of the understanding. The death of the world is therefore our responsibility; we carry it within us. What we have lost in losing the world is poetry, not just the possibility of poetry, but as it were the poetry of the world. The expression 'poetry of the world' calls for clarification. If we carry within us the death of the world because we try to create it through our categories of the understanding, then we are imposing on the world our vision of objects. A first step to recover it would be to overcome or turn away from the answer to skepticism provided by Kant. This would imply letting go of our categories and the violence they effect on the world and direct ourselves again to the thing-in-itself. The turn just mentioned invokes inevitably our skirting on the border of animism, subjecting ourselves to the world once again. This subjection to the world and its mysteries becomes for the Romantics the very task of poetry, a task that requires first of all the redemption of poetry itself, a reopening of its possibility from within the Kantian settlement. It is in this sense that the quest for poetry from beyond Kant's line becomes a new approach to the poetry of the world. Cavell writes: 'what is a fuller expression of the romantics's sense of the death of the world than a sense of the death of the poetry of the world?' (IQO: 45). Cavell does not clarify what he

intends by poetry of the world, but one can take a cue from his grammatical explanation of the expression *the life of things*. To the (generic) philosopher's request for an explanation of the expression Cavell responds that the latter does not license a definition. The expression points to an intuition 'concerning something like a prohibition of knowledge, a limitation as from the outside' (IQO: 53). I take Cavell to be drawing a parallel between the life of things and the poetry of the world. The latter is a way of wording the intuition that something such as the *life of things* exists and remains beyond our understanding. It is beyond the reach of reason, but can possibly be redeemed through poetry and this redemption can flow back into philosophy. The poetry of the world would then identify what Kant has placed beyond the line, but also denote our craving for this beyond. It expresses the disappointment with the Kantian settlement described earlier: that in removing access from the ground appearances are of, Kant has sacrificed precisely what we wanted: intimacy between nature and consciousness. If one replicates Cavell's description of the *life of things*, the expression 'poetry of the world' does not have a technical definition; it expresses whatever it is the Romantics are disappointed about in Kant's limiting and securing of knowledge. Perhaps one could go slightly further in this exegetical effort. The expression concedes that whatever lies beyond the security of knowledge will have the same attractiveness that poetry has, would in fact be understandable as what draws us toward poetry and makes the space poetry charts one we want to inhabit.

In his text on Hölderlin's *The Ister* Heidegger understands human beings' relation to poetry as determined by the 'the manner in which the world as a whole is opened up to human beings in general' (1996a: 23). The sense of the passage seems to rest on the interpretation of poetry as structured by an ability to receive a world it in turns illuminates and opens up. In this light then the expression means not only the opening up of the world poetry is capable of performing by itself, in its words as it were, but indicates a passive side to this activity. Poetry is done once we 'take interest' in the world, we are open to it. This interested encounter with the world brings about its poetry, our ability to put it into language and word it together. The relation is therefore dual, and the expression maintains this essential ambiguity. Poetry is an effort we are capable of only after we have been seduced by the ways in which the world becomes attractive to us. It is easy to understand then how the idea of the redemption of poetry is already directed at a redemption of what of the world we are no longer capable of receiving, so that our poetic gestures are likely to close

the horizon even more, instead of illuminating it. A conversion, a return to the world, is needed for that return enacts the redemption we are in need of in order to redeem poetry (and, Cavell adds, philosophy). It is worth adding here that in a text devoted equally to Heidegger's reading of rivers and Thoreau's writing of ponds Cavell pauses (2006: 231) to exert some pressure on a passage from *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*. The passage names our everyday relation to the forming or opening up of the world as one requiring 'awakening'. This awakening however is not simply activity, but a demand for more, and better reception, or in Heidegger's words a 'letting whatever is sleeping become wakeful' (1995: 60). It is philosophy itself, what Heidegger calls our 'attunement in philosophizing', that needs to subject itself to awakening. For Heidegger the term 'attunement' stands for a disposition toward something, the defining way in which something does or does not happen, opens up to us or remains overlooked. This fundamental state of mind can provide us with a deeper insight into our Being-in-the-World. Because according to Heidegger human beings are always already attuned in one way or another, our indifference to the world, our slumbering and being asleep to it, is not neutral, but signals a particular way of encountering the world. One could thus translate the idea of the 'poetry of the world' also as the possibility to be attuned to the fact that we are asleep to the world. If we are asleep to the world then it is our responsibility to let ourselves be awoken to and by its poetry.

The tug of poetry, a manifestation of the seduction of the world, would signify then both a realignment of ourselves with the world and an escape from reason, thus potentially dangerous, open to 'shady regions of learning', inevitably so. This poetry would perhaps have the same destructive attraction as the song of the Sirens for which Ulysses and his sailors already found a remedy. This remedy though implies deafness and forced immobility, a double amputation of the senses, a double resistance to the world. The appeal of the world can sometimes be too great, even for sailors. Venturing beyond the Kantian line means accepting that the ways in which the world presents itself there can be overwhelming, its seduction irresistible and the price to be paid cannot be accounted for in advance. How can then this redemption, from the limits of reason toward the seductions of the world, flow back into philosophy, considering it stands as a deliberate unsettling of the Kantian edifice? The Romantics are said to be measuring the balance between satisfaction and dissatisfaction with Kant's

arrangement not simply to redeem poetry and bring the world back to life, but to redeem philosophy. How could this be done?

Cavell reads Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* precisely as a journey that aims to chart a map of what lies beyond the line but also to show what the experience of that space (and the experience of the return from it) may look like. The expression 'poetry of the world' at this point words together that which cannot be experienced, that world that hovers above our experience and from which our experience takes its cue. The line that is crossed here though is also that between poetry and philosophy, or between poetry and prose, the writing of literature and that of reason. Parenthetically Cavell asks us to take the crossing of the line as the decisive moment when our understanding of the two as presenting opposite poles should be reviewed and perhaps even set aside. This invitation to a reworking of the positions of poetry and prose conceals and emphasizes at the same time the idea that the crossing of the line is also the manifestation of how poetry redeems philosophy, of how the redemption, if it comes, could come for both, in the same breath. It has been said that for the Romantics the redemption of poetry is a redemption of the world from our intellectual stabs, from those in particular inflicted on it by certain philosophizing. If poetry redeems the world from us, then this gesture has the power to also restore philosophy for us. Going beyond the line between poetry and prose implies transgressing the impossibility of reconciling philosophy and literature. The geographical metaphor here is relevant since the two are understood as separate continents and the line drawn by Kant is taken to name two things at once: a point beyond which philosophy cannot venture and a point of unending attraction toward which philosophy craves to venture. Poetry could be said to lead philosophy there where it should not go. Cavell asks us to ponder as to what kind of philosophy lies in wait beyond the line, beyond this illicit contact with poetry. Will this be similar to what Coleridge calls 'a total and undivided philosophy'? (2008: 300)

Cavell announces his proposal in two remarks, which it is worth quoting at length:

> I am not saying that when he wrote his poem he meant it to exemplify Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, merely that it does so, and that there are passages in the *Biographia* where Coleridge is summarizing his hopes for philosophy in the form of post-Kantian idealism […] Then one profit in thinking through the Mariner's journey by means of the poem is to assess that Fate, to suggest, for example that

> if the Mariner's experience *is* to be imagined or conceived as the region below the line, showing that its structure can be mapped, then it is not an a priori limitation of reason that prohibits its penetration by knowledge, but some other power, less genteel, call it repression. (IQO: 47–48)
>
> This projected reading of *The Ancient Mariner* is not in competition with the familiar reading of it as an allegory of the Fall. Rather on the contrary, I take it to provide an explanation of why it fits the Fall […] Accordingly, I take the story of the poem to allegorize any spiritual transgression in which the first step is casual […] On this understanding the transgression fits what I understand the idea to come to of the craving to speak, in Wittgenstein's phrase, 'outside language games'. (IQO: 48)

It is possible to formulate two primary features in Cavell's reading: *The Ancient Mariner* expresses beyond Kant's argument the possibility that it is not a lack of knowledge that stands in the way of our reaching the world, but our own repression of whatever knowledge we already have. It is our experience that blocks further experiences. Furthermore the intellectual transgression at stake in the poem is one that is natural to us and manifests the repression just mentioned. The language of the everyday, our ordinary language, contains within itself the very vulnerability it falls victim to. This vulnerability is a constant craving to overcome itself in view of more penetrating insights, a more perfected version of itself. To put these two points together: we ordinarily repress our knowledge in view of better knowledge and so block our own way, transforming finitude into intellectual deficiency. The Mariner should therefore be taken as an epitome of all of us when we are bewitched by a picture of knowing as absolute intelligibility and refute the actual, ordinary accomplishments of our knowledge. Coleridge's Mariner becomes a representative of our paths into thinking and away from it, into language and away from our attunement in it. Inasmuch as a fixation with a particular way of thinking makes us dumb, then the Mariner's initial state can be described as 'intellectual coldness'.

What recovery does Romanticism offer from this repression as transgression? The answer should be sought in the ways in which we settle the question of the poetry of the world. One feature that was only implicitly touched on was the question of animism. Cavell draws our attention to the fact that in his attempts to overcome the Kantian settlement the Romantic is inevitably running the risk of falling into pathetic fallacy. Romanticism's bargain with knowledge seems to accept animism. This acceptance appears to ignore the Kantian effort rather than proposing an alternative to it, so that the answer to

the *Critique*'s setting of limits—'Thanks for nothing'—becomes 'No thanks for everything' (IQO: 53). If there is animism in the Romantic quest for the world, then the price the Romantic project pays for it becomes the starting point of Cavell's reading of Coleridge, Wordsworth and Heidegger. Cavell proposes to turn the line of thought upside down and the trajectory that begins here is one that, implicitly, leads to the entrance of a reconceived animism in philosophy. How the reconceiving is handled is of course key here to dissipate the suspicion that Cavell is simply relying on a version of the pathetic fallacy, for which he declares more than once his philosophical contempt. As Cavell writes 'for an intellect such as Coleridge's, for which objects are now dead, they will not be enlivened by an infusion of some kind of animation from the outside' (IQO: 54). One can say that Cavell is proposing here a different kind of animism, an animation not from the outside, not given, but received. The issue comes up most explicitly in the Mariner's killing of the albatross.

The reading can be broken down in a number of points identifying the fall into and recovery from skepticism. Cavell reads, through Warner, the killing as motiveless. Taking the Mariner's crossing of the line, entering a new cold seascape as a parable for skepticism's progress beyond ordinary language, beyond the finitude of our knowledge, Cavell suggests that the skeptic's denial of human finitude is shown to be itself without reason. Thus denying the human condition and the horror it provokes is itself the motive that is being repressed. The denial of the human denies the possibility that the human condition can inspire horror. The leap Cavell is making can be rephrased as follows: the killing stands for a denial of the human and pictures itself as motiveless. What the denial denies is that the human condition can be horrific, inspire fear because finite and limited. Admitting a motive would mean admitting the denial of the human. The horror of being human is the point of denying the human condition; this denial represses this horror. The human's killing of itself represses through killing its own finitude. The arbitrariness of the killing is its humanity. However if the killing is derivative from the original transgression—the crossing of the line, a succumbing to temptation that does not imply a loss of control—then it should be explained according to that casual act. What really needs explaining is that casualness (could one also call it overconfidence?). The casualness is interpreted by Cavell as the risk we all run to want our language to do more, to want to cross the line and 'speak outside language games'. This risk is inherent to language itself. The drift into

the cold country leads to the killing, because—considering the allegories Cavell reads into the poem—the crave to transgress the conventionality of our criteria and words leads to dissatisfaction with them. This dissatisfaction manifests itself in the perceived need for our words to force themselves beyond our criteria in order to get a closer picture of the world. The reaction to the Kantian fixing of objects—making them dead—is depicted by Coleridge as a killing for the sake of extreme intimacy, for absolute connection. Cavell then takes the killing as the desire to establish a connection with nature beyond our human responsibilities, a killing whose consequences the perpetrator cannot calculate: by wanting nature too close we end up killing it.

A second point can be emphasized. The Mariner's recovery begins in his acceptance of life. The Mariner is alone, at least in spirit and said to despise his own being alive, having transformed his finitude into self-punishment and his separateness from the world and the living beings within it into guilt. The recovery begins in the acceptance of his separateness as a sign of participation. Thus the killing should be read as deriving from the bird's love for the Mariner. Cavell concludes that the poem's attempt to chart a recovery from skepticism lies not in a mindless animation of things through human words, but in the ability 'to let yourself *be loved* by all things' (IQO: 56). If this is indeed animism—but then one should find a better name for it—this kind of animism is not to be completely disowned by philosophy; it should instead be welcome by it. Instead of describing our love for things, for Cavell one is to accept *love*, to accept being accepted, 'a certain revised form of life, outside […] any human power' (2006: 296). This revised form of life is however the very condition that makes it impossible for the Mariner to simply return to the world of men. His return is as it were marked by the experience of his transgression. He now possesses a message and will use it to disturb the peaceful life-in-death of the inhabitants above the line. This disturbance becomes the Mariner's teaching and this teaching is neither lecturing nor dialogue, it provides tuition by example, 'by the love and reverence to all things'. The instruction the Mariner provides is directed mainly to the Wedding-Guests and its aim is that of detaining them in conversation in order to shock and upset. Cavell reads this stunning without redemption (the Guests are *left* stunned) as the Mariner's alternative to marriage. The Mariner's tale and example by disrupting the gay festivity declare intimacy as being beyond our expression. Conjugal intimacy has become post-sacramental and cannot function as a metonym for society at large, nor can God sanctify it. Marriage can be

intimacy, but also an empty institution, it cannot be celebrated as such, by itself it does not reconcile us with the world. It is a new engagement with narcissism. Thus the question of a new intimacy—of letting oneself be loved in order to discover the ability to love—is not one that can be settled by marriage. This new intimacy rather requires further confirmation and the acceptance of two features: separation and repetition. An elaboration as to the first one comes from Cavell's closing remarks on Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Here Cavell draws briefly on a theological understanding of marriage as presenting the creation of woman from man and thus beckoning their separation. Cavell analyzes the final wedding ceremony in the play as 'declaring that the question of two becoming one is just half the problem; the other half is how one becomes two. It is separation that Leontes' participation in parturition grants' (IQO: 100). The demand is that one accepts the claim of others as the price of knowing or having one's existence. This claim figures itself first and foremost as the acceptance of others as separate, beyond me, which in turn demonstrates my dependence. The trajectory of Leontes before the final ceremony is precisely that of someone who does not want to accept the fact that existence itself is the incurring of debt, that having one's own existence implies dependence. Thus in order to avoid the thought of otherness—of himself as father and brother, of others as offspring and wife—he wants there to be nothing, he wants the whole of existence to be destroyed. He can't accept the debt, because the debt in this case would be unpayable. He turns Hermione and himself to stone, but finds a way to awaken both himself and his wife. To find in oneself the life of the world by accepting the dependence of one's existence and its essential separation is the task of the final scene in *The Winter's Tale*. The second element needed for marriage to be accepted as recovery is presented by Cavell at the end of a text on the uncanny as a parting story. In the closing scene of the film *Woman of the Year* (1942) with Tracy and Hepburn, marriage is not presented as a sacrament, or as a festival aimed at distracting us from the coldness of the world, but as the manifestation of a willingness to take on the daily return of experiences and make of them a site of habitation. Cavell sees in this acceptance of desire for the ordinary the embodiment of a transcending of absolute—call them abstract—ideas of intimacy and domesticity in view of a daily renewal of togetherness through mutual separateness. Cavell calls this 'mutual pleasure without a concept' (IQO: 178). The moral is that it is a daily reconfiguring of the ordinary rather than an overcoming of it that can become the site of adventure. A life more ordinary can be an instance

of happiness. The willing repetition of days substitutes the holiday. It is not in holidaying from the world, but in the acknowledgment of its separation and return that we can disclose and give expression to our intimacy with it. Thinking back to the *Mariner* then the refusal of marriage as a recovery from skepticism resides in the uncertainty that befalls the institution. This uncertainty declares that celebration and festivity do not in themselves guarantee intimacy, neither do they offer appropriate expressions of it. For marriage to be an effective redemption something has to occur that takes place beyond the festivity and replaces it. Thus finding in oneself the life of the world means refraining from wanting absolute connection (the Mariner's killing of the bird) and from wanting no connection at all (Leontes' denial of Mamillius), from relinquishing our powers of expression to festivity and institutions and from inexpressiveness. The ability to *be loved* is a task whose achievement requires a daily effort, not a moment of revelation, it is a revising of life that gives us access to the world.

A Kind of Seduction

Do these ideas usher in a new animism or do they do away with it altogether? If the new animism—call it interest—is something Cavell has in mind to re-open our relation with the world, what criteria govern it? What emerges from Cavell's reading of Coleridge is a disillusionment with the sacramental, with God's ability to sanctify our intimacy. This disillusionment however can make us happy. The sense Cavell seems to extract from Coleridge and that he carries into his analysis of the 'Intimations' ode is that a mature acceptance of a disenchanted world (disenchantment with both an absolute connection with the world and with the world sanctified) can serve us to accept our separateness, becoming key to our interest. Cavell seems to follow this path through in his reading of Wordsworth. The analysis begins with what Cavell calls the poem's 'process of understanding and overcoming the unabashed pathetic fallacy' (IQO: 71) that we seem to accept naturally as children (John Wisdom writes in 'Gods' that 'the child feels that the stone tripped him when he stumbled, that the bough struck him when it flew back in his face' [1964: 164]. He has to learn to unlearn this). The question the poem asks is then why is this to be overcome and in favor of what. Cavell notes that the final stanza reverses the idea of being spoken to *by* nature with the idea of speaking *to* nature in the line 'Forebode not any severing of our loves!' (71). This reversal offers the opportunity to gauge what 'communicating with objects' may

mean. It is crucial here to see what becomes of this 'with' since what it suggests is that it is not a monologue but a dialogue Wordsworth is looking for. The poet begs things (fountains, meadows, hills and groves) not to reveal their separateness, the cutting of their intimacy. But then the communication goes further and speaks of nature 'giving thoughts' that are 'too deep for tears' (IQO: 72). These thoughts express something beyond grief, deeper than grieving, they therefore also recommend and suggest a mood, a pose beyond grieving. In the analysis that follows Cavell takes the line 'Our is birth is a sleep and a forgetting' as providing evidence for what these thoughts are and for how we become capable of bearing nature's separateness and thus conquer a nearness to it, discovering nearness for ourselves, as a mode of being. The line just quoted gives thoughts about the condition of birth, not just the event of our birth, but the fact that birth already speaks to us of our mortality. Thus to forget our birth here means to recollect what birth means, the fact of natality, a fact announcing the birth of a world as well as our finitude. As Edward Duffy puts it this 'would lead one to accept the verdict of reality and time, and so refit oneself for life precisely as the odd or individuated one one has become' (2013: 45). *Forgetting* names the need to replace the reenactment of childhood with recollection of and participation in childhood. To participate in the fact of childhood is to let childish things go, to accept birth and the singularity we are, to accept that the disenchantment that comes with this is not the end of the world, but perhaps a new birth to it. The line adds to the idea of forgetting that of sleep, which Cavell interprets as pointing to our vocation to human life, inspiration to a more fulfilled version of our humanity. I take this to introduce the idea that as we stand we are still grieving; in simply reenacting childhood we deliberately ignore that our birth and childhood are already the announcement of mortality, of separateness and separations. In recollecting instead of reenacting we are then called to a 'braver joy', to replace the acting like children, with letting the child go by participating in what it wanted (becoming human) and what it stands for (that life will come to pass). This allows us to transform disenchantment from grieving to happiness. Forgetting names here an activity, successful forgoing, a willingness for abandonment, taking this abandonment as a possibility for re-birth, a revised life. Cavell's final twist brings the reading to a close by suggesting that the forgetting of childhood provokes the transformation of the 'splendid vision' therein enjoyed—nature speaking to us, animism—to fade into the everyday, to renew the ordinary and accept our oddness.

Crucially here Cavell introduces the notion of vengeance as our way of responding to birth. The notion will return in this discussion as it is the cornerstone of Heidegger's reading of Nietzsche. Vengeance has to be foregone and relief from abandonment is to be sought with the acceptance of our inhabiting the everyday, thus accepting our finitude and the world's separateness from us. This kind of animism teaches us another way of looking at separateness, some other mode of becoming, where the splendor is not dissipated but transferred onto the reliefs we can get. They will be governed by their partiality and administered within the limits of the time we have, nonetheless they give expression to the world. Cavell writes that it is uncertain where the impulse to foregoing comes from and the poem doesn't tell, it rather spends much of its force in 'a kind of reseduction (as does much of the energies of Heidegger, and of Wittgenstein, not to say Freud), because our powers of being drawn from elsewhere ("we come from afar"), of being interested […] are deadened' (IQO: 75). This seduction is precisely what poetry and philosophy are for. The trajectory of recovery can then be said to revolve around the transformation of animism into interest. One still does not know where the inspiration comes from, one does not know that 'something' which elicits our interest. Cavell attempts an answer in the form of a question: 'what is our relation to the case of the world's existence? Or should we now see that there is nothing that constitutes this relation? Or see that there is no one something? What would it be to see such things?' (IQO: 136).

That our relation to the world is not based on something (there is no one something) of course brings us back to the traditional epistemologist's investigation and his desire to dogmatically squeeze the world into one particular object. Cavell is thus once again putting forward the argument for a turning of our relation with the world away from the exclusivity that pervades the skeptic's investigation. It was said that the skeptic's claim is both natural and unnatural. It is natural because entered according to the procedures of ordinary language. Unnatural because on the way to his conclusion the philosopher imagines the senses as independent from a body that acts and proceeds then to fix the world so that it answers for him. In this process the philosopher becomes attached to the one object as revealing of the world at large, but the object fails him. Cavell describes this failure as one dictated by the skeptic having removed our humanity from the investigation, inviting instead the object itself to provide an answer. Speaking outside our attunements the traditional epistemology takes the object as an interlocutor, thus enacting a particular kind of animism. He

does take the object for the whole world and then takes the world to be an object among others. The attachment becomes paranoid, and the failure of the object to respond becomes as a consequence evidence for humans' inability to know. Another clue is provided by Cavell's reference to seeing. The epistemologist wants to see *absolutely* an absolute object. This dogmatic approach takes our relation to the world to be necessarily dependent on the possibility of establishing an exclusive connection with something, with a generic object that in the course of the investigation becomes also the only possible object, the one in which we invest all our attention.

The alternative Cavell offers then passes through three elements: a different way of qualifying the terms of the relation; a differently conceived concept of 'seeing'; and ultimately a reassessment of what something is. The first element could be characterized according to the Romantic framework just discussed. Our encountering the world is not through knowledge understood as certainty, but through acceptance and acknowledgment. The *Mariner* figures a way of accepting the reception of love through the momentary contemplation of snakes. Wordsworth recommends participation in childhood in order to overcome our grieving for the abandonment that birth is. Leontes recovers from his doubt about Mamillius through the acknowledgment that certainty turns everything to stone, leaving us cold to the world, but also affording us the power to kill what lives within it. Not only certainty is not to be had, but its search makes us violent. As a consequence seeing—whose counterpart I take to be most explicitly articulated by Cavell in his discussion of Wordsworth's vision—the most prominent tool of the skeptic's investigation becomes not a way of reaching deeper, of assessing whether something 'really' exists, but a way to stop denying what is already in full view and turn one's eyes to it. The Mariner comes to this conclusion by understanding that his killing of the albatross—which he wanted closer connection with—ends up killing nature for him. Leontes opens his eyes to his own denial and sees his own humanity and that of his wife, reanimating both and permitting their shared return to the (shared) world. Wordsworth declares that once we forego our anger for being natal (mortal) and take relief from our finite reliefs, 'the splendid vision'—that of childhood's natural intimacy with the world—fades into the everyday, illuminating our ordinary ways of seeing with a 'happier disillusionment'. What emerges in the three readings is a recovery from a position that could be qualified as the quest for absolute autonomy. The three instances trigger different imaginations of this quest, oscillating between plenitude and nothingness: a desire for

exclusivity (the world is mine), a craving for annihilation (a state before or beyond one's existence), a languid nostalgia for nearness (those childish things). But if the quest is for absolute autonomy and the purity of independence, then the beginning of a recovery from this by the wounded intellect must necessarily point to the acceptance of its opposite. Being loved, counting and foregoing signal the beginning of our acceptance of dependence. Shakespeare, Wordsworth and Coleridge provide us with figures that understand through a reconfiguration of seeing their being conditioned, abandoning the idea of absolute independence, taking on the responsibility for the loss of distance and its consequence: the ignorance of nearness. Thus as Cavell writes 'the renunciation of our unconditionedness, of an identification with pure spirituality' (2006: 268) resides in how we take things. It is this acceptance that provides for Cavell the platform for his reconfiguration of animism into interest. Ultimately this will be decisive for forgoing grief, for understanding 'that we have an interest in learning nearness, in the stability of materiality, in achieving comprehensibility to others and an interest in the endurance of interest itself' (2006: 266). The reaction to the Kantian settlement of the thing-in-itself should thus be followed in the most explicit reaction to it focusing on things themselves, because as Heidegger writes in *The Thing*, 'We shall not reach the thing in itself until our thinking has first reached the thing as a thing' (PLT: 165). The opening sentence of this reaction reads: 'All distances in time and space are shrinking', but the response follows shortly 'Yet the frantic abolition of all distances brings no nearness; for nearness does not consist in shortness of distance' (PLT: 163). Despite its esoteric character Heidegger's attempt to reorient the Kantian settlement remains for Cavell one of lasting significance and seems to decisively redirect Cavell's foray into the recovery from skeptical violence. Cavell seems to be thinking about this when understanding the intellectual violence operated by skeptics on objects. The absolute nearness the skeptic is seeking reduces everything to uniformity, fixing the world according to the results of his investigation and therefore submitting it to his intellectual appetite. The trajectory of this reduction starts with the hyperbolical doubt and proceeds onto the formation and definition of Western thinking as construction and representation. This is what we should forego and awake from, turn away from by turning it around since it (our thinking, our own thoughts) has already turned against us (the reference in Heidegger is to the atomic bomb). The first step resides in the idea of recuperating distance and nearness, one through the other. This means first of all giving nearness its space, attending to

it, recoiling from the attempt to encounter it directly, to seize control of it. Attending to nearness means attending to things and attending to things means to do something different than picturing them as objects. The transition from object to things signals the transition from thinking as representation to thinking as attending. The study of nearness thus begins with the unsettling of the ground of representation, unsettling thinking as making. What Heidegger demands of us then is that we think thinking differently from the mere putting of something before our mind. What pertains to the thing as thing is not of our own making; it is neither a product of our practical manipulation nor a consequence of our intellectual syntheses. Following Heidegger's text one finds confirmation that the argument is meant as a response to Kant's *Critique*. Heidegger writes that while the thing shows itself in its outward appearance, this does not pertain to the thing as thing, one could say that it rather distracts us from it. Appearance is not the essential manifestation of the thing but the element that once followed produces the thing's withdrawal. We rather first become aware of the thing when we engage with it, for instance, by filling a jug. In filling the jug we become aware of the emptiness that allows for its holding attribute. We thus become aware of the jug by becoming aware of this nothing and notice that in our making we have in fact been shaping the void, better we have brought it forth. The thing in this case is thus better described through nothingness than through materiality. Strikingly Heidegger remarks that in fact things have never appeared. As such the thing has never appeared to thinking and then asks 'to what is the nonappearance of the thing as thing due?' (PLT: 168). It is our understanding of the thing as that which stands that blocks its appearance. It is worth quoting here a lengthy passage where Heidegger describes heads on what becomes of things in Western thinking:

> The thing-in-itself means for Kant: the object-in-itself. To Kant, the character of the 'in-itself' signifies that the object is an object in itself without reference to the human act of representing it, that is, without the opposing "ob-" by which it is first of all put before this representing act. "Thing-in-itself," thought in a rigorously Kantian way, means an object that is no object for us, because it is supposed to stand, stay put, without a possible before: for the human representational act that encounters it. (PLT: 174–175)

What the representational act blocks is the possibility of thinking things alongside humans, what Heidegger calls the thing's gathering. It means to look for explanations where there are none, falling short of the world's

nature, 'the simple onehood of world' (PLT: 178). It has been mentioned that Heidegger demands us to think things beyond human making. The text then asks us to preserve things and makes their appearance as things dependent on a form of vigilance. Vigilance is the first step of our thinking turned from mastery through synthetic representation toward calling and responding. These steps cannot be taken as a mere change of attitude, they require a conversion. What would this conversion produce?

> If we let the thing be present in its thinging from out of the worlding world, then we are thinking of the thing as thing. Taking thought in this way, we let ourselves be concerned by the thing's worlding being. Thinking in this way, we are called by the thing as the thing. In the strict sense of the German word *begingt,* we are be-thinged, the conditioned ones. We have left behind us the presumption of all unconditionedness. (PLT: 178–179).

Cavell comments on this section to stress that 'the recall of things is the recall, or calling on, of humanity' (IQO: 67). Attending to things and preserving them in vigilance becomes a way to recuperate access to the world, bringing ourselves back to it, letting it interest us. Heidegger calls this the nearing of the world and the closing words in the text read: 'Men alone, as mortals, by dwelling attain to the world as world. Only what conjoins itself out of world becomes a thing' (PLT: 180). Instead of desperately attempting to get the world near to me, we are to wait the world nearing itself to us. This is what it would be to 'see (such) things'.

It is important to assess Cavell's admission that the language of *The Thing* triggers a nervous chuckle among those philosophers whose training gives them reasons to be suspicious of Heidegger's reliance on anthimerias and denominal verbs. More than suspicion, expressions like 'the thing things' cause the feeling of a limit having been reached, of something that is either to be joined or abandoned. Cavell looks for a way to translate the alleged eccentricity of Heidegger's jargon in a form that does not offend the Enlightenment or post-Enlightenment mind. According to Cavell the only piece of writing that offers a parallel in the Anglo-American tradition is John Wisdom's essay *Gods* (which, considering the text contains a long quotation of *Tintern Abbey,* Cavell might have found while tracing the path of Wordsworth). Wisdom begins by writing that the 'existence of God is not an experimental issue in the way that it was' (1964: 149) and introduces then the notion of a 'God of the world'. These lines set up the discussion as a confrontation of animism, which albeit never mentioned by

this name is clearly identified in the idea of entities swarming in the world. One of the reasons why the notion gives the impression of craziness is due, according to Wisdom, to our more refined knowledge of natural phenomena. The problem under analysis then is one between believers and atheists and for both, Wisdom says, it is not a matter of a world to come, but of 'a world that now is, though beyond our senses' (150), therefore beyond further knowledge we could gain by refining our investigations of natural phenomena. This is so not because there is something that blocks our knowledge, but because it is not (simply) a matter of how our knowledge is organized. This is a matter of qualifying our belief and Wisdom produces a list of possibilities that are already open to us, when the rubric of knowledge seems to fall short of our epistemological demands. It is worth quoting the passage in full if for no other reason than to compare its language with Heidegger's and listen in to the inflection and pathos the words of Wisdom contain:

> We recall the timeless entities whose changeless connections we seek to represent in symbols, and the values which stand firm amidst our flickering satisfaction and remorse, and the physical things which, though not beyond the corruption of moth and rust, are yet more permanent than the shadows they throw upon the screen before our minds. We recall, too, our talk of souls and of what lies in their depths and is manifested to us partially and intermittently in our own feelings and the behaviour of others […] Is the hypothesis of minds in flowers and tress reasonable for like reasons? Is the hypothesis of a world mind reasonable for like reasons – someone who adjusts the blossom to the bees, someone whose presence may at times be felt – in a garden in high summer, in the hills when clouds are gathering. (150)

This passage provides the transition to the question Cavell is interested in assessing, the belief that provides rational justification for the issues of 'minds in flowers and trees', hence the belief that turns itself into a certain view of reason. The shape of this rational justification is again dependent on us, on whether and to what extent we are willing to accept the reasonableness of our belief in other minds, or in other words the reasonableness of our attachment to facts of nature, which support the idea of human minds. In Wittgensteinian language one could say that Wisdom is after a grammatical investigation of animism that takes its cue and builds from a grammatical investigation of other minds. What we take to be the essence of others' minds (hence the grammar, our ways of engaging with and

describing them) will guide the analysis of the essence of—call them—material minds. Wisdom explains, for example, how someone would respond to a request to qualify love for one's partner. A qualification of love would figure something like 'the things we do together', 'the kids', 'the house', 'the dog', 'other people', 'dining out'. These features reveal a number of discoveries, not the kind of knowledge afforded by Pasteur's discoveries, but similar to the discoveries brought about by Dostoyevski and Freud. Shall we say these discoveries are not discoveries? Then why do we feel we can legitimately call them so? Wisdom provides an answer in his famous story of the invisible gardener. The 'sense' of discovery reported by the two inspectors of the garden is of a completely different kind and yet the information afforded to them is overall and in each detail exactly the same. It is nonetheless possible to say that one has discovered one thing and the other has discovered another, without having to modify the amount and quality of information they have gathered. Their discoveries and hypothesis cease in this sense to be experimental. The difference between them is nonetheless fundamental, one feels toward the garden in a way that is decisively different from how the other feels. The matter has now become a question of attitude toward something, a way of perceiving something after the information has been distributed. Wisdom asks: 'Can the manifestation of an attitude in the utterance of a word, in the application of a name, have a logic?' (1964: 156). Issues of this kind cannot be settled by further calculation; neither can this dispute be described through a chain of deductive reasoning. If one wants a parallel then this can be sought in aesthetic dispute where it is essentially not a matter of facts but of what Wisdom calls 'our feelings'. What are the things we do to reveal the intrinsic value of an aesthetic object? We look again, we trace the features, we listen again and trace the rhythms, we reorient ourselves again toward the object. Wisdom admits that the confusion as to the logic of these issues may reside from connections that 'are not presented in language' (1964: 162). To attempt to settle the idea of animism Wisdom proceeds to draw a parallel with the stories of the Gods. The stories of the stones and the stories of the Gods belong to the same family. But to the same family belong also the words we use to word some of our feelings (e.g., that there is a voice 'in' us), and these feelings in return contain facts, 'patterns in human reactions which are well described by saying that we are as if there were hidden within us powers, persons, not ourselves and stronger than ourselves' (1964: 166). Wisdom's suggestion seems to be that it is psychoanalysis that has revealed to us the factual nature of these

feelings—of our composure overturned and as it were invaded from the outside. Therefore what this family offers us is not another place, but this place here transfigured, a timely release into freedom that does not oblige us to skip the present. In this sense what we call animism is to be taken not as a factual claim, but as an attitude, a specific turning of our involvement with the world, a 'patient and courageous attention' (1964: 168). It is this attitude that is revealed in our gently giving water to withering flowers. The skeptic reproaches the man for betraying an inappropriate attitude even if he knows that flowers will be refreshed by water and even if he knows that the man under scrutiny is not expecting the flowers to thank him. Nonetheless the skeptic feels this attitude to be 'somewhat crazy' (1964: 161). However this feels not crazier than the attitude of lovers, who can't be dissuaded their love is unrequited or misplaced or the other person unworthy of it. The skeptic insists because he feels that 'the light of reason' has not as yet struck these lovers, that despite his intervention they fail to see the point of the 'connections' he is drawing them to, they remain deliberately wrongheaded.

The importance of the passages from *Gods* just analyzed emerges in light of *Other Minds*, where Wisdom once again introduces a character called Smith who seemingly believes in the presence of minds in flowers and trees. Smith is believed to hold the conviction that flowers feel. Smith will probably sigh when or at the thought that young flowers are dying (1968: 6). Cavell turns the question around and asks why is it that the philosopher invites (almost forces) the idea that Smith is projecting an emotion where there should be none: in flowers. Perhaps Smith is simply not following the same emotional attitude. So it would be the skeptic's assumption that invites this specific description of the behavior, not Smith's conduct. Cavell writes: 'the man's treatment of flowers is described in a way designed to invite, or incite, the suspicion of pathetic fallacy, because a skeptic can only imagine something like a projection of emotion in play, hence a suspicious projection' (IQO: 68). The closure Wisdom brings—we shouldn't doubt where doubt is unnecessary, where we are confronting something like an 'old hope' (1968: 37)—does not seem to satisfy Cavell. He wants something more in Smith's behavior, something that approximates the last stage of the acceptance of the world. What he seems to want is something Wisdom alludes to in *Gods* in referring to the relation between therapist and patient: 'Thinking to remove the spell exercised upon his patient by the old stories of the Greeks, the psycho-analyst may himself fall under that spell and find in them what his patient has found and, incidentally, what made the Greeks

tell those tales' (1964: 163). Smith's parable might therefore have something to tell us, inasmuch as it provides what Cavell might call a 'scene of instruction'. The tuition that Cavell gets from this scene of withering flowers could be described as the beginning of our conversion from master to pupils, from speakers to listeners and from clutching to receiving. Smith's caring for flowers, his sighing at their premature passing, his satisfaction and remorse suggest something beyond old hope. Smith's behavior invites a different kind of reasoning, one which does not take away the eccentricity in that behavior but one which indicates the possibility of what could be called a 'practice of acknowledgment'. Cavell asks the readers to pay more attention to Smith's caring gestures (his nervous handling of the flowers or his smelling them, his horror at chopping their stem and panic at seeing petals drop) so to imagine 'someone's finding himself or herself struck by a treatment of flowers […] in such a way that he is led to consider what flowers are' (IQO: 69). To recall our ways of dealing with something means to become aware of what something is and therefore to bring to our attention how we express our interest and commitment to specific things. This in turn indicates how their singularity presents itself to us, it reminds us of how different different things are. This is also a different way of expressing Heidegger's allegedly esoteric call for our becoming *bethinged*. Mulhall puts it in the following terms: 'rather than imposing our general preconceptions about objecthood on to a given object, we bring ourselves to consider what our everyday experiences of and with that object can teach us about its specific, distinct nature' (1999: 160). By becoming bethinged we also take an interest in our being drawn to the world and therefore come to consider what our relation to it consists in and how we express it. What Cavell is insisting on here is the possibility to exchange our desperate claim for exclusivity for forbearance, as in the passage 'leaving the world as it is – to itself, as it were – may require the most forbearing act of thinking (this may mean the most thoughtful), to let true need, say desire, be manifest and be obeyed; call this acknowledgment of separateness' (NYUA: 45). Made anxious by our craving for absolute independence we forget the terms of our condition, the fact that existence is had only on condition. It is possible now to understand what Cavell means when he speaks of the provocation of reversing the process of knowledge, working the different strata of beings backward. If the possibility is opened that the inaccessibility of the thing-in-itself masks and voices a more fundamental suspicion toward other human beings, a suspicion that furthermore one has to live, then it follows that one can indeed reverse the order: material objects skepticism

takes its cue from a sense of mistrust and unrequited love and the world becomes an object of desire and a subject of betrayal. Recalling these steps, a corrective suggestion emerges: our empathic projection toward others puts a seam in our experience ('Only a small proportion of the things I see, or sense, do I regard as human [or animated, or embodied]. Projection already puts a seam in human experience' [CR: 425]), but our experience of the world is constantly seamed, called as it is to face the endless emergence of the singular. Those responses that when called to scrutiny may seem to reveal primitive (animistic) dealings with the world, reveal also the specificity of our interest in singular things and the specific ways we have to express that interest. The treatment of flowers described by Cavell as one of many exemplary ways of our being bethinged shows us at once what flowers are and how we human creatures distinguish between flowers and other singular things (each blade of grass, each fish of the sea, each fowl of the air). This means that once we stop and think in front of the flower we are doing two things at the same time: we are letting the object tell us what it is (a flower, not a butterfly) and we recall our everyday ways of expressing ourselves in regard to its singular nature. Importantly Cavell adds at the end of his treatment of flowers that if they did 'feel for us what we feel for them, we would not treat them as we treat flowers, for example, arrange them; not even lovingly' (IQO: 69). We do not on the whole arrange animals and we do not on the whole seek the odor of stones. There are things we do and things we do not do with singular objects and this tells us what they are, allows them to teach us what their distinctive nature in our relational system is. Our finitude can find timely recovery in the emergence of the singular. To allow this emergence means taking an interest in the world and in our dealing with it, but for this emergence to be even possible one has to come to learn (even to love perhaps) separateness or what Cavell sometimes would call thinking as forbearance. This could also be called a *power of patience*. The world has a grammar, but our willingness to remain ignorant of it—despite our knowing it already, inside out—can make the world unreadable. If we are not ready to be read by the world, we will not be ready to read it.

Every Word in the Language

To consider what something is we consider how we express our interest in it. The uses and consequences of our words once exposed will further expose the world. As Mulhall aptly puts it: 'reminding ourselves of their

[flowers] distinctive place in our form of life, is a way of reminding ourselves of (certain aspects of) our shared criteria for the word "flower"' (1999: 161). That we have criteria for wording the world together already should make us aware of our interest in the world and of our ability to retrieve it when lost. Criteria tell us precisely what something is, without however giving us the certainty that something is. Criteria are essentially descriptive, they designate identity and not existence or, as Cavell puts it, they 'establish the position of an "object" in our system of concepts' (CR: 76). Criteria do not simply afford us the possibility of using a concept within our linguistic exchanges; they also delineate the perimeter of the specificity of our interest. What remains underimagined according to Cavell in traditional accounts of the Wittgensteinian expression *forms of life* is the crucially significant reference to that which exists with us in the world (not for our benefit but open to our involvement). The expression refers explicitly to life, to existence as shared, to what counts as a flower and to what counts for us, for the specific possibilities phenomena have for our knowledge: the singular sorrow, pleasure, gratification, indulgence, affront, distress, shock a singular thing invites or produces (without exhausting itself there) and therefore the singular expression this mood calls for. Every object when attended to brings forth its specificity and ours, its nature and aspects of ours. Then to say that our knowledge is shared means to include in the fellowship not only other human beings but every singular occurrence that seams us. For Cavell it is our destiny that something essential about us is revealed in our attending to things. It is along these fateful lines that one should read Cavell's writing of Kant's philosophical revolution as in need of radicalization (as if the revolution had fallen short of its promise) and offering the idea of grammar as one radicalized form of transcendental deduction, so that 'not just twelve categories of the understanding are to be deduced, but every word in the language' (IQO: 38). Our ordinary experience is weaved to the plural singularity of the world more than we think and less than we want. Both the more and the less are bound to cause disappointment. In this sense the skeptic voice can never be completely quelled, it will keep speaking within each of us, since criteria are only natural, hence only human, only shared, they have no ground outside of this sharing and therefore will from time to time strike us as arbitrary, conventional, unadventurous. If our disappointment will constantly reappear then our recovery will also need to be sought anew, each day. Opposing to our criteria a quest for depth and vertical transcendence skepticism can only be answered to by means of

a quest for a horizontal and 'relentless superficiality' (IQO: 176). What Cavell demands then is not a more solid philosophical construction, but a resettlement or revision of our existence. The progress of this philosophy lies not in our knowing more of the world, but in our exposing ourselves to it, following its provocation, becoming the ones called out and showing as a consequence ourselves to ourselves, bringing the human back into our investigations and conversations. In an essay on Emerson Cavell speaks of this in terms of 'call' and 'attractiveness'. The two terms stand in opposition to the most unhandsome part of our condition. In *Experience* Emerson writes: 'I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition' (2003: 254). The reading Cavell offers of this involves, not surprisingly, a couple of interpretative twists. What Cavell finds 'unhandsome' is not the fact that objects are in themselves beyond our grasp, escaping our attachment and rebuking our intimacy. What is dangerous is our denial of their distance. This denial becomes all the more callous because instead of stepping back to let the objecthood of the object teach us what it is—leave the world to itself—we insist and try to clutch harder. While the object does not become less lubricious our unhandsomeness, our disappointment and anxiety in relation to the world increase. Cavell concludes that this attitude surfaces when we 'conceive thinking, say the application of concepts in judgments, as grasping something, say synthesizing' (ET: 117). The opposite of this recalcitrance that feeds anxiety and makes the world disappear is attraction, our ability to let ourselves be attracted 'naming the rightful call we have upon one another, and that I and the world make upon one another' (ET: 117). Concepts follow interest, we must care for something, take it at heart (Heidegger insists on this repeatedly in *What is Called Thinking*). Since Cavell reminds us that 'valuing is the other face of asserting' (CR: 94), and that we are to move from 'an Intuition of what counts to a Tuition of how to recount it' (ET: 129), it is interest we need to awake. What we have lost when we say we have lost our relation to the world is not a set of things but our desire for and interest in them. Cavell puts it as follows in a long passage that concludes with, among other things, an invitation to read Heidegger's work on Nietzsche:

> If we formulate the idea that valuing underwrites asserting as the idea that interest informs telling or talking generally, then we may say that the degree to which you talk of things, and talk in ways, that hold no interest for you,

> or listen to what you cannot imagine the talker's caring about, in the way he carries the care, is the degree to which you consign yourself to nonsensicality, stupefy yourself. (Of course your lack of interest may be your fault, come from your own commitment to boredom.) I think of this consignment as a form not so much of dementia as of what amentia ought to mean, a form of mindlessness. It does not appear unthinkable that the bulk of an entire culture, call it the public discourse of the culture, the culture thinking aloud about itself, hence believing itself to be talking philosophy, should become ungovernably inane (CR: 95)

The possibility of losing the world is always there, every time we attempt to clutch the world and then go on speaking about it, without interest in it, uttering words as if in stupor, as if drunk, abandoned by ourselves. This stupefaction happens before or beyond any commitment to boredom, which would present a different route. It happens when we try to go beyond ourselves, grasping and holding something that has no handles, something whose structure does not offer itself to us in these terms. That there is no something our relation with the world is based on thus could be read in terms slightly different from our first reading: not that there simply is not a particular thing that will give us the world, despite our relentless concentration, but that whatever is there in the world actively calls us to a different orientation, to a revision of our attachment. If the things of the world, once our grasping and seizing has given way, provide us a way to return upon ourselves, this means that in losing connection with the world we have simultaneously denied connection with our own humanity. To try and grasp things in order to gain intimacy with the world does not only isolate us more from it, but reduces to torpor and silence the humanity in us. Rather than becoming absorbed in the world, we move further away from it and from ourselves, giving in to the animism of the skeptical investigation (taking the world as too taciturn, insensitive to our affectionate plea and therefore empty, nonexistent), instead of tuning in to our powers of reception, responsiveness and patience, animating our desires and interests. The refusal of the world and the refusal of individuation go hand in hand, we lock ourselves out of the world because we block and ignore its own and our singularity. To accept this stimulates horror because it implies accepting that we are separate and therefore dependent. To repress this horror does not lead to recovery; it leads instead to further, yet more anxious tremors. As Cavell puts it, 'the attestation of one's autonomous power of perception may come in recognizing the autonomy or splendid separateness of another, the sheer wonder in recognizing the

reality of the presence of someone whose existence you perhaps thought you had already granted' (1994: 47). Once we accept to accept we may just come to be granted the world and others out of our own very handsome hands. In *The World Viewed* Cavell writes that the world is all there, gives itself to us and imposes itself on us and yet we are not meant to be dictated by it what views we can take. To accept the world means to understand and respond to how different *different* things are, accept ourselves as conditioned by the world's conditions.

CHAPTER 3

Nancy and the World Without Sense

A Passion of Sense

At the beginning of *The Evidence of Film* Jean-Luc Nancy writes that the cinema of Abbas Kiarostami does not bear witness simply to the closure of a certain history of film, but to 'a changing world' (EF: 12). The expression 'bearing witness' however does not capture what is really at stake. It is not simply a matter of cinema becoming a transmitter of the changes in the order of the world, in the reshuffling of its principles, in the attention to new phenomena. The change at stake is not toward a different regime of images, a different mode of representation, a different relationship with its objects, with the world as an object of cinema's aesthetic discipline. Cinema does not represent the world anymore, if it has ever done so, it rather 'makes evident a conspicuous form of the world' (EF: 12). Nancy then stresses that while the focus here is on Kiarostami, it is not simply his work that signals this change. Kiarostami is not alone, there are other looks and they all deal with the same insistence, with the same configuration, with the withdrawal of representation. The entirety of Nancy's work on film is motivated by a reflection on the absence of the world as an object of representation. Cinema does not simply bear witness to this; it participates in this thought and presents this withdrawal. Film is fastened to this, its existence is now possible only as 'a conduct in regard to the world' (EF: 16). In other words, cinema is called to make evident the world as that which resists worldviews, that which has escaped visions, that which withdraws from any attempt to represent it as this or

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that, enclosing it in a look, an idea, a theory, an investigation. Cinema makes evident this condition of the world and participates in it. Cinema is neither an external look on the world nor the detailed recounting of the events taking place in it; cinema is the evidence that discloses that the world is no longer placed in front of us as an externality. Our relation to the world is quite different; every attempt to block this difference leaves us without a world.

When thinking about film with Nancy it is a matter of thinking the world again, but also of bearing the crude awareness that this one thought about the world will not elevate us above it or bring us closer to it; it will rather participate in what it thinks about. The world fastens and abandons us at the same time, in one stroke, in one look. Nancy's discourse on film thus is also a discourse on the particular present of our world, a present that is inhabited by a specific trajectory, or specific past. This trajectory that cuts through the present speaks of abandonment, of the abandonment of teleological orientation and absolute values. While the problem is only seldom articulated in terms of modernity the name does describe the path that leads to the disappearance of the world's transcendental sense. The present of our world is announced by the world's absence. This absence however needs to be qualified and needs to be qualified from within philosophy: this absence is also the absence *of* philosophy, understood both in terms of philosophy's withdrawal and of its attempt to conceptualize absence. Following the trajectory means understanding how the world today exists not in terms of a relation to the past, but in terms of the absence of relation this past has produced. A relation with this past has become impossible and yet it is by means of this impossibility that the world is what it is. Philosophy thus moves in and out of this impasse sometimes with a sense of dissolution (of self-closure, of loss, of nihilism), sometimes with the urgency of a renewal of the mechanisms of the past (a foundational nostalgia, a solution). Nancy is quick to remove himself from both gestures of desperation and elation, adopting instead the point of view of the present itself, inhabiting as it were the experience of this absence, what is happening to us. If the world is absent today it is because at some point this absence, thus this world, has been created. However one should also refrain from insisting too much on a chronological unfolding. This chronological unfolding becomes available only in the synchronic structure of our world. Only there can this unfolding be felt, only there because it is there that its absence—the one it has produced and the one it has become for us—can be experienced. Only our

experience of the world as it is provides an entrance into this trajectory. In the absolute independence of the world one touches the withdrawal of the world's dependence. This is a thought that resists our intervention and that we resist entering, because the absence is not here a lack or a potentiality, not a crisis, but the very factuality of our world.

Cinema manifests the world's withdrawal from representation and therefore shows us (but this showing is not an illustration, it is that which can never be appropriated by illustrations) that it is a matter of adjusting our relation to it differently. The risk in not doing so is the loss of the world itself. As Nancy says:

> The world is no longer an object at all. And doesn't this growing awareness of philosophy amount to a return to the world after the entire rationalist tradition has had us believe that we could hover over the sensible contemptuously? […] This world, taken for an object of knowledge, investigation and mastery, is also a world from which the human – and the living more generally – has been excluded. (2013: 30)

Philosophy's growing awareness for a return to the world is not simply directed toward a new thematization of the question of the world. It emerges as the original demand to think the world outside thematization. This gesture is not simply oriented then toward a return of the world to thought or vice versa a more concentrated reflection on the world, it is a gesture that aims to think the human and the living together with the world or better said the world as this together, as that which forms itself first of all as a together. The rationalist tradition has conceived the world as a site where human mastery could deploy itself, stretch its potential and showcase its skills. The radical thematization of the world leads to its disappearance and the rationalist tradition, whose goal was that of making the world more human, more knowable by human intellect, has ended up transforming the world into the unknowable object par excellence. The trajectory can be sketched in a simple outline: once the human takes it as its task to know the world it creates a gap, a distance that reason will fill. However in its attempt to overcome this distance reason extends it, exacerbates it, to the point where the world becomes a remote object, from which we find ourselves excluded, since we have by now insisted on being external observers. This withdrawal sanctions the world as on the one hand too demanding for a truly exhaustive investigation and on the other too foreign for inhabitation. That which began as the attempt to make

the world more human has then provided the exit of the human from the world. This curve can be rephrased by saying that the human saturated world or nature with sense, to the point where the world's teleological destination showed itself to have no place for the human. The return to the world would then be first of all a return to its absence of sense as that which is determined a priori. The sovereignty of reason in which the rationalists rejoiced fulfilled itself by installing an organizing principle in the world and satisfied itself with the ability to explain, discern, distinguish. However the idea of Reason as an organizing principle, recreating a cosmos out of the disorder of the world, was itself in relation to a past it was trying to overcome, but ended up extending. The Principle of Reason was but the latest incarnation of the subjection of the world to an external principle. It is this demand for subjection that has inspired what Nancy calls simply the West in its relation to—and dismissal of—the world. While Monotheisms declared their loyalty to a world beyond the world, to the opening of an otherworldly dimension that would rescue this world here, the rationalists insisted on appealing to a world behind this world here. This world here is but a semblance of what really is, it is but an image, a view that hides and withdraws and ultimately tricks the intellect. Whether we look for a world beyond or for a world behind, we are denying this world here, since we assign to it a sense beyond itself. This sense establishes the need for the completion and fulfillment of this world to take place elsewhere. Thus one returns to the absence mentioned at the beginning. Thought already proceeds under this demand, under this duress, under the aegis of a world without sense. Our tradition has never thought about anything else than this, that the world is without sense and that its sense should be assigned from somewhere else. It is now a matter of thinking this absence *as such*, in its opening and evidence. It is also therefore a matter of moving beyond it, without moving beyond the world.

The return to the world Nancy invokes amounts then to a return to the tradition, not in order to repeat its foundational gesture, but to take up its findings once again: the world is without sense, our relation to the world is one that is permeated by absence. This is the demand for thought today: to think through what the tradition has offered us, not in order to deny or refute it, but in order to open it up, differently from how it pictures itself. As Nancy puts it, 'it is a matter simply of accompanying a clarification that already precedes us in our obscurity' (SW: 8). Then it is a matter of articulating what the tradition transmits to us, finding a way, an opening into the question: What does it mean that the world is without sense? The

expression should not be taken as designating an annihilation of sense, as if we were contemplating the closure of the world onto itself. This nihilism, or rather this understanding of nihilism, is perhaps simply the symptom of what the absence truly determines. What this cataclysmic thought offers is once again the idea of an ultimate end, which thematizes the absence either as nonsense or as coming of the revelation. The expression does not designate a liquidation or a closure, but an opening and not a final and ultimate opening (the opening of the sky), but the opening up of our tradition as the engine that has brought forward the absence of sense. To open up the tradition means to follow and retrace its twofold movement. The absence of sense designates on the one hand the stripping of the world of its sense and the shifting of this sense elsewhere; on the other hand this stripping and this assignation to the elsewhere already bring forward a different understanding of absence. In this second connotation, the absence of sense does not designate the fact that the world is taken to be a mere object organized from elsewhere, but that the sense conferred by this elsewhere has gradually been dismantled. If in the first case we have to do with an external principle guaranteeing the sense of the world (absence of sense from this world here), in the second we have to do with the figure (but it is a figure that only figures itself) of a world that is not organized from the outside and whose sense is therefore undetermined. It is a redoubling of absence, the absence of sense names at once the process through which the world became insufficient and the process—already at work in the first—through which whatever had filled this insufficiency comes to an end, leaving the world to itself. For a long time the West has learnt to understand the world in reference to something else. In this way the world had a sense, a sense was guaranteed for it, was conferred upon it, was established and determined for it. However there is a second determination according to which the sense of the world as given needs to be addressed. This second determination is that of myth. In myth, the breaking away from which constitutes the initial gesture of philosophy, sense is always given, deposited in the world. With mythology however the question of sense is not even posed, not yet. The world is simply a cosmos, a unity of sense, inhabited by the presences of Gods that organize it from within. The referential nature of myth is in this way unproblematic, phenomena can be explained through divine presences, which concur with them, which manifest them and do not withdraw within this manifestation.

The givenness of sense in myth is also the giving of a presence, of multiple presences. The world is full of sense from within, it is, as Nancy's reading of Wittgenstein implies, an immanence of sense that originates in an immemorial past, a true origin. The problem of sense and its absence then arises specifically at the end of myth, or in other words at the beginning of philosophy. The beginning of philosophy marks the birth of a regime of sense that the man-philosopher confronts. The question of the beginning of philosophy is always thought, from Plato to Heidegger, in terms of self-production. Philosophy begins from itself and produces its own name and its realities (concept, idea). With this self-institution philosophy also produces the problematic understanding of origin and end. For if philosophy understands itself as self-generating then it can relate to what precedes it as either a progress or an accident. Both options however remain problematic. In the first instance philosophy should presuppose something of itself in what precedes it; therefore its parthenogenesis would not be pure: this process posits necessarily a constant progression of history and its fulfillment. In the second instance philosophy relinquishes any sense of necessity to its birth, therefore becoming utterly non-philosophical, groundless. These original lacks affecting philosophy are transmitted to the thought of history, which remains caught between teleology and coincidence. They also touch and transform the thought of the world, for given these premises a history of the world would be caught in a continuous tension between a provenance that anticipates a finality and an accident that unsettles it. Nancy writes that in this way philosophy constantly betrays the thinking of the world. However this betrayal functions also as a revelation. Nancy writes: 'the logos properly speaking forms itself from that which it has to conquer […] a *phusis* that is not given to it' (CW: 80). This situation, by which philosophy self-generates and is at the same time generated as a response produces the emergence of the West and the problematic of sense. The question this paradox poses then is that of an ungrounding of the ground that philosophy, by thinking itself both historically and ahistorically, constantly repeats. Nancy expresses it as follows: 'is it possible or not to assume the nonfoundation of the history of the world? This means: is it possible to make history, to begin again a history—or History itself—on the basis of this nonfoundation?' (CW: 81). Is it possible to assume both the absence of origin and the absence of end, without longing for nature and myth and without teleology or messianism? Is it possible to accept this absence of sense? Nancy sketches the answer in compressed terms. The issue of the absence of grounds and

finality is the question that incessantly, but implicitly, occupies metaphysics. This constant presence is what metaphysics essentially battles against by opening the possibility of history as a process of completion, of accomplishment, thus assigning to history a biological mechanism, making it function as a natural process. History in its metaphysical understanding is completed in becoming nature, thus reneging itself as history. Metaphysics thus pushes itself to negate its own invention situated in history. The invention of history as completion of a telos ends up completing itself in its own self-effacement. What ultimately is completed, in the sense of liquidated, exhausted and spent, is the idea that something or some Being will bring this process to completion. As Nancy writes: 'the capacity of assumption and absorption of a *terminus ad quem* is exhausted' (CW: 81). Philosophy as metaphysics figured this *terminus ad quem* first as an anamnesic movement through which one recollects an immemorial knowledge, and then, as historical unfolding determined by salvation in its Christian connotation. This exhaustion becomes evident in our world and its absence of sense. A signifying terminal for the world, God, Supreme Being, Organizing Principle or even Humanity, appears now as a metaphysical (philosophical) construction. This opening up happens in philosophy and Nancy identifies it with Heidegger's idea of the 'end of philosophy', understanding with this the end of theoretical constructions that intend themselves as representations or images of the world. The end of philosophy, as the exhaustion of historical completion, of self-fulfillment allows the emergence of an understanding of what Nancy, after Lacoue-Labarthe, calls 'denaturation'. This is the possibility of understanding the problematic nature of every self-positing, 'auto-generating and autotelic' process, in particular that of philosophy as metaphysics. This denaturating principle itself becomes the motif of the entire metaphysical trajectory. Thus truth, the truth of history and the truth of the world, become, in Nancy's words, 'emptied of any "content", of the plethora or the saturation of a completion' (CW: 82). Thus philosophy itself is exposed to its ends, to its limits, to the world, to that which exceeds its autonomy. As Nancy puts it in another text, philosophy now has to do with 'the end of sources, the beginning of the dry excess of sense. No more *parousia*, no more present, attested sense, but a completely different eschatology, another extremity, another excess of sense' (SW: 24). What happens however is not an event, it is not the eruption of an externality. The process is internal to metaphysics itself. Metaphysics is the double designation of an immemorial origin (anamnesis) and a truth forever deferred. As such it

structures itself around a two-faced incompletion, impossibility to begin and to end. On the one hand metaphysics has to insist on an origin that cannot be traced within its history (within history as such) otherwise it would not be the origin that it designates as proper (originating in itself). On the other its completion must lie outside of history, as history's completion, and cannot therefore be brought about by any conceptual gesture, it must descend naturally and remains therefore always too obscure or too evident. Its final truth must exceed history, it must not come *now*, but rests beyond any *now*. Metaphysics thus stretches between these two impossibilities and sets in motion from the outset the thought of its own exhaustion. In other words metaphysics articulates since the beginning the absenting of sense, sense absenting itself from the world. This void is filled with God, with a divine place outside the world, but God also names a void of sense in this world here. The monotheistic God replaces the divine presences, but this replacement does not reinstate a presence, it establishes and immediately displaces an absence of sense. Nancy writes: 'From the outset […] philosophy was the deconstruction of the edifices of a world that shook the mytho-religious world of given meaning, and of full and present truth' (CW: 84). Philosophy as metaphysics begins precisely in emptying the world of gods, in breaking up the solidity of the world (nature plus or equal divine presences) and this becomes then the trajectory of the West. With this gesture philosophy names the opening of sense and the opening of the world in terms of absence. Sense becomes an issue, becomes the issue for the West, precisely because the operation of its absenting has begun. Principles and ends, the meaning of history and of the world, become a theme, a motif, the object of a knowledge and therefore of a technique (it is in this sense that Nancy inscribes metaphysics within technology). This flight opens up sense in an unprecedented way: as impossible past and as deferred future. It is only from the moment where sense is crossed out, where its agents are not visible anymore that it becomes sense. Denaturation is essentially a detachment from given and full sense, which is testified by the emergence of a specific technique for the interrogation of nature. Nature appears only through denaturation, it does not exist in myth. What exists there is the world as a compact solidity (nature + Gods). The understanding of nature as autotelic is a product of metaphysics. The West, but also 'man', thus begins as a technology of meaning, the technological reinscription of nature and gods. When the world is demythified then sense emerges, as the abyss of non-knowing and Socratic/Platonic philosophy is the most daring figure of this. Sense then

only and always emerges as absenting. Nancy writes to this effect that a technology develops at the dawn of metaphysics, a structured logos of 'manipulation of the object "nature" that emerges when the mytho-religious order is disassembled: such a physics is a technology of crossed-out ends, and crossed-out principles' (CW: 87). Philosophy then will be nothing else than a technology, a constant process of detachment, a continuous refinement of the technique that allows man to conquer what is not-given and what is not-yet.

Our obsession with meaning—typical of important sections of our tradition—would be the attempt to reconquer or refashion the mythical world in our world. The process of denaturation itself has no progressive meaning; it rests on the radical autonomy of its development, mastering the non-given and accomplishing the non-made. That Being is not something that *is*, is perhaps the core gesture of this denaturation.

What emerges from the trajectory Nancy draws is that the history of the West, of our world, is the history of an absenting of sense. That sense is absent is the mark of the philosophico-religious curve one has become accustomed to call the West. The fact that our return to the world must begin with the acknowledgment that sense is absent is the properly Western trace. It is not an event, or not simply an event, but the emergence of the Western trajectory as such, an emergence whose evidence explodes precisely as the end of philosophy, or as the break up of a process whose naturality comes under scrutiny. Absence of sense and absence of the world are different names for the same movement: the reopening of Western reason onto itself, the unsettlement of this reason's originary gesture as a gesture that founds itself on nothing, on its own self-legitimization. It should be pointed out that when Nancy writes 'sense' he is not referring to determined significations, but to the possibility of significance, that which opens and inscribes signification. Thus by absence of sense one has to understand the exhaustion of a certain configuration of significance. This configuration is the one that referred the signifying possibilities of the world to another regime of significance, one which was prior to it and governing. At the same time, following the reconstruction of Nancy's argument on denaturation just outlined, this absence is the very production of the West. Absence in this case denotes the flight of the divine presences of myth. It is this second connotation of absence that ultimately generates the submission of the sense of this world to an overarching significance handed down from elsewhere. The cycle could be thus summarized in the following general strokes: metaphysics establishes itself as the exhaustion

of divine presences that inhabit the world; this gesture produces the emergence of a divine principle absent from the world, but controlling its sense. This absenting radicalizes itself to the point where it dissipates its relation to the world; at this point metaphysics ends or reopens itself to face the complete lack of sense it has produced, an absence that was always at stake within its gesture. To this effect Nancy couples the logic of absence with that of impossibility. The creation of sense must be occasioned in the world according to the logic of the impossible. With this gesture Nancy tries to replace the conditions of possibility of experience with experience as conditioned by an impossibility. The world itself is the im-possible, meaning that which does not respond to any condition that is not that of its unfolding and becomes then that which is experienced outside of any subject 'producing' this experience. As Nancy writes: 'Willing the world, but not willing a subject of the world (neither substance nor author nor master')' (CW: 49). The world is thus removed from the conditions of possibility of finite knowledge, and precisely through this is constituted its experience. The world is im-possible, thus it remains always in the possibility of its experience; this should be received and created at the same time, but never determined according to an organizing principle. Experience without conditions is another name for Nancy's thought of the world as impossible. To this effect he writes that this thought has occupied philosophy at least since Kant: 'philosophy after Kant was continuously the thought of an experience of the impossible, that is, the experience of the *intuitus originarius*, or the originary penetration by which there is a world, existences, their "reasons" and "ends"' (CW: 65). The experience of the world is the world itself disengaged from an organizing principle and the conditions of its representation.

If metaphysics has established the absence of sense since its inception and permeated the Western trajectory with this very absence, then the 'death of God' is structurally embedded in our tradition. In other words, the accepted division between classical, Christian and modern periods would be misleading if constructed around three breaking points. Nancy rereads the periods stressing the essential permanence of an unfolding of absence. The beginning of this unfolding, which ultimately leads to our world and to the call to acting in the im-possibility this constitutes, should be rather read in the essential continuity between theism and atheism. The coupling of the two terms explains Nancy's announcement in *The Sense of the World* that the movement of our history is a self-surpassing that delivers us to '"this world here", this world that is to such an extent "here" that

it is definitively beyond all gods and all signifying or signified instances of sense' (SW: 25). This beyond, this im-possibility then 'is to be received (or "let be") and enacted simultaneously. And this simultaneity requires a completely different gesture of thought [...] Can we think of a triviality of sense—a quotidianness, a banality' (SW: 18).

The becoming quotidian of sense and of the world—the measure of this excess and its reception—can be traced in what Nancy calls the self-surpassing of Christianity. As Nancy says it is from the end of philosophy that something like the absenting of sense and this world here announce themselves. The end of philosophy however is not just the exhaustion *of* metaphysics (denunciation of metaphysics' genealogy and culmination of its development); it is also, within this same denunciation, the acknowledgement that it is from within this same regime that the unsettling of the system takes place. Metaphysics is not only in need of surpassing, what it is necessary to show if the critique is to have the force of a return to the world is that metaphysics is self-surpassing. A tracing of its trajectory would then be a tracing of its movement beyond itself. Only thus can a critique really provide the features for an overcoming of the metaphysical closure. At the opposite a critique that aims to provide a purely external point of view would replicate a displaced version of the representational regime the closure already embodies. A successful critique would ultimately show itself in places that are neither those of 'understanding' (the various rationalities and minor enlightenments we constantly encounter) nor those of 'religion' (rigid and compromised), but in 'a passion of sense' (DC: 5) or in this world without sense. But in order for this place to show or rather to become habitable (for it is not hidden and neither submerged, it is in fact too *obvious*) one has to abandon reason for the sake of reason.

The Invention of Distance

The abandonment here in question is one that reacts to the intimidation rationality prescribed for itself. It is modern philosophy's fear of itself, of its own origins that needs to be shrugged off. What this critique needs to open then is the tautology that Christianity inherits and that binds theism and atheism together. The figures of contemporary thought that have touched on this abandonment—chiefly but not solely Nietzsche, Heidegger and Wittgenstein—have all demanded reason or knowledge to go beyond itself, not in view of irrationality, but in view of a turning back,

so to dismantle reason's self-obscurity. This amounts to a demand for an unsettling of what Nancy calls the 'closure of metaphysics'. This expression names for Nancy an originary tautology that represents Being as the presence of beings. Nancy writes that with this gesture, Being as beings, 'metaphysics sets a founding, warranting presence beyond the world (viz., the Idea, Summum Ens, the Subject, the Will). This setup stabilizes beings, enclosing them in their own beingness' (DC: 6). The dual and self-referential system that sustains metaphysics and seals it on itself proceeds from this originary tautology. The movement of simultaneous association and dissociation produces the absenting of the principle that allows for beings' presence, thus creating a realm of proper reality (reality in itself) and a realm of mere emanations (shadows, appearances) of that propriety. Monotheism does not break with this system, at the opposite it radicalizes it and does not therefore constitute a break with this scheme. Metaphysics itself, which for Nancy in this context is synonymous with 'West', 'philosophy', 'reason', 'rational ground' is not born out of a miracle. It is rather the effect of a transformation of man's relation to the world. The unknown or inaccessible, which myth embedded in the world through divine presences, is not illuminated by metaphysics, but becomes part of thought and directs it. The transformation of our relation with the world implies that the inaccessible, no longer embedded in nature, becomes the most striking feature of thought, motivating reason's tension beyond itself. It is through this transformation that the *alogon* became the very quest of logos. That which is incommensurable becomes that which reason craves for. Thus Nancy's deconstruction of Christianity aims not simply at tracing the genealogy of our contemporary world, but at unearthing a number of features that our rational thought has carried with itself until today. This deconstruction is meant to dislodge reason from the obsession with the inaccessible that leads it to identify with it and ultimately to find its limit and its resolution there. It is not just Christianity that speaks in this name, but the constellation of our thought and of what becomes of our relation to the world, including Western emancipation. Christianity assumes upon itself the philosophical idea of the inaccessible and creates a world out of it. As Nancy specifies this other world is simply the other of any world, the inverse of our possibilities. The Christian world in other words is not another entity, but precisely that which cannot be qualified as an entity because unconditioned. This excessive alterity opened at the heart of the world is in a sense the heart of the world

itself, but now assigned to its outside. To reach for this world here one has to travel to the alterity that opens and mobilizes it. The unconditioned, whose demand Christianity reinforces, is that which is greater than thought and which must therefore be thought. This is the exercise according to which reason shows itself capable to think that which exceeds it. In thinking that which exceeds it reason takes it as its ground. The name God then becomes the metonymy for the excess of reason and for the affliction, call it madness, reason produces for itself. The craving for the inaccessible is not something reason can do without, it is as it were the natural impulse of thought to think beyond itself. If this cannot be avoided, what can be avoided is the conclusion that the inaccessible is the other of this world here. Thinking cannot not think something in excess of itself. It is in this sense that Christianity bears the signs not only of the displacement operated by Greece, but of the necessity that defines the modern world of thought: the desire through which man is caught up in its own overcoming. Descartes' quest for certainty wants the same in wanting the knowledge *of* God. This demand therefore does not stop making its force felt with the surpassing of Christianity. What changes or rather what has to change, is our ability to think it, to think man's surpassing of itself. Can we accept this without having to postulate God, an otherworld or divinity?

The answer may seem to come from atheism, but the deconstruction of Christianity as said proceeds precisely from the coupling of theism and atheism, so that the latter cannot be assumed as the liberating force. Atheism rather participates in the metaphysical project. Nancy writes: 'what distinguishes or constitutes the "Greek" is a space of living and thinking that divine presence [...] neither shapes nor marks out' (DC: 14). In order to date this dismissal of *presence* Nancy evokes Xenophanes who already denounced the Olympian Gods in favor of an entity deprived of human attributes. In Xenophanes' words one hears the replacement of a divinity that does not bear resemblance with man, is unmovable but ubiquitous and presides over the sense of the world. In this 'Greece' is the first step toward the constitution of atheism. The change occasioned by 'Greece', the invention of Atheism, replaces an animated world ordered according to a destiny prescribed in founding representations (Hesiod's *Theogony* provides a summary of these representations). In this configuration the divine presences are in the world among everything that is. The question that can be addressed to these gods is who they are, what their distinct qualities consist in (and therefore what kind of sentiment, behavior, thought they provoke and inspire). The divinity is in each of them and in each of them it

is of a different type: what one god can do another cannot. Gods who live in water cannot fly and so on and each god receives an epithet according to its specific qualities. Each divinity takes on a task and its mode individualizes a set of divine attributes. Nancy writes that these divinities belong to both space and time, not as conceptual formulations, but as specific sites and specific ages, 'they are immortal and they have a history. The gods have a history and a geography: they can move off, withdraw, spring up, or decline; they can come, here or there, now or later, and show themselves and not show themselves' (1991: 132). These gods of polytheism live within the world. Polytheism is not the name of a multitude opposed to a unity; it is the name of presences opposed to a principle. It names divinity as a present power, a power that is manifested in specific ways, places and hours, a power that is not mediated by an essence, but whose essence is, so to speak, in the act itself. There are no gods if not present and acting in the world. Gods are not concepts; they are individualized possibilities of the ordered universe. There is in them no substantial divinity, but a divine action. Each god will have its own divine actuality. This multitude of presences ultimately does not refer to one essential divinity, which touches them and grants them their power. There is no divinity outside of this singular presence. These presences are therefore not properly speaking 'gods', they are rather immortal figures, they are as present as everything else, but distributed on a higher or purer level than mortal entities. What these gods lack is what theism invents: ontological distance. The invention of theism presupposes the dismissal of present divinities. The measure of the divinity becomes now its ontological distance from the world. The gods disappear, withdraw and become the names for a series of fictions, and God becomes the conceptualization of distance. This conceptualization of distance implies another movement: once the world is deprived of the divine inhabitation of nature this becomes a system organized by an absent principle. Man and god stop living in the world together, the world becomes the reference that invokes its ground, the alterity that is opened within it. The places of the divine are emptied in favor of a unique principle that organizes the world without existing in it. It is in this transformation of a present divinity expressive of nature into the unity of an organizing principle detached from the world that theism and atheism share their premise. Nancy elaborates on this by proposing two ways in which atheism negates the divine principle. Atheism replaces the transcendental order with an immanent one, which becomes the new repository for ground and telos. This immanent order is called society, history, science,

matter, life or humanity (both as the universality without identity and as the most dense identity, up to the most acute individualism). However the mechanism according to which this immanent principle functions is no less coercive than the transcendent one. The divine will is here often substituted for a human will, a destination toward a specific political design or the retracing of an origin. The name 'people' in the nationalist projects that dominated the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has often become the metonymy for this overarching, overflowing, ultimately transcending immanence (Heidegger, it is well known, fell into this conceptual trap). The second strategy responds instead to a barring of both origin and telos. This deflection of provenance and destination—manifest in the world of (or as) technology and capital—ultimately crafts its own causes and ends, thus reproducing the same gesture that it wants to negate. This particular creation does not proceed toward a specific end, rather it shows the endlessness of the teleological process, showing any teleology as infinite extension of the end. Technology and capital call this infinite teleology with various names such as 'update' or 'accumulation'. These names designate the exacerbation of teleological processes devoid of a clearly identified telos. What is teleological is the process itself, caught in an expansion that it wants infinite. Both technology and capital evoke the erasure of cause and finality in order to make more room for the replacement of these two fixed points by the unending unfolding of their own processes. Only as infinite can the two function and the flexibility both evoke is nothing else than an articulation of their specific teleology. In this sense the erasure at stake in this second atheist negation is more of an infinite reinforcement than an overcoming.

Taking a step back then what binds theism and atheism to each other is thinking's attachment to the unthought, to that which exceeds it. In this excess there is the self-surpassing of reason, a self-surpassing reason cannot reconcile itself with. It takes it either as its own failure or as its necessary limit. The demand that carries thought out of itself—this demand that appears to us as the most modern element—works through theism and atheism in the same way. Both respond to a conceptualization of this self-surpassing, a conceptualization that creates an other to itself, which then founds the world and reason. In this sense atheism is still what bars access to the world, inasmuch as it keeps rephrasing this excess as a paradigm of principles.

This cohesion around the principle of theism (read Monotheism) and atheism has a name and a specific history. While atheism poses the absence of a divine principle, theism postulates the divine principle as absence.

In this couple one finds the encounter between the Greek metaphysical formulations (Plato's *he theos*, but also Aristotle's *unmoved mover*) and Judeo-Christian monotheism. The metaphysical tautology of beings as expressive of Being, which grounds them, is now embedded in the divinity of God. This name represents nothing else than this unity of Being and beings and it is precisely on this unity that the history of God insists. Its divinity is its being one and the attributes of this divinity consist essentially in its ability to absorb within or attribute to itself the role of the grounding of existence. Oneness has absorbed divinity and in this absorption it has already displaced every sense of divine power. Nancy makes one more move: if God is the principle of the world, the Being of beings, then he is also the name or figure that must necessarily bring origination and generation to an end. The principle must evade the logic of the principle, since it must be posited outside of any principle, itself independent of principles. A principle cannot have a 'prior' in anything, it has to be deduced a priori and cannot therefore be presented, thus corroding from within the very logic that sustains it. This communion calls for a different reception of our history.

Monotheism—the unicity of the god—conforms to the idea of an anonymous premise and at the same time seems to resist it. Nancy delineates a number of ways in which this resistance is occasioned, stressing how this double movement of embrace and retraction still guides contemporary thought. Monotheism is the condition of possibility of the West and this can be seen in how atheism essentially doubles it up. That our world is without sense, that we are so to speak without a world order, means also that our time is one in which the possibility of an analysis emerges with the urgency of a demand. This urgency dictates that 'the West—or what remains of it—analyze its own becoming, turn back to examine its provenance and its trajectory, and question itself concerning the process of decomposition of sense to which it has given rise' (DC: 30). The first figure this turning back would see is monotheism as an intrinsic condition rather than an alien protuberance of our civilization. It is still the same compactness, the tautological monism of the one God/Principle that governs our history. In this sense monotheism is at stake even within the most advanced rational modes of our thought. The monotheistic elements of atheism are still for us the most decisive steps in our relation to the world. Nancy asks then what 'resource lies hidden' (DC: 34) within this mono? What lies hidden underneath the

configuration of this mono that links theism and atheism is the possibility to move beyond our alleged, but failed break with Monotheism and therefore to produce (or accept) a real break, one which furthermore would exclude a 'return' to monotheism. Under the dialectical tension between a denial of Monotheism and a return to it lies the possibility to think this world here, to bear the touch of sense, 'not "to arrive at the constitution of an originary signification", but to hold the step of thought suspended over this sense that has already touched us' (SW: 11). This touch of sense is for Nancy what must be recuperated and invented at the same time, for it forms both the 'buried origin and the imperceptible future' (DC: 34) of our world.

This enquiry will lead us to show that what survives of the divine in the world is that which has always been worldly in the divine.

Folding and Unfolding

Monotheism develops and unfolds according to a movement that lodges its own dislodgement. Monotheism self-surpasses itself until today. We are in its shadow, in the shadow of the breaking apart of the *mono*. Nancy lists five main conditions according to which Christianity's unfolding is in fact a folding.

Monotheism presents a God whose divinity amounts to its absence. As Nancy writes, 'in its principle Monotheism undoes […] the presence of the power that assembles the world and assures this sense' (DC: 36). Faith is then loyalty to this absence, to the impossibility of witnessing an assurance. Faith holds on to nothing, to no presence or emanation of presence, it is the ability to hold on to where there is nothing to hold on to. If there is faith there is an act of acceptance that nothing will corroborate, no countersignature will provide ultimate confirmation or deliverance.

Monotheism inscribes itself within human history. Rather than resting on the fertility of a mitopoiesis, it allies itself from the start with the human condition and provides this with a symbolic apparatus. Nancy reads in other words the 'question of the conquest by man of his own destination' (DC: 37) as a further penetration of monotheism (and Christianity in particular) into reason.

Monotheism assumes itself as a constellation of various alternatives. With Christianity this constellation accepts not only historical alternatives, but mobilizes different conceptual areas. As Nancy puts it 'this divided

unity of self, characteristic of monotheism most properly, and thus also most paradoxically, makes up the unity of the unique god […] this god divides himself—even atheizes himself—at the intersection of monotheism' (DC: 38).

Considering then this composite character monotheism establishes an infinite self-relation that escapes fulfillment. A further condition follows from this: pushed by its subjective structure to relate to itself in search of propriety and identity, Monotheism is engaged in a continuous rectification of its assumptions and of its mode. This self-scrutiny expresses a tension for a return to a purer form. It is to this effect that Nancy traces the double movement of Christianity, on the one hand affirmation (a system of powers and mechanisms to enforce it) and on the other abandonment (of itself, of its own affirmation, of its own self) that exposes that affirmation to the impossibility of its realization precisely in the places where it is realizing itself.

The configuration briefly sketched by Nancy according to the five elements through which Monotheism can be seen to fold through its very unfolding offers a way to think the world without sense. This world without sense, our world, is not then simply the explosion of the new, the event that deflagrates 'today'; its long history has been covered up within the metaphysical tautology and its displacement in God as organizing principle. In order to be able to relate to the world, one has therefore to follow this trajectory, for, as Nancy writes, without this 'it is impossible to consider seriously, henceforth, the question of the sense of the world such as the West has given it to us as heritage—or as escheat' (DC: 39). The problematic nature of the modern can only be read in conjunction with the problematic nature of its break from the Monotheistic tradition. This break has not been effected yet, precisely because the interruption (whose name is often knowledge or reason) sustains itself on a denial. In other words a surpassing of monotheism by atheism has not been occasioned yet because atheism has not been able to think its indebtedness to and contemporaneity with monotheism. Thus as modernity has pervaded the world we have lost the opportunity to think what this project represses of itself in order to be able to understand itself as a radical interruption. The truth of the modern world, that sense is not given, that the world is without principle, should be put to the test of its provenance. Without the depth this provenance gives to the idea of our world we remain unable to accept what is already ours. This denial is often repeated even in those analyses that do indeed retrace the trajectory of the emergence

of the modern. Here the Jew-Greek element is always prioritized while the Christian reference (the interlocking of Judaism, Hellenism and the Roman) is sidelined. When looking at our tradition one is often moved to focus on the miscegenation of the scriptural element with the philosophical one that runs between Judaism and Greek metaphysics. This gesture is no doubt useful inasmuch as it prepares the way for an analysis that turns from original purity to contamination and derivation, aporetic constructions, silenced provenances and the impossibility of monolithic destinations. Jew-Greek speaks of a dual (at least dual) generative process, that as a consequence disowns the very idea of the originary and its techniques. Because of this composition the Jew-Greek forms a unity that is already immediately divided and whose division accompanies its very attempt to form a solidarity with itself. To understand the Jew-Greek as our very history is therefore to understand that history as always caught in a contradictory movement, where every linear progressive advance is internally displaced. However between these two the Christian element, which absorbs them and passes them onto us, is yet to be thought. Christianity and the West form the unity whose decomposition the modern inherits. This inheritance is not a simple interruption, a new beginning. The modern inhabits this decomposition, rather than being its consequence. In order to see what this inhabitation produces one has to accompany it to its limit and from that limit to find 'a provenance of Christianity deeper than Christianity itself' (DC: 143). This *an-archism* of Christianity as the heart of Western thought should in turn produce a thought of what Nancy calls 'horizontality', the distension and opening of sense.

The operation named here becomes crucial precisely because Christianity understands its genesis as the integration of what precedes it. Judaism, Hellenism and Romanity are absorbed in Christianity and therein recapitulated. This recapitulation defines the Christian element as caught in a continuous act of self-transcendence. Christianity's unfolding is strictly linked with a faith that embraces history, a historical faith. Faith is deposited in the very movement of a history between the antecedence it constantly tries to reflect itself into and the progress that infinitely defers the arrival of its truth. Christianity as subject is a historical subject, one in progressive distension, therefore not religious, if by religious we understand genesis as absolute happening and 'salvation' as access to a mystery, that which our eyes are closed to. The eyes of Christianity are open and open to history, in the face of history, a backward glance that activates a progress.

Nancy offers a rather compressed formulation for this: the Christian revelation can be summarized as '*complete sense in which there is no longer any sense*' (DC: 147). This dense passage requires a clarification. The intrinsic historical structure of Christianity informs it with a double understanding of itself: on the one hand it stretches back to find its sense (its content) and on the other it stretches forward to announce that its sense (its truth) is not just yet to come, but precisely in this 'to come'. Thus it embodies sense's double connotation, both as content and as tension, movement. Its sense is both the direction in which it travels to find itself and the promise that sense will open up history by opening itself up, by finally revealing itself. Not simply then the two, direction and content, but the two together, *content as direction*. The opening of its sense (content) resides in the deferral of this fulfillment, in the progressive unfolding of sense. The Christological event is another figure for this: the presence of sense, occasioned in this world, is not the end of sense, it is rather the institution of one more passage. Once God becomes present as man (Nancy writes *un*to man) this presence produces another forward direction, toward a second coming. Presence does not complete sense, it pushes its demand even further, it stands as a testimony of more opening, or of one more opening. With the advent of Christ, Christianity does not reveal the end of its historicity or the end of the revelation in a content that fulfills it, it conflates passage and presence into one. The event 'Christ' reveals that nothing will be revealed the opening of revelation itself, the fact that one is engaged in constant revelation, that sense is that which reveals itself. In this paradox, sense is completed, there is no more sense, apart from its opening toward nothing in particular, 'no-thing'. Complete sense would then be a formula for the exhaustion of sense as something that can be located and received, absorbed and used. Sense's beginning becomes a task, in need of creation and re-creation. That sense is completed means that it begins at its limit, when every assumption of given sense functions simply as a trigger for more opening. The sense of sense, as revealed by Christianity, resides in the revelation of excess as its most eminent feature. Every presence therefore is bound to trace and launch again a passage. 'There is no longer any sense' is the announcement proper of Christianity and its lesson is that we are caught in this: sense offers itself as infinite renewal. The content of sense is its directionality. No determination or figure can satisfactorily exhaust this content. Even speaking of 'the Open as such' is ultimately insufficient, since such an expression runs the risk of replacing and reproducing the logic of the principle. Nancy

explains it in more descriptive terms in *Adoration:* 'revelation does not unveil anything that is hidden: it reveals insofar as it addresses, and this address constitutes what is revealed. […] It is not a question of learning a doctrinal corpus, but of responding' (AD: 41). What Christianity and all monotheisms of the revelation proclaim in announcing a revelation is already its end, not as fulfillment but as eternal suspension of fulfillment. The truth that Christianity reveals and opens up is not the content of a principle, but the opening up of truth. Nancy adds that this truth assumes and delivers 'no doctrine or preaching. It is not the truth of any adequation or unveiling. It is the simple, infinite truth of the suspension of sense: an interruption, for sense cannot be completed, and an overflowing, for it does not cease' (AD: 41). A message will be transmitted, but what is transmitted is the demand of transmission, not a particular content, but content as transmission. The revelation then is essentially not the unveiling of an object at the end of a quest, neither this object's springing into vision, but the mechanism of sense, which lifts the veil to reveal another veil. One could try to revert the formula: sense reveals itself, its own structure, as that of a constant revealing. Revelation understood this way would then be deprived of any object, it would be that which escapes every relation to an object and substitutes for this a relation to itself that is at the same time the abandonment of self-sameness. Sense is always in front of us, obvious, but 'in the sense of ob-vious, that which precedes us on the path, that which comes to meet us and which thus opens the path, but which nonetheless does not interrupt the road by the illumination of a revelation' (SW: 16). This de-limitation of sense as the heart of Christian dogma is the very missing element of the Western world, of our world as that of the absence of sense. It is thus this understanding of Christianity as the proclamation of the opening of sense that pervades the articulation of our thought.

If Christology forms the central testimony of this development, it remains to be seen how Christology essentially absorbs and releases a philosophical concatenation that still concerns us at the end of metaphysics. Christology understood as incarnation is the setting into play, in a new configuration, of the Greek thought of essence, substance, *ousia*. The *homoousia* is the sharing of the same substance between the Father and the Son. Nancy writes that the presence (*parousia*) of the consubstantiality (*homoousia*) represents the philosophical reopening of substance as that which is present and presents itself. Thus the heart of Christianity is a reelaboration of what with Heidegger we could call the 'ontological

difference'. The remoteness of God is already understood in terms of philosophical substance, but this remoteness is also presenting itself and therefore also opening up relation, as the condition of existence, the opening onto self-excess that existence is. In *Adoration* Nancy links the thought of incarnation to the absence of ground that Christianity prepares. Incarnation becomes a name for the task of making sense that befalls us. As Nancy puts it 'the world's sense is that we are charged with sense; and yes, the truth of sense is neither completion nor significant plenitude, but rather a suspense whereby sense is at once interrupted and infinitely relaunched' (AD: 52). The resemblance that incarnation designates distinguishes man in creation; it makes of him the trace of the creator, the trace that dedicates the world to its creator. The created world is marked therefore by that which remains withdrawn and by the withdrawal of the origin. Our world is the world immediately consigned to a lack of origin.

Faith and sin provide further evidence to this construction. Faith is pure loyalty to the infinity of sense, an act that actualizes itself. Sin is the name for the indebtedness that existence contracts from the start, the fact that we are from the start in relation to something, opened and obliged to the other. Sin is the debt contracted by nothing else but existing, individuation. Sin is an original condition because individuation instantly negates our opening to the other. It is therefore the original condition of that which cannot help but be singular and therefore required to open to otherness, demanded to spend a life in debt. In a sense it is the original demand that existence does not close off onto itself. Sin is a relation to the self and is therefore at once that which accuses and causes the self. God is the name that bridges all these moments and that manifests how Christianity addresses the person in its tension and historical becoming. Nancy writes that 'the life of the living God is auto-affection' (DC: 156). This auto-affection means that God is the name for the insurrection of a relation, of man presenting itself to man, delivering itself to the opening up of sense and receiving this infinite reopening as its most proper task. Man assigns itself to the excess that sense is. With God man takes on the task of excess as its most intimate assignation. This is again the excess of the *alogon*, which with Christianity configures itself in a threefold structure: as presentation of the excess of sense, the indebtedness of existence to relation; and adhesion to an act that surpasses its agent and becomes reception. Thus Christianity already names man's ability to bear exposition to what cannot be appropriated. This is why Nancy closes his deconstruction with these words: 'it would be a matter of thinking the limit (that is the Greek sense of *horizo*: to limit,

to restrict), the singular line that "fastens" an existence, but that fastens it according to the complex graph of an opening' (DC 157).

Faith in the World

Our faith in the world—reconceived by Nancy starting with Christianity and from there posited as the evidence of our opening to the task of the world as the task of making sense—tells us what becomes of our world. Nancy reads the question of faith starting from the Epistle of James in the New Testament and interrogates the epistle concerning the origin of homoiosis. In his reading of James, God becomes the first giver. As a giver God—'Father of lights'—doesn't offer something in particular, but the possibility of things. Adopting the Derridean logic of the gift (the genuine gift must reside outside of the oppositional demands of giving and taking, Derrida asks 'is not the gift, if there is any, also that which interrupts economy?' [1992: 7]) Nancy writes that God withholds itself by giving this possibility. The logic of the gift thus understood and the logic of man's resemblance to God are therefore one and the same. What God gives in giving resemblance to man is the mark through which or in which it withdraws. The mark indicates the reception of the gift, opens man up to that receptivity, grace, which should equal the gift. Thus to be in the image of God is to be able to give oneself over to the gift, to give one's reception and enter the joy of this abandon. Homoiosis amounts to the ability to abandon oneself to what one receives without apprehending. This possibility is precisely what man receives (in a sense without receiving anything, not a thing, if not reception itself) as faith. This abandonment consists in faith's works ('I will show you my faith by my works' [DC: 51]). Nancy warns the reader not to take 'work' here as productivity, but as a general 'praxis' understood as the being-in-act of an agent not directed at a particular object. The works of faith are not specific tasks and duties the faithful should fulfill in order to prove and test his/her faith, but the tension that makes up existence. Faith is in the works because it is a 'tending toward' that does not attend to anything. There is in this idea of 'works' the mark of an excess with regard to the agent and his/her production. In acting with faith the agent becomes more than he/she is. The agent reveals itself as inadequate to faith and that is faith's work. If this is the case then the structure of faith is not that of an adherence to a set of beliefs or the postulate of a superior knowledge. As Nancy writes this faith is convinced of nothing but itself and it has

nothing 'with which to convince itself […] Faith consists in inadequation to itself as a content of meaning' (DC: 53). Thus it is neither naïve nor dogmatic; it is that which gives itself over to a self-incommensurability. It is in this opening to an otherness without presentation, resting simply on reception deprived of an object to be received, that the faithful installs his works. Faith names here one's abandonment as the projection at the heart of sense as pure directionality, dismissive of any assigned content. God's occasioning of faith through the gift of receptiveness delivers the faithful to the sense of sense, not a deposited truth to be reached, not a task to be accomplished, but the adherence to receiving that which exceeds meaning and signification and therefore makes them possible. The faithful is caught in this tension: truth is always an outside, willingness to be exposed, letting oneself be exposed to the making of sense and of the world. Nancy writes: 'the *nomos* is thus the following: that we are only liberated by the truth that does not belong to us, that does not devolve to us, and that makes us act according to the inadequation and the inappropriation of its coming' (DC: 55–56). Thus faith, rather than being the dogmatic adherence to a set of postulates that testify to the one God's presence already presents the structure of this world as that which necessarily adheres only to itself and in so doing truly becomes world, deprived of representations and orders. This world is deprived of given senses, but given to sense. Faith is the articulation of this relation to sense. Thus an affirmation of faith would not in principle be foreign to an affirmation of this world, once we understand faith as one of the self-surpassing gestures of Christianity, adherence to nothing. The deconstruction of onto-theology, which speaks the end of metaphysical representations, is not in opposition to an affirmation of faith. This is what Nancy reads in the work of one of his teachers, Gérard Granel. It is with Granel that a connection manifests itself between the excess of reason and the theological as its allegory. It is not by chance therefore that Granel appears in the epigraph of the Nancy's *The Sense of the World*. This name touches in fact both extremities of that sense, the metaphysical and the theological stages, and attempts to move within and beyond both with a thought that thinks the human as the formality of a response to the world. Nancy explicitly addresses this ontological question buried under the term 'faith' when he writes that 'Granel undertakes to pursue as far as possible a thinking of the ontological void, the "emptying out of being"' (DC: 63–64). This emptying out is in fact a retracing of the Heideggerian motif of the unsubstantiality of Being: Being is the taking place of a being, it is exposed in the singularity of a

being and leaves nothing behind (in Heidegger's text on Leibniz Being is said to belong together with play [1996b: 112]). The elaboration of this motif according to the act of faith is Granel's (and Nancy's) attempt to move beyond Heidegger's care. Our apprehension of things through care is 'too active', it weakens the things it acts upon.

In his analysis of Granel's 'Essay on the Ontological Kenosis of Thought since Kant' Nancy focuses on the term *kenosis*, a Greek term that originates from the verb κενόω "to empty out", repeatedly used in the New Testament. This word opens up the two main registers of the text, the philosophical and its theological displacement. It is the movement that from philosophical discourse leads to Monotheism and from this back into philosophy that allows us to envisage the thinking for the world today. What is in view for Nancy and Granel and for Nancy's Granel is a thought of this world here, one that is obstructed by our inability to think metaphysics and Christianity not only as self-surpassing but as a belonging together to the same self-overcoming. It is for both a matter of confronting the '"stubbornness of Substance" within the entire tradition' (DC: 66). Granel responds to stubborness with a 'poetry of the World'. It is worth here quoting the passage by Granel at length for it will serve as a guide for the rest of the discussion:

> It is always a detail, and nothing but a detail in the immense population of things that provokes this infinitesimal suspension: the cry of a harrier streaking the gray sky, a sudden chill that sends me back inside my skin; on another day a warm wind caressing my hair […] One will probably say that all this concerns the poetry of the World, and that philosophy is not poetry. For my part, I would say that there reigns her, in what writing is pointing toward, nothing less than a logic of phenomenality, a fabric of unsuspected a prioris that readily put to shame the formula we used earlier ("the presence of the real") just as much as the one metaphysics utilizes ("Substance"). (DC: 164).

It is always the singular emergence of the world that brings about not only the poetry of the World, but the world *as* poetry. The world as originary opening of the possibility of phenomena that is not however the establishing of a grounding field, but the fabric that each singularity weaves and tears apart each time. That the world is poetry also indicates that its sense is that which cannot be grasped in its essence, precisely because every essentiality is immediately displaced and outmaneuvered by the singular existence. Another name Granel uses for the world as

poetry is 'the Ungraspability of Being'. This ungraspability thinks a whole that is not a whole, a formality without form (Nancy would recapture this motif of formality in his *Drawing Pleasure*), a sensibility that does not affect and is not affected by a specific sensation, all that is not the All. It thinks the loyalty we owe to this strangeness that takes hold of language and makes it speak of 'a prioris' that are contemporaneous with their spending and nonetheless reach further ahead. This poetry has nothing mysterious, but names 'the withdrawal of the "how"' that occurs in the fabric of the world and makes up that fabric as one not of monstration but at the opposite of essential reserve of the World. The world as poetry is the fact that this reserve, this holding back, modesty or poverty, can be named as the world's upsurging that withdraws the possibility to name something beneath the surface of this upsurging. If poetry of the world means something for philosophy then it would indicate the excess of this upsurge and at the same time the rich poverty of the surface: the world is all there and yet withdrawn, constantly in view and yet withdrawn from any representation. The emptiness that Granel names would then be a figure for the plenitude of the world, each time new and each time abandoned to its singular occasion. This understanding of the world presupposes a double movement: on the one hand there is no appropriation of the world on 'my' part and on the other no sending on the part of the world toward me. The encounter, if one wants to name it so, takes place as what Granel calls the 'hollow of the seen'. Our relation to the world is not a relation to something in particular, it is a blind spot, which cannot be assumed or recaptured or thematized as something and that cannot therefore form the site of a representation. Speaking with a Kantian accent Granel writes that the world 'ultimately disappears the moment I distribute it into a matter and a form, parts and a whole, things and qualities, substances and actions' (DC: 165). For this reason Granel moves away from the thinking of reality, from reality as present or as presence toward what he calls, 'a cartography of the void' (DC: 166). This cartography ultimately attempts to do away with things, or at least to replace their objecthood—their standing there—with a more an-archic mode that could lead thought beyond Heidegger's pragmatic of care. Thus the sky becomes a crucial figure here, because the sky never presents itself as something, as a thing, but always as a perceptual difference. The Heideggerian *da* is then not just a being-there, but the *there*, being-the-there. This *The there* that I am is what makes possible the appearing of the world, without presupposing or supposing any core

real that would provide a reflection, simply opening up the formality of appearing. This formality is in itself not an abstract schema, but the forming of the form. This is the ontological site itself, a site that is never filled and never constructed, but also that never rests on anything, not even on itself, it is a hollow, an absence, a blind spot. Nancy then expands on what Granel leaves unsaid by writing: 'The principle of the world is set or *poised* on this void: nothing else organizes it' (DC: 68). Having attempted to deconstruct not just subjectivity but an entire representative regime, Granel concludes:

> Wanting to know more about this would be like wanting to enter into the creative act of God. What then! - might we say, on the contrary that the invention of a divine creation is only a flight, on our part, from all that is terrible in the pure and simple finitude of Being itself? (DC: 173–174).

We can know nothing about this blind spot as organizing principle; that is why it is a matter of entering into an act of creation. There is in Granel a set of references to God that, Nancy suggests, should be taken care of since they signal a possible confusion. This confusion is dispelled once we distinguish 'that which, in Christianity, proceeds from an outside of the world (God coming into the world, God remaining inaccessible to the world)' (DC: 71) from the formality of the world. This is not outside the world. It is the world's opening within itself, where this within constitutes also the world's constant referring to itself, that which the world keeps in reserve. The difficulty in distinguishing these two comes down ultimately to that which within Christianity anticipates the thought of the void proposed by Granel or to that which composes the exhaustion of the Christian organization of a divine principle absent from the world. The opening of the world for Granel clearly has no reference to an external substance. Nancy reads the reference to the divine as contained 'in' the world. *The world itself is divine*. How can such a thought pass? The divine here names the alterity that opens in the world to the world. The opening of an alterity in the world is the conceptualization of the *alogon*, of the excess man cannot not think, the experience of the world. In another passage Nancy names this very opening of the alterity of the world as the project of Christianity itself (DC: 10). When he writes that this thought runs through the entirety of modern thought he has this constant confrontation in mind. Beside Nietzsche and Heidegger the name that returns most frequently, is that

of Wittgenstein. The intersection is here explicit. Granel was a reader and translator of Wittgenstein and his conceptualizations of the world always evoke Wittgenstein (the text by Granel from which Nancy quotes for the exergue of *The Sense of the World*, 'Le Monde et son expression' is largely a reflection on Wittgenstein). Nancy often returns to this Wittgensteinian expression from the *Tractatus*: 'the sense of the world must lie outside the world', which continues: 'In the world everything is as it is and everything happens as it does happen' (2001: 86). Of this expression Nordmann writes in his introduction to the *Tractatus*, 'the sense of the world must lie outside this knowable world of representation. This "outside" need not be a mystical realm of the "higher". It is […] a world in which we are invested as makers of sense' (2005: 170). Nancy comments that this decisive question of an opening within the world that institutes an alterity at its heart cannot be understood as a property applied to the world from elsewhere, but as the fact that there are some things and their co-appearance makes sense. The expression comes back in successive texts. In *Creation of the World* Nancy rephrases his response to Wittgenstein as follows: 'the world in itself does not constitute an immanence of meaning; since there is no other world the "outside" of the world must be open "within it", but open in a way that no other world could be posited there' (CW: 52). This sense is the outside that opens right in the middle of the world, right in the middle of us as 'sense makers'. This outside-within does not subsume this world here to an overarching signification ('no other world could be posited there') that would conclude it; it simply opens the world as that whose sense cannot be grasped according to any particular signification. Meaning here stands for the possibility of signification as such, the possibility that there is reference, a direction of sense and a content of sense. In *Dis-Enclosure* the expression becomes the necessary consequence of the world that has become mundane and that has reached its peak of extension (DC: 5). However this necessity is precisely what needs to be found or whose place still needs to be thought. In *Adoration* then Nancy retraces this thought with more descriptive strokes, 'Wittgenstein is not calling on any representation or conception of "another world": he is asking that the outside be thought and grasped in the midst of the world' (AD: 24). To think the divine within the world means precisely to think the world as its own gap, as a relation to the inappropriability of its sense, meaning and signification, the deferral of conclusion imposed by the *alogon*.

Unreasonable Reason

The insistence on the divine as *alogon* is a way to refer everything back to reason. This referral to what reason has tried to repress subtends the Nancean project of a deconstruction of Christianity. The terminological evaluation Nancy embarks on is aimed at exposing reason to itself and to what it has repressed. What reason has repressed is what constitutes it, the human, and the human as it pronounces words like 'faith', 'God', 'resurrection', 'divine'. The return Nancy advocates is to a world that reason has made unreasonable (inhuman) in trying to push the unreasonable away, rather than thinking it through. Reason has made the world unreasonable by transforming the craving for the *alogon*, for the unthinkable that thinking thinks, into a Divine Substance and then into a Ground of Rationality. The opening inside was built into a world outside, so that this world here was freed of it, but only to become dependent. Nancy wants the divine—if this is the name we want to keep, but perhaps it is simply due to a lack in our metaphoric economy—to be retraced in the world. This divine is the thought of the world as an opening, as a gap into which fall all attempts to know or master its final sense. In this gap there is a liberating energy, inasmuch as our obsession with meaning and with principles, with origins and causations, with guarantees and certainty, with celestial or natural backing, is put back into play, rather than being assumed and absolved. Nancy writes that the invitation that comes from Wittgenstein (but also from Nietzsche and Heidegger and ultimately from Christianity itself) amounts to paying the debt we owe to ourselves:

> Whereas Enlightenment reason, and following it the reason of the world of integral progress, judged it necessary to close itself off to all dimensions of the "outside", what is called for now is to break the enclosure in order to understand that it is from reason and through reason that the pressure […] of the relation with the infinite outside comes about, and does so in this very place. Deconstructing Christianity means opening reason to its very own reason and perhaps to its unreason. (AD: 24–25)

The divine is the name of this gap within the world and names that which is not a thing, does not stand in front of us as an object of knowledge and does not give itself to intellectual synthesis. Nancy writes 'the "birth of the divine" as the dawn of the world' (DC: 72). This dawn implies though not only an opening, but a delimiting. The opening is not itself just open, but offers itself for delimitation, it offers itself to perceptual

discernment. How do we accede to that of which we should not want to know more? The answer is contained in a gesture that is more and less than knowledge (shall we say acknowledgment?), because in its act there is neither the emergence of a subject nor that of an object, but relation as delimitation of the outside-within. The gesture that accepts unreason, the *alogon* or the strange is the courage (a masterstroke in Granel's text) of reason beyond its own self-intimidation and therefore beyond a world compressed into the knowledge of an object. This knowledge requires 'a thinking given over to that which comes to it from elsewhere because from nowhere' (DC: 73). This relation to the world is not intimidated by the unthought, by what thinking cannot but think. It does not want to transform this unthought into an object, it does not want the knowledge of God, but touches upon the finite knowledge of man, has the courage to receive the nothing that delimits and opens up reason to itself.

This thought demands that we ask 'anew what the world wants of us and want we want of it' (CW: 35). Elsewhere Nancy calls this opening the dynamic relation (which is not a dialectic) between finite and infinite. Recalling a Wittgensteinian expression once again, 'the infinite doesn't rival the finite. The infinite is that whose essence is to exclude nothing finite' (PR: 138). Nancy reads finitude not as the lack or the limit of infinity, but as the condition of the opening of and to the infinite. The world in this sense is the opening of everything toward everything and that is its infinity, it is 'divine'. The thought of the opening serves to undo the logic of the principles, but also should bar the way to representations, liberating the world from 'worldviews'. This thought asks us to exit our 'worldviews', not simply because they are politically and ideologically murderous, but because they perpetuate, this time through the solidity of a granitic immanence, the very gesture of the most vertical transcendence. To this effect Nancy writes:

> A world 'viewed', a represented world is a world dependent on the gaze of a subject of the world. […] Even without a religious representation such a subject, implicit or explicit, perpetuates the position of the creating, organizing, and addressing (if not the addressee) God of the world. (CW: 40)

The trajectory can now be spelled in its constitutive terms: the excess of reason calls man toward the infinite. Metaphysics, including its Christian incarnation, have understood this excess as an infinity that forms the

ground or elsewhere of this world here, thus displacing this world and negating its existence. In wanting to break up with Christianity and the 'religious' modernity has closed itself off in a set of radical immanences that fail to address the excess while this resurfaces in modernity's very discoveries ('nation', 'society', 'people'). It is a matter of understanding how the excess of reason, reason's very ex-istence, produces the assignation of infinity to the outside. This gesture demands that instead of pushing the infinite outside or closing ourselves from it, we address it again as the very without reason and without completion of our finite world.

This discourse is a rephrasing of what has so far been called passage (the passage engenders presence which in turn is nothing but a passage). The world outside representation—the infinite now taking place, absorbed within the world—is precisely a world without a subject of this representation. In other words it is a world without God. A world without God was announced within the very constitution of monotheism. Atheism and theism were created together and with them the idea of an opening in the world (an other world is always an other of the world understood as a totality of beings). This formation gives rise to what Nancy calls 'mondanization', world-becoming, which is not 'a mere "secularization"' (CW: 44) (it doesn't make much sense to speak of Nancy as a post-secular, our tradition is itself 'secular', a constant entrance into the secular). The world of Christianity 'the world as created and fallen, removed from salvation and called to self-transfiguration, had to become the site of being and/or beings as a whole, reducing the other world therein' (CW: 44). In the rationalist tradition this transition becomes most apparent. The modern world, which is born there, reopens the questions laid down by Christianity and while providing transcendent accounts already addresses the world of immanent circulations. In the rationalist tradition, the God of onto-theology encountered the world as the element that provided a new leap in its self-deconstructive movement. This operation can be seen to play a part in Descartes' *Third Meditation*, where creation and preservation are said to be the same. The God of continuous creation is a God that acts within the world. In this as in other cases (Nancy invokes Spinoza, Malebranche and Leibniz, but one could add at least Giordano Bruno) the God that was the subject of a represented world, a world as representation, lost its independent existence, even its existence absconditum, and merged with its creature. What this God lost was precisely its subjectivity, becoming instead the

contingent and necessary existence of the world, not the Supreme-Being but being-world, the world in the act of existing without external reference. This was there since the beginning, since the conceptualization of the excess of reason. The existence of the Absolute already introduced the world's absolute existence.

Privation and Privilege

Finite existence has always been thought according to a privative connotation. This is also the position assumed by atheism. Finitude understood as our (intellectual) lack, as our insufficiency, our privation, contingency, imperfection, leaves room for finitude understood as our condition, that which is necessary to affirm. Nancy writes that finitude 'is not the being-finished-off' (SW: 29); finitude is not a ruin, a consummation to which we could oppose a boundless infinity. Unless we think finitude outside of its being-deprived we are still within the realm of metaphysics or rather within a history of God. The history of God runs parallel to that of finitude and has so far engulfed it. We are capable of thinking finitude only as the negative reversal of what we think under the name God. Finitude still lacks consistency and it can't have any because once it is thought as privation it acquires its consistency only in a relation of dependence from an infinite ground. Once this thought has been set in motion then the counterbalance to this inconsistent privation must be a being that is absolutely consistent, 'the pure immanence of a pure transcendence' (SW: 30–31). This pure transcendence comes then to be deprived of all existence and the efforts of Descartes to prove the existence of God from a finite existent (himself, man) stand as evidence to this. Thus one is confronted with this situation: finitude as privation acquires its consistency from a being lacking in existence. Existence is constantly awaiting to be completed by that which does not exist. With regard to the question of the world this translates: the world does not exist unless one can confirm the existence of that which by definition, in order to be what it is, must be perfectly outside of the realm of existence. The tension thus structures itself as follows: the perfect Being completes the finite, that is, existence, but in order to be perfect it must be said to have nothing of what is imperfect, that is, existence. Not only finitude then has always been thought in terms of privation, but also existence, completed in return by an essence which must be removed from all existing. This God has completed itself even before any existence; it is pure essence. The

analysis just sketched aims to show how privation ultimately annuls not only itself, but the entire construction it is supposed to depend on. The thought of privation drags even the Supreme Being into nullity. If privation ends up canceling everything out, Nancy to the contrary asks us to think of the finite world as that which essentially affirms (finitude is Nietzsche's *eternal yes*). What does this affirmation amount to? Finitude should be understood first of all prior to any essence that would commence the work of privation. Finitude affirms itself because it carries existence beyond essence and in so doing carries essence away. Finitude rather than privation is this play of existence, or as Heidegger says 'the play in which humans are engaged throughout their life, that play in which their essence is at stake' (1996b: 113). With this play the essence is precisely at stake, not sealed within itself and at the same time dispatched elsewhere, but thrown into existence. Rather than invoking the notion of play Nancy speaks of finitude as privilege and one can hear in the choice of this term the very reversal of privation. Both indicate the *privus* and both signal the mark of a separation. While in privation this mark resonates with the idea of a being separated from what is essentially one's own, privilege designates the law of the singular, the exception and the insurgence of the singular. Privilege is therefore the privation of nothing, but the coming of the singular. Finitude affirms this: that there is a world is a matter of letting the singular emerge; this emergence is also an affection, therefore a task. Nancy concludes then that finitude is affirmed also as creation and that this creation by itself, immediately reneges every creator, naming simply the toward the world, 'insofar as the world is the configuration or constellation of being-toward in its plural singularity' (SW: 33). To think of creation is to think of what finitude affirms. So what is at stake here is a leap beyond atheism, there where this term balances itself too much on the privative 'a', but also man's faithfulness to reason. Something in reason addresses us toward an opening of reason and as long as we take the abolition of God in atheism to be this overcoming we have not moved any closer to this opening. We remain as it were caught in a closure produced by the rationalist tradition and traditional epistemology. To be really atheological we have to suspend atheism and look for the world, we have to suspend the intimidation of reason and acknowledge the opening.

At this point it is worth hearing Nancy reformulate the question as to what the world asks of us and what we ask of the world:

> How can this be considered in an actual relation with the world, or rather with what happens to us as a dissipation of the world in the bad infinite of a 'globalization' in a centrifugal spiral behaving like the expanding universe described by astrophysics, all the while doing nothing else than circumscribing the earth more and more in a horizon without opening or exit? How are we to conceive of, precisely, a world where we only find a globe, an astral universe, or an earth without sky. (CW: 47)

The first gesture would be precisely to recapture the sky. As Jean-Luc Godard says to his friend in *Lettre à Freddy Buache* (1982), it is a matter of urgency and of a sky whose light quickly dissipates, or better said, passes: 'often the police stopped us when we are shooting the other day. We had stopped on the side of the highway and they said: "You can't stop there unless it is an emergency." We replied: "It is an emergency, the light, it is only going to last ten seconds"'.[1] It is a matter of recuperating the urgency of this sky that disappears, of a light that only lasts ten seconds. This is not the sky of original principles and ultimate ends. It is a sky that informs and is informed by a completely different kind of vision, a vision that lasts ten seconds and that calls us for an urgent response. Thought must have the measure of this ten seconds and the urgency they require. This urgency is not that of fixing the passage, but of accompanying its passing.

To think this passage means to think the world otherwise than as a given totality of prearranged, consumed and measured significations. Nancy writes that this 'world is always a creation' (SW: 41), the constant exercise of a relation to the totality of sense, a new Spinozan 'beatitudo'. There is no reward for the act, no 'end' to the act, the act itself makes its own sense actual, opening up sense altogether, *making sense*.

To regain then the measure of a world that structures itself in excess of both knowledge and the significations this knowledge produces, to contrast the dissipation of the world into a bad infinity, one must regain control of the idea of creation as the infinity within the world. In Nancy's diagnosis we are faced on the one hand with a tradition that decomposes

[1] 'Souvent la police est venue nous arrêter quand on tournait l'autre jour. On s'était arrêté sur le côté de l'autoroute, et puis ils nous ont dit: "Vous n'avez pas le droit, sauf en cas d'urgence." On leur a dit: "Il y a urgence: il y a la lumière, elle va durer dix seconds"'.

itself, disassembling its structure to reveal what was there since the beginning (the projection of the excess of reason into a founding principle or divine substance) and on the other with a future deprived of all future, because the present is invested by the infinite expansion of accumulation and the shrinking of possibilities that this imposes. It is a characteristic of the present world—and its accepted doxa—that a demand for more freedom, more circulation, more value, more opening, more exchange, is countersigned by a series of reminders that almost instantly show every 'more' to be bordered by a 'less'. Every opening installs and operates a much more powerful closure (thus the creation of a Europe of free circulation becomes quickly 'Fortress Europe'). It is therefore a matter of using an infinite to fight another as it is a matter of using creation to create nothing. That the world is always a creation should be taken as an invitation to revisit this notion, rather than as a new inscription of the old register of production. Once the concept of creation is so revisited it shows exactly the opposite of what the register of production offers: it shows the taking place of the world without producer and it indicates a way to reopen the world dominated by a bad infinity to the finite inscription of the infinity of sense. In this sense then creation is always pared with nothing. Creation is nothing, there is nothing to look for before the world, nothing to look for outside of the world, there is no before and no outside. What there is and what commands this thought is the now of this inside that constantly opens up and is *there*. But this there is precisely nothing, not a thing, but the fact that there is something at all. In *The Sense of the World* Nancy writes: 'the entire aporia of the concept of "creation" is here: insofar as it takes production for its schema and insofar as it presupposes a creating subject that is itself self-engendered, it does not touch on the act/event of existing that nonetheless haunts it' (SW: 28). The sense of this creation is aporetic inasmuch as it reverses the idea of creation as the representation of a production or principle of causation. It is aporetic also because through it the centrality of man is displaced. Man was the center of the world as the primary teleology of a myth of creation. But if creation is nothing then man is itself part of this nothing and engaged with it. A schema of the created with man at its pinnacle survives to an extent even in Heidegger. His beings without or lacking in world are symptoms of this. The existence of stones and animals is not less worldly than that of man, stone and animal expose the nothing of the world as much, but according to different modes, as man does and man itself would have nothing to expose itself to if a non-human world

didn't exist. Man would take place only within himself (my intuition is that this is what we reproach to philosophy or intellectuality in general when we call them 'abstract', the world is man's object to have). The world as created nothing does not follow the hierarchic schema of the world as created by a producer. Nancy uses the word birth (naissance) in at least one instance precisely to distance every thought of provenance from the concept of creation. It is to the theological idea of *creation ex-nihilo* that Nancy turns then to attempt to wrestle the world from the bad infinity of globalization. The choice is by no means casual: it is one more opening of the tradition of monotheism with which we have not broken yet. As Nancy writes the word points on the one hand to the fact that 'the creator necessarily disappears in the very midst of its act' and on the other to the fact that 'Being falls completely outside of any presupposed position and integrally displaces itself into a transitivity by which it is, and is only, in any existence' (CW: 68). The notion thus operates on two levels. On the one hand it supports and provides one more entrance into the thesis that monotheism simultaneously protracts the metaphysical closure and produces its own self-surpassing announcing the coming of our world without reason. On the other hand the concept names the exercise or act according to which we can now relate to the sense of the world that risks dissipating or imploding under the authority of global capital and other closures. The concept is therefore at once a figure and an act, an actualized figure, a discourse and a pragmatic, a praxis without precedent and without guidance. Creation ex-nihilo governs the taking place of the sense of the world and at once embraces the entire tradition of how this world has deprived itself of celestial guarantors and natural teleology. To say it with Roberto Bolaño 'The world is alive and no living thing has any remedy. That is our fortune' (2011: 20). This sentence contains the coordinates not of a hopeless fatalism, but of an engagement with the world, a commitment to it and also an inevitable assignation. That the world is alive is its nothing, its liveliness draining any remedy, ultimate intervention or original distribution. This exhaustion produced by the living leaves the opening of a fortune, which means exactly an happening, the taking place out of no given condition. This fortune is ours because it is our task to attune ourselves to this taking place, to respond to it and to introduce ourselves. It is a very little thing and yet it is capable of opening up and accepting the infinity of sense. This is what creation ex-nihilo assigns us to. This is what Nancy means when he says that 'sometimes what we do best is nothing, doing nothing, letting things

be' (2009: 93). Letting things be is the very exercise of creation, but it means something very different from indifference.

Thus the concept of creation becomes for Nancy the cornerstone of a thought that goes right at the heart of monotheism and the West and that provides an alternative to the closure of sense produced by accumulation. The problem here poses itself in these terms: the concept of creation immediately institutes the confusion of the creator with its creature and this is proper only of a theism that is contemporaneous to atheism. In most cosmogonies and their accompanying myths one is presented with an architect that orders a preexistent, chaotic matter. With the introduction of the ex-nihilo this chaotic matter disappears. Therefore nothing pre-exists creation, there is no before and no outside of creation. But at the same time *nothing* itself disappears, precisely because it becomes the possibility that there is something. Nothing does not pre-exist creation, it is creation. Creation is the gift that giving itself withdraws from any position that could be held by an agent or by a power and therefore is nothing, not a thing that gives and not a thing given. In one single gesture thus Nancy crosses creation and nothing, the first being simply the emergence of what is already there, the latter designating not a register of privation, or a more archaic stage of the world (prior to intervention by a producer) but the void that coexists with something and from which it cannot be detached. It is not therefore a matter of following a movement from *nihil* to *quid*, but of receiving the surprise, the growth of nothing as something; a cultivation without roots. The nothing or the open are not prior, nor do they contain the disposition, the stretching of the world, they co-appear with it, with the things of the world, in the same way as the infinite and the finite are inscriptions of each other. As Granel writes in a text on Leonardo's 'knowledge (*savoir*) of the Shadow' the open is 'a mode of the closed, a concrete expression of the essential finitude that any form of being modulates' (1995: 126, *translation mine*).

Excessive Curiosity

If creation by a producer and nothingness as prehistory are crossed out, the *ex* in *creatio ex-nihilo* is all that remains and it is our task, what Nancy calls curiosity, 'the correlate of creation, understood as existence itself, is a curiosity that must be understood in a completely different sense than the one given by Heidegger' (2000: 19). Curiosity is interest for the singular that carries with itself the entire opening of sense, a moment of the world,

an experience of its independence and of my engagement with it. Nancy writes that 'this occurs in the face of a newborn child, a face encountered by chance on the street, an insect, a shark, a pebble' (2000: 20). All these moments of interest produce a different response and present a different access to the world, a difference distance from it. No singularity produces the same response and no singularity tells us the same about what our response to the world is in each occasion. This interest and curiosity of course can be lost and with them the very register of creation is lost. The world drops out. This happens precisely when we want to move ahead of the singularity, address the origin itself, a temptation that is always there with us, always human. Then curiosity becomes appropriation, mastery, possession, craving for objectivity. As Nancy writes in this case,

> we no longer look for a singularity of the origin in the other; we look for the unique and exclusive origin, in order to either adopt it or reject it. The other becomes the Other according to the mode of desire or hatred. […] The Other is nothing more than a correlate of this mad desire, but others, in fact, are our *originary interests*. (2000: 20–21).

Creation is the form and act of a thought that maintains interest without appropriating the origin of that which elicits this interest. This exercise keeps the possibility of a future alive, inasmuch as what we call the future survives appropriation and therefore remains in excess of representation (a represented future is nonetheless another form of accumulation, it is saturated with the present). The thought of creation comes to oppose the register of represented worlds and displace the very possibility of representation. Another name for it is *absentheism*. Creation is the thought of the absence of God and of the void of representations. The absence of a subject of the world allows for a willing of the world, the releasing of our interest and curiosity in its being alive. The splendor of this creation would at the same time be its poverty, in the sense of an act through which we countersign our abandonment by God and we abandon ourselves to this world here. The thought of creation gives us to think an exercise that exhausts the fulfillment that marks the representational register. To this effect Nancy writes that it is a matter of creating the world at each time and this creation is an ethos or habitus of the world, a way of wording its sense, of inhabiting its opening, of receiving the singular. In *The Evidence of Film* he writes that 'capturing images is clearly an ethos, a disposition and a conduct with regard to the world' (EF: 16). This ethos or habitus

holds us beyond representation and any possible given, not only as given prior to but as conclusion. Our relation with the world is therefore not a relation with a particular something, neither with a representation that points to a further reality; it is a relation with a circulation of sense of which we are both producers and receivers. The world is this constant invention of sense, exposure to and exposure of an infinite formality inscribed in and made possible by its borders, the finite. If representation is precisely the doubling up of a presence, the presenting on behalf of something that is absent or past or too far, the rendering of a presence that does not participate in its rendering, but makes it possible, then the world is that which immediately excludes this referentiality. Heidegger defines the modern idea of representation along these lines: 'to bring what is present at hand [*das Vorhandene*] before oneself as something standing over against, to relate it to oneself, to the one representing it, and to force it back into this relationship to oneself as the normative realm' (QCT: 131). There is nothing of the world that we could set out before ourselves. Through Descartes' metaphysics we understood ourselves as subjects in front of the world, reduced to a picture we ourselves had structured. This is the world without humans Nancy briefly mentions in *La Possibilité d'un monde*. The reversal of this is our 'return' to the world (Heidegger calls this 'courage', the courage to call into questions 'our own presuppositions and the realm of our own goals' (QCT: 116)). Through this exercise we can come to see that the world references itself and as such annuls the ground that would fix the quality and number of its presentations. The world presents itself in its repeated coming to presence, but what comes to presence is not that which is elsewhere or that which was originally hidden; it is simply and at each time the whole world. For this Nancy suggests the term 'fractality'. Fractality intervenes on nothing and this intervention is unprecedented. In Nancy's words fractality is 'no longer the piece fallen from a broken set, but the explosive splintering of that which is neither immanent nor transcendent. The in-finite explosion of the finite' (SW: 132). What is produced according to this logic are what Granel calls 'fragments beyond objectification', or 'singularities without belonging' (1995: 106–107, *translation mine*).[2]

[2] The French reads 'sans appartenence', which is in this case more felicitous since it evokes the idea of being apart; these singularities are precisely that which have not been set apart from the whole; they are in themselves the apart.

The concept of unity then can be invoked only with regard to an absence of given unity, it is a unity in the making and never made. Every singularity exposes the whole of the world and in so doing changes the world. Each intervention of sense, each conduct and gesture bring up the world and interrupt whatever sense we may have of it. Completion is deferred in every attempt at completion. The general sense of the world, its meaning in general, is reshuffled each time we pass through a singular difference. Here the gap is opened, sense is in excess of the work of meaning. This attention to singularity is the very counterbalance of the proliferation administered according to general equivalence. This is also what brings Nancy in a text on Kant's reflective judgment to write that knowledge is lacking, but not because of a human deficiency. It is not a matter of knowledge because singularities do not form together a unity, but remain irreducible to it. They do not form a unity and do not even conceal anything; they are not the apparition of a thing withdrawn from experience. Evoking Wittgenstein's language games (CW: 61) Nancy speaks of a justice paid to the singularity of each game, thus without common measure. Returning then to the theme of the *alogon*, reason's excess, which formulates the insurgence of both theism and atheism, Nancy writes that 'what Kant called "reasonable humanity", instead of being the tangential approximation of a given rationality […] will have to conceive of its own rationality as the incommensurability of Reason in itself' (CW: 62). To do justice to Reason's exceeding itself, to man surpassing itself, is a matter of this creation that unceasingly actualizes the world in the difference of its singularities. This is ultimately nothing else than giving back to man what was man's all along, but which was displaced to God and its Divine Substance and then to immanent Reason, Nation, People. To give to man what is man's means accepting the excess man constantly engages in, addressing what cannot by definition be addressed. This very excess that had secreted a creator and assigned to itself the role of creature, of mark, figure and representation of that creative act, becomes now the subject of creation, as the excess of its experience of the world. Reason gives itself in this making sense and not in any adequation to means or ends given to it in advance. It is not therefore a problem of limits of the understanding, but of the excess of thought. Our world constantly puts us in front of the excess of thought and the urgency to address ourselves to this excess, the work of sense beyond significations, is the very experience of the world. This experience is a wonder that creates the world. Nancy briefly and somewhat enigmatically introduces a passage from Wittgenstein's *Lecture*

on Ethics, to say that the transitivity of Being can be expressed with the sentence 'I wonder at the existence of the world' (CW: 71). The context of the passage has to be made clear since Wittgenstein suggests that the sentence is a gross violation of language because the grammar of the word 'wonder' does not apply in this case. It only applies for 'something being the case which I *could* conceive *not* to be the case' (2014: 12), for instance, a dog being bigger than any other. I can even wonder at the sky being blue rather than clouded, I can wonder at the world being such on such day, 'but it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing' (12). Thus the meaning of wonder in this case signals the moment where we are faced with an origin and at the origin 'criteria come to an end'. Creation thus means that I cannot imagine something not taking place, the taking place of the world is the possibility of such and such a sky, dog, house. I direct toward the such and such my attention and my interest, I cannot regress beyond them to grasp something that would be the cause of this, because the such and such and their creation are right there, in the same place and in the same way, their extension and my interest make the world what it is, make it so that I cannot imagine it otherwise. There is the existence of the world and its existence *is* the color of the sky, the size of a dog, the permanence of a house, 'me', 'you' and many other things, but not any particular thing more than any other. Already in the *Notebooks* Wittgenstein has this: 'The world is independent of my will' (1961: 73e). Nancy writes that this existence has to be acknowledged and this acknowledgment itself (which is anarchic, depriving the origin of origin, an existentiale) proves that the world exists and that this only makes sense:

> Acknowledging that 'there is something and not nothing' does not amount to convoking a pathos of wonder before Being […] That there might be *something* is surprising, and in the acknowledgment (even more when it is given the form of a question: "Why is there something, and not nothing?"), the possibility that there is something or nothing makes no sense if there does not exist, first of all, something. (BP: 172–173)

This is not a thought of annihilation, but the idea of existence 'as an ensemble or partition of singular decisions. It is for us to decide for ourselves' (CW: 74). To say that it is up to us to decide for ourselves means that it is up to us to decide which situation we are in and how we are to relate to the world, whether taking leave from its represented form or folding into the latest item in the chain of representations (Nancy calls

it capital or accumulation). And this amounts for Nancy to dismiss all attempts 'that negotiate a sense, an issue, or a repatriation of the real within the narrow confines of our faded humanism and clenched religiosities, in order that we may merely open speech once again to its most proper possibility of address' (DC: 138).

Instead then of a 'faded humanism' that still tries to wrestle itself from its religious ground or the 'clenched religiosities' that narrow down the possibilities of sense, what we need to reckon with is separation. Not the thing-in-itself, but 'the giving of things itself'. The separation and distinction of the world that structure our relation with it, not one thing or another, but the fact that there is this thing and another and that they are distinct and that their distinction is our way of making sense of the world. This means also turning around the claims of the insufficiency of reason. In a world without-reason, emerged from the double closure of metaphysics and monotheism, the logic of insufficiency simply demonstrates its own insufficiency. Then the fact that our knowledge shows itself to us as an intellectual lack, while at the same time it craves for the excess it can't achieve, but can't avoid thinking, become the truth of this world here. The meaning and consequence of this truth however is the very reversal of what our tradition has pictured. In the acknowledgment of the chiasm insufficiency/excess reason 'recognizes, not a lack or a flaw, which it should expect reparations from an other, rather the following: the logic of sufficiency and/or lack is not the logic appropriate to it' (DC: 25).

Without giving up reason or the skepticism that shook the dogmas, one can arrange the sense of the world in a different way for the reason that produced skepticism seems to have subsequently found itself in a frozen state. The reversal would be a reason that relates to the world by finding a power of existence, a power that pervades our very gestures, passions, words. This force does not seek property or mastery of this world, rather it seeks 'an enjoyment that would not be a satisfaction acquired in a signification of the world, but the insatiable and infinitely finite exercise that is the being in act of meaning brought forth in the world' (CW: 55). The exit from this intimidation signals the return to the world. To this exit Nancy gives the name 'dis-enclosure', the opening up of a space that was previously occupied by the distance between man and God and that releases a different distinction. This distinction is alternative to both the Monotheistic dogma and, without for all this recurring to mythology, to the mastery of intransigent Reason. Granel wishes for a similar gap, a gesture that simultaneously, in one move, could 'topple rationalist certainties

and spiritual ambitions' (1995: 94, *translation mine*). Nonetheless it is reason that occupies (or occupies itself with) this different demarcation, but this time confronting its own demand for the unconditioned, that which metaphysics closed off. This closure however was always already tensed toward its own destabilization, one that showed how uncertain the certainty of rational grounds was. Descartes is perhaps the proper name for this, wavering as he does between a natural doubt and an engineering of the world in such fashion that it could respond to that doubt.

Since the beginning what we call rational discourse or philosophy has never stopped to name and delimit 'the extreme limits of reason in an excess of and over reason itself' (DC: 7). It was not a mistake of philosophy, neither was it the inadequacy of man that made the project impossible to complete. The opening to reason's excess is reason's demand and this demand structures philosophy and man. The excess or extreme limit is that which exposes reason to itself and therefore justifies it. The closure was brought about by reason's inability to open itself to this excess as its own, projecting it instead into a principle external to it and to the world. Wittgenstein reaching the end of explanations and finding his spade turned and Heidegger recognizing a play that puts at stake the essence of man are not therefore closures to the world, but acknowledgments of its opening. While this opening proves itself beyond mastery (origins cannot be checked) it is nonetheless ours and we know this with or without philosophy, it intervenes in our world, in our existence every day, one could even say that the *everyday existence* with its unfamiliar familiarity is a figure (or even an evidence) of this opening. It belongs therefore to no Supreme Power or Eternal Substance, it belongs to us, inasmuch as it is ours to think (which does not mean however that thinking can dissipate it). This is what reason has been repressing and opening itself up to, unceasingly. The problem is not then that we should stop addressing ourselves to this excess, but that we address the world with it (which also means that we stop addressing the world as an object or a mere apparition). To invoke Granel once more 'one has to choose between the being-apart of God and the being-world of the World' (1995: 133, *translation mine*).

The Stone's Affinity with Thought

Nancy is aware that the taint of animism may befall his world and writes 'one need not fear that I am proposing here an animism' (SW: 62). The possible confusion comes from Nancy having reopened Heidegger's

stone, the stone without world. For the Heidegger of *The Fundamental Concepts* the stone cannot even be deprived of world because it has no access to it. Heidegger further qualifies this access in terms of attaining or possessing something. The stone is without world because it lacks the possibility to master or appropriate something. Nancy reverses Heidegger, reintroducing the stone and its 'sense' into the world. The stone thought by Heidegger is too abstract, still entrapped within the logic of a subject confronting an object. To this one can oppose a concreteness that interrupts this dialectic: the stone extends, occupies an area and constitutes a distance. In this sense it spaces out the world and its sense with a 'passive transitivity' (SW: 61) that makes up another possibility of the world. What Heidegger fails to recognize for Nancy is the surface and the world as a resonance of surfaces. Nancy writes that it is because it is a matter of surfaces that thought can manifest a 'profound affinity with things' (2002: 15). Thought confronts the significance of the world as this discretion that is right there at the surface, the discretion of each surface. This network of surfaces exposes the world as passible of sense. It is not therefore a question of animism, but of interest, not of the stone having a sense of itself, a consciousness, but of a sense that 'collides with' (SW: 63) the stone. Similarly Nancy writes that when I ask what a flower is, I lead 'the qualities of the thing back to some unity of representation' (2002: 16). Interrogating a flower (smelling it, touching it, observing how it absorbs water and reflects light) is instead a matter of letting thought sink into it, 'the real of a flower, that is, indissociably, the "a flower" […] such and such flower here and now, rose, daisy, or pansy' (2002: 16). For thinking to sink into the heart of things, stones and flowers, thought must accept that there it ricochets, becoming the suspended mobility 'gripped by the innumerable heart of all things' (BP: 167). The more thought tries to get away from this heart the least it thinks the world. It rather appropriates it and returns simply to what it has itself put into it, circling around its categories. On the other hand, once gripped thought becomes what it is, 'the more thought lets itself be taken in by the powerful restraint of things, by the inertia of the buried heart of their presence, their pressure, and their appearance, the more it ponders' (BP: 168). To think is to lead discourse back to things from its constructions, bringing philosophy back from itself, leading words back as Wittgenstein says. From this it follows that every word is at stake, not only particularly important words and not only particularly significant uses of words. Nancy seems inclined here to attribute to ordinary language, our ordinary uses of language the

same responsibility bestowed on poetic language. He is describing here the 'pervasive tendency to distinguish, in language usage, between a banal […] and a grander, supposedly poetic usage, wherein language would be its own end' (BP: 176).

While the Heidegger of *The Fundamental Concepts* dismisses the stone, the Heidegger of *The Thing* makes the sinking of thought into things the moment of our access to the world: 'if we let the thing be present in its thinging from out of the worlding world, then we are thinking of the thing as thing' (PLT: 178). When Heidegger writes that the thing things, he is writing the collision and passibility of all the singularities that are the world (or that the world *is*, transitively). Nancy suggests for this bethinged thought an 'impassive gravity' (BP: 170) that would function with the necessity of a 'useless leap'. Useless should be read here as a positivity that affirms beyond any affirmation of use, mastery, end and appropriation. The leap is useless not because it leads nowhere, but because it does not conquer its point of arrival, but passes through it. Philosophy has a tendency to bypass this passage, because it 'makes the thing its thing, whereas the some of something does not let itself be appropriated' (BP: 177). For Heidegger the name 'philosophy' should be substituted with a thinking that gives thanks; for Wittgenstein, as Granel puts it, the place of thinking is in a response that is otherwise 'than the place of philosophy and anterior to it' (1995: 84, *translation mine*). This thought offers no authority, but a singular passage. Then thinking this world would immediately, in one stroke, deliver oneself over to this 'changing world', to the way in which it changes and to the mere fact that it is there and constantly changes. It means also leaving behind the idea of thinking as the essential operation of a determination, certainty and destination. This thought is ordinary and exercised every day, itself under the scrutiny of the everyday, 'thought brought up short against the heart of things' (BP: 175). This would be a thought that ultimately has to return us to what draws us to think, which is neither an object nor a problem, but that which is precisely other than these: the world.

CHAPTER 4

The World Realized

Worldly Affinities

Cavell and Nancy begin their 'return' to the world by following paths opened by Wittgenstein and Heidegger, in particular by emphasizing the excess of the world with regard to knowledge. This understanding that cannot embrace and master its own object was said to constitute the starting position of our interest in the world.

The 'affinity' between the later Heidegger and the later Wittgenstein becomes even more visible when, as a number of scholars have noted (Mulhall 2001; Braver 2014), one focuses on the renewal of thinking their work is predicated on and calls for. As Braver writes 'their basic objection is that philosophy has been practiced in a way that is fundamentally inappropriate for creatures like ourselves' (2014: 9). Similarly Cavell articulates the proximity in terms of the two philosophers' ability to detect and resist philosophy's 'chronic tendency to violence' (2006: 231) perpetrated against the ordinary world or what Heidegger would call 'the heart of things'. In a text on monotheism and the domination of the principle Nancy couples Heidegger and Wittgenstein as the two thinkers who have expressed 'the necessity that has guided thought over the last century' (DC: 24).

This call for a renewed resistance of thinking to its own inherent violence motivates Cavell and Nancy's turn to the concept of the world. For both, our encounter with the world produces a renewal from within reason of a crossing out of knowledge. The world requires to be liberated

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for thinking to get on the way and this liberation takes place on two sides of the concept. On the one hand the world requires to be freed from the Western tradition that in various forms has displaced its sense toward an 'otherworld' or toward a more satisfactory reality. On the other the thinking of the world needs to be affirmed beyond the neutralizing form that an apparent overcoming of the transcendental tradition has confined it into (finitude as intellectual privation, failure of human knowledge, desire for a more convincing grasp on reality). For Cavell and Nancy it is a question of thinking this world here on both sides of the tradition, interrupting the judicatory authority of divine principles and resisting the reduction of the world to an object. The demand the two thinkers share is the recuperation of the excess of reason from the 'elsewhere' in which our tradition has projected it. This recuperation implies not a new reduction, but the acknowledgment that our knowledge of the world is not the knowledge of a fact and that this awareness does not lessen our involvement with the world, but at the opposite makes it decisively more acute. In *The World Viewed* Cavell writes of Terrence Malick's films: 'if in relation to objects capable of such self-manifestation human beings are reduced in significance […] perhaps this is because in trying to take dominion over the world […] they are refusing their participation in it' (xvi). These words anticipate the central question that for Cavell and Nancy thinking needs to ask: What would it mean to see that what assures our relation to the world is not dominion over the totality of objects, but the acceptance of our inexhaustible participation with them? In his work on Romanticism Cavell formulates it as follows: 'what is our relation to the case of the world's existence? Or should we now see that there is nothing that constitutes this relation? Or see that there is no one something?' (IQO: 136). Nancy on the other hand writes that 'it is up to us to "seize" the infinite chance and risk of being in the world, although we know (but is this a knowledge?) that there is nothing to "seize"' (SW: 26). The starting points from which one can see the pressure the world exercises on thinking are then two: there is no knowledge of the world that would conclude our knowing the world; there is nothing we can grasp about the world, no particular thing that will provide us with the key to master the rest. Every singular insurgence of the world is already the exhibition of all the world there is, and yet this insurgence is simply a modulation that resonates through all the surface of the world. Nancy has also expressed this configuration according to the logic of 'struction', the passage between 'more than one' and 'less than one' without

the mediation of a principle of univocity (2014: 20). In designating our experience as liberated by Kant from the dominance of rational thought Heidegger invokes the idea of a circular happening, 'between us and the thing' (1967: 242) and calls this the 'Open'. For Heidegger the world is what 'is constantly strange' (1967: 243). According to Cavell and Nancy our task is thus to install thinking more firmly within this strangeness: the world is strange, irreducibly so, it is a matter of accepting this, and this acceptance leads to creation and responsibility, rather than grief and resignation. When Cavell writes that with Wittgenstein it is not a matter of refuting skepticism but of setting its truth in motion (our relation to the world is not one of knowledge, when this implies certainty), he means precisely to reject the idea that the limitation of reason leaves man in a position of immobility and intellectual despair. Writing on Kant's limiting of the possibilities of knowledge, Cavell stresses how the German philosopher shows 'that knowledge is limited not in the sense that there are things beyond its reach, but that there are human capacities and responsibilities and desires which reveal the world but which are not exhausted in the capacity of knowing things' (CR: 54).

Once the truth of skepticism is acknowledged our (human) possibilities are unbounded, our embarrassments and inhibitions shaken off. For both Cavell and Nancy the emergence from these limits introduces a new chance for thinking.

The World and the Viewfinder

On the one hand then we have nothing to adhere to, neither divinity nor Reason, neither ultimate goal nor organizing principle; on the other this situation forces us to enjoy all the possibilities and demands of sense. The withdrawal of sense presents both the terminal expenditure of the idea of destination and the introduction of a constant agitation, a prolific turbulence. To this effect Nancy writes that 'the thought of the sense of the world is a thought that becomes indiscernible from its praxis' (SW: 10).

This praxis implies that the world cannot be understood as a totality one can envision or represent, but precisely as that which escapes representation. For both Cavell and Nancy an insistence on this impossibility leads to an emphasis on film. As already mentioned Cavell's *The World Viewed* is explicitly written in this direction. How else is one to read the passage that deems our age as one in which 'our philosophical grasp of the world fails to reach beyond our taking and holding views of it' (WV: xxiii)? This

passage seems to signal that the philosophical way out of this deadlock passes through cinema. To reach beyond worldviews would mean to reach once again toward the praxis of sense, as that which worldviews block and exhaust. For Nancy cinema is a way of taking care of 'that which resists, precisely, being absorbed in any vision ("worldviews", representations, imaginations)' (EF: 18); cinema takes care of the world. While this expression carries an inevitable Heideggerian mark, it should also be heard as an invitation to a more radical dispossession.[1] Inasmuch as philosophy has understood itself as producer of worldviews, systems and principle, philosophy has constantly suppressed the thinking of the world, for any worldview absorbs and dissolves the world in its vision.

For both Cavell and Nancy an understanding of film is impossible without an understanding of the world outside of representation. The world is not the mimetic index of an other (God or Reason), but the circulation of sense. A world outside of representation is a world conceived without principle or end that guarantee its sense. In the absence of a model and a pre-given structure every gesture of sense reopens the sense of the world entirely.

For both Cavell and Nancy the world of film registers a resistance to our relation to the world in terms of worldviews. Two further methodological points can be made to bear on this: film enters philosophy through a specific scrutiny of the question of the world, a scrutiny that attempts to illuminate the question of the world's sense without this referring to anything beyond this world here. At the same time film does not simply illustrate a moment of this scrutiny. The thinking of cinema for both philosophers structures a way to articulate an original thinking of the world, rather than simply providing a sketch, an 'image' of its development. For Nancy and Cavell the thinking of film must be able to resist being absorbed within a more original gesture and must be seen as opening up an opportunity for thinking as such. This is so because for both, to borrow Rodowick's words, the power of film 'is a question neither of representation nor of meaning, but rather of ontology' (1999: 46). Ian James highlights how cinematic works 'are not, for Nancy, representational, but they do present or expose worldly existence' (2007: 68). In this sense philosophy is meant not to dictate to the image but to 'accompany the evidence of

[1] It is worth stressing here how in this term one should also hear the 'art of "deremption"' ('l'art de la "dessaisie"') invoked by Granel in his remarks on Rainer Schurmann's *Broken Hegemonies* (2009a: 123).

film as it presents and unfolds itself' (2012: 30). The structure presented here then follows this movement: Nancy and Cavell's thinking of cinema is determined by their analysis of the concept of the world; however the world could not be thought this way without passing through film (in this sense film is also a 'philosophical' event). The thinking of cinema neither precedes nor follows the philosophical approach to the world; it is already inevitable once the question of the world is introduced. The contemporaneity of the two questions however emerges only once the world has come into focus as that which directs, organizes and addresses thinking as such, imposing on thinking its demand and urgency.[2]

Film is already implied in the 'all together' that Nancy identifies as the thought of our world and already manifests the sense that 'we can no longer be certain of a distinction between the world and us' (2014: 2). What is at stake is not the order of simulation and dissimulation, the pervasiveness of simulacra absorbing reality within their reach. It is rather a question of the world and the exposure of sense, an exposure that cuts through the *eidolon* and its original. If philosophy orients itself in the world by letting the world direct its beginnings, and if our relation to this is not a relation to a particular something but to the irreducibility of sense, it is clear how thinking itself cannot be reduced to a core and its margins. The core is already engaged at the margin and only there. Without this fracturing, this constant exposure of the core, one would be dealing with an inert identity. Nancy expresses this idea as fractality, Cavell as the lack of forward movement (the climax being reached at every word).[3] It is only in this way, once thinking is entirely disposed to the pressure and pulse of what makes it think that thinking becomes what it is. It is only in this way, Nancy and Cavell contend, that philosophy can operate: not by keeping something of itself in reserve, by keeping itself proper, but by questioning what its subject is, what calls for it. It is never therefore a matter of philosophy mastering film, nor is it a question of philosophy lending film the authority this lacks, but of thinking the world of film as an exposure of the

[2] John Mullarkey convincingly denounces philosophy's 'abuse' of film when he writes that even the most generous philosophical gesture (including Cavell and Nancy's) cannot help reducing film to mere illustration. He writes that in philosophy's eyes, 'if film thinks, it is *not* in its own way but in philosophy's way' (2011: 88). For him a solution could come from Laruelle's 'methodological agnosticism' (93).

[3] Cavell writes: 'a book of philosophy suitable to what Thoreau envisions as "students" would be written with next to no forward motion, one that culminates in each sentence' (IQO: 18).

sense of the world. As Sinnberink remarks, for Cavell 'film can profoundly transform philosophy' (2011: 29) since it demonstrates its own articulation of the 'question of the future, that is, the possibility of both inheriting and transforming tradition – the possibility of creating the new' (29). One would not say then that film is paradigmatic, but that film is irreducible. This irreducibility, the lack of an essence, the pressure that brings thinking to the outside that alone offers it the opportunity to begin, is the attraction that directs thinking toward the world of film. Commenting on Malick's *The Thin Red Line* (1998) Critchley expresses Cavell's focus by stressing the ability of film to grant us an entrance into the calm of things, before or beyond human purpose: 'we watch things shining calmly, being as they are, in all the intricate evasions of "as". The camera can be pointed at those things to try and capture some grain or affluence of their reality' (2005: 147).[4]

The thinking of cinema drives Cavell and Nancy to insist on our relation to the world as one in which its sense is both our possibility and our responsibility and yet remains inappropriable, in excess of measures, ordering coordination and unity.

Both thinkers begin their analyses of film by claiming that film exercises a resistance to worldviews: taking views, in Cavell's words; imposing visions, in Nancy's phrasing. In the expression 'worldviews' one hears echoes of Heidegger's *The Age of the World Picture* (Cavell mentions the influence this text, once avoided, exercises on his own; Nancy makes it a central reference in *The Creation of the World*). Here Heidegger describes a series of elements that distinguish the modern age: science, machine technology, the subjective experience of art, the politics of culture and the loss of gods. The first mention of 'worldview' occurs precisely in a remark on this last element. Heidegger writes that this loss should not be understood as the departure of divinity, but rather points to what Christianity itself brings about in a twofold movement. On the one hand the world becomes Christianized since its cause is posited as infinitely remote; on the other the Christian doctrine embeds man's historical unfolding and becomes itself a worldview. The relation to the gods becomes through this

[4] While this is beyond the scope of this work both Cavell and Nancy's philosophical approaches to film seem to allow for interesting intersections with new materialisms and environmental engagements with the moving image. See for instance Ivakhiv's *Ecologies of the Moving Image* (2014). While the work draws its conceptual apparatus mainly from Guattari's *Three Ecologies*, the introduction invokes Heidegger to describe film's ability to be a form of 'world-production' (6).

movement a particular relation to the world, a relation in which the world becomes the bridge to its unconditioned cause or principle. For Heidegger the loss of gods and the other phenomena already mentioned rest on a common foundation, on a particular image of the world. It is the very idea of an 'image' or 'picture' of the 'world' that allows us to grasp the essential nature of our age. The expression 'world-picture', Heidegger writes, 'distinguishes the essence of the modern age' (QCT: 130). What lies within the expression? Heidegger further specifies that it has to be understood in the relation between its two constitutive terms: 'World' indicates here the totality of 'what is' and the meaning attributed to this totality (nature, history and man). By 'picture' on the other hand Heidegger understands not the reproduction of 'what is', but the framing of the world into a system. Picturing is then first of all the act of framing existents within a plan conceived in advance. 'What is' stands before us systematically and only as such a system does it become a 'world'. It is this systematic arrangement that is decisive for Heidegger. Thus 'world-picture' means that 'what is' is understood only as that which is systematically represented in advance. Heidegger writes: 'what is, in its entirety, is now taken in such a way that it first is in being and only is in being to the extent that it is set up by man, who represents and sets forth' (130–131). Man essentially represents 'what is' as that which can be represented according to a fundamental design that is at the same time the opening of a realm of knowledge. This projection, Heidegger says, decides essentially and in advance how 'what is' will be known: 'only within the perspective of this ground plan does an event in nature become visible as such an event' (120). Nature and history are then themselves subjected to this representing plan and therefore transformed into objects: the first because calculated in its course; the second because verified in its development up to the present moment. With this Heidegger indicates that both future and past are explained 'in advance', where the expression does not indicate clairvoyance, but the framing of what happens according to an immutable (already completed) plan. Heidegger uses nature and history precisely to explain that representations are not simply directed to 'what is' as to things present at hand, but that its operation makes of everything (including nature and history) something present at hand. As Heidegger writes: 'only that which becomes object in this way is – is considered to be in being' (127). Only once its place within the opening design is found can something become part of 'what is', become accepted as *something*. According to Heidegger it is Descartes' metaphysics that inaugurates the prominence of the plan, since it is with

Descartes that man becomes subject as ground of 'what is'. The totality of 'what is', the world, becomes a picture in that it has to stand before man and allow itself to be encountered according to man's pre-conceived plan. In one of the appendixes to the text Heidegger compares this metaphysics with the Greeks' understanding of 'what is' and writes that with the Greeks man is essentially limited and attends to this restriction. Man is then the measure of Being not because it reduces 'what is' to his plan, but because it receives from Being his proper measure. With Descartes man becomes the measure of Being as determining and establishing the measure the world must accommodate itself to. While for Greek philosophy man's role is limited to the preservation of 'the horizon of unconcealment' (147), with the world-picture man proceeds 'into the unlimited sphere of possible objectification, through the reckoning up of the representable that is accessible to every man and binding for all' (147). The expression 'worldview' becomes the name for man's power to decide what the world is. The unlimited possibilities of objectification make of the world *something* that stands at man's disposal, conquered or conquerable. Representation becomes then the structure of a fixing and grasping of the world, 'an objectifying that goes forward and masters' (149). Descartes' interpretation of the question 'what is Being' leads to a theory of knowledge whose proof of the outer world radiates from the certainty of its center—man as ground/subject. The expression 'worldview' becomes the name for the position of man in the midst of the world. Once the world has been transformed into an object that stands in front of us, then the plan gains in importance, and decisively so against the singularity of what is (hence what Cavell at times describes as Descartes' loss of interest in the world). Crucially, according to Heidegger, because representation has determined the world in advance, taken views of it and fitted them within a plan, philosophy is also abandoned. Representation, planning, absorbing, dissolving do not need philosophy. A world absorbed within a worldview is in no need of philosophy, because 'it has already taken over a particular interpretation and structuring of whatever is' (140). With the thinking of man that follows from Descartes begins the setting aside of all philosophy (replaced by what Heidegger calls the 'laborious fabrications of such absurd offshoots as the national-socialist philosophies' [140]). The idea of man that thus emerges from the Cartesian worldview substitutes, according to Heidegger, man as the being essentially limited by Being, with man as essentially limiting Being, what is, the world, through a gesture of representative mastery. If with Protagoras' expression—'man is the

measure of all things'—man preserves the coming to presence of Being, letting 'what is' be, with Descartes man is the measure inasmuch as only that which can be seized as and mastered by man *is*. When Cavell writes that the quest for knowledge was for the European mind 'the best expression of seriousness about our relation to the world' (MWM: 323), he is pointing to the release that epistemology sought from the dogmas of Christian truth. However this liberation became a craving for mastery. Reason's ability to release man from deity dethroned everything but itself. In this transition the sense of deity does not disappear and is not overcome. Reason itself still 'remains to be humbled if the truth here is to emerge' (MWM: 325). From this Cavell then concludes that in order to know the world and our relation to it we need to be prepared, to prepare ourselves (through philosophical therapy, reason's work) to forego knowledge. Heidegger—and Nancy after him—articulate even more explicitly the enduring prominence of the logic of salvation at work in Cartesian epistemology. For Heidegger the positing of certainty at the heart of Descartes' metaphysics is a consequence of its unbroken ties with Christianity ('although without knowing it' [QCT: 148]). Reason becomes self-legislating and therefore poses its own freedom, postulating also the set of obligations that deliver this freedom. This gesture however remains trapped in a reactionary movement against the spirit of Christianity. Here truth is posited as the *certainty* guaranteed to man through salvation. What for Heidegger survives and undermines the transition is precisely the eminence accorded to certainty: since revelational truth guarantees certainty, a gesture that merely reacts against it can oppose this truth only by founding its operation on a different type of certainty. Hence Cartesian epistemology replaces certainty guaranteed by the doctrine of salvation—posited as it were from on high—with certainty guaranteed by man himself—posited as it were from down here. This liberation that moves from certainty to certainty implies that while man replaces God as ground, man maintains and nurtures the very logic and construction he wished to displace. The epistemologist's idea that, as Cavell writes, knowing the world amounts to knowing a particular something, becomes possible precisely when man establishes himself as the ground for certainty, deciding as a consequence 'what knowing and the making secure of the known, i.e., certainty, should mean' (QCT: 148). The new freedom of self-legislating Reason vanishes in the objectification it has ushered into the world. Because of the priority accorded in this movement to objectification and representation one also loses sight of how '*different* different things are' (WV: 25).

The first consequence then of film's resistance to worldviews is that film operates under a different regime than that of representations; the second is that this regime renews a call for philosophy. Two goals can be said to intertwine in Cavell and Nancy's thinking of film: to recapture our relation to the world as one that is not based on knowing as certainty derived from objectification, but on the reception of the singular; to recapture thinking as that which is attracted and called for by the insurgence of the singular, by the seam(s) in experience. Understood in this way film reopens at once the question of the world and the question of philosophy or as Rodowick puts it, film triggers 'ontological questions about our relationship to the world' (1999: 124). What film names here then is the return to the strange, the interesting, the differentiating pressure of the singular, which cannot and should not be mastered, but exposed, worded, acknowledged (as Cavell puts it) and adored (as Nancy phrases it).

Retouching the World with the World

Nancy and Cavell decidedly reverse the idea of cinema as completing the regime of representation (an idea expressed perhaps most famously by Bazin), stressing how cinema produces a step away from thinking as representation, in view of what I will call *thinking as patience*.

Nancy frames his discourse on film through the idea that film today is undergoing a shift—envisaged in particular in relation to the work of Abbas Kiarostami and Claire Denis—that returns it to its most crucial question: the release of a look on the world and the reception of the pressure the world exercises. Cinema should be understood then as problematizing the act of looking not in the sense of 'representing' but in the direction of 'regarding'. As such cinema (this cinema, but then possibly cinema as such) develops not an 'image' of the world, but a regard for the world's 'generating' force (EF: 13). This generating force, of cinema and of the world with and through it, is possible only through what Nancy calls evidence: the pressure of a blind spot that withdraws, becoming hollow. Evidence is for Nancy the withdrawal of what *makes* evident, the subtraction of what gives birth to an experience of the world. Every evidence is irreducibly singular, a pressure at the same time applied and received, emptying the looking position of any opportunity to 'gather' a vision onto itself. As James aptly puts it 'the being of that "something that is" is not one of immediate presence, but of a presence, presented yet withdrawn' (2007: 73). The one who looks is emptied out and is emptied out

precisely in receiving and generating the force that makes possible a look on the world. That which makes evident is also that which withdraws from vision, from imaginations: it opens the world in opening itself up to it. As García Düttmann writes, this 'self-evidence exerts pressure on the gaze urging it to […] observe the world in order to "realize the real"' (2007: 107). The preoccupation then is not with how adequate cinema is to the real or to a particular vision of the real, but with how cinema contributes to what is proper to this world here: the distension of its patency, coming from nowhere and going nowhere. The world's patency is never a placing or being in view, but rather the affirmation that, to borrow the words Gérard Granel uses to describe Kant's great discovery, 'to appear is by no means a "moment" occurring to a reality posited somewhere else (or "in itself")' (2009b: 54). The evidential force of the world is the limiting of an unlimited reality, the sharing out of singular finitude. The fact that cinema directs itself to a safeguarding of the real means that cinema cuts through the unlimited reality and generates that which it receives: the circulation of the singular.

One can then understand why Nancy writes: 'such is indeed the definition of the real: it is not what is to be signified, but what runs up against or violates signification' (1997b: 69). Cinema deals with the world as a force stripped of significations coming from elsewhere. This pregnant emptiness of sense is not the presentness of objects. It designates that which 'gives itself in excess or short of equally permanence and continuum as well as of progress and evolution, retention and projection, inaugural and terminal, waiting and arrival' (2013: 15).

Thus the realism of film for Nancy does not imply the firm subsistence of something and its subsequent mimesis, but the opening up of an otherness within the world (in this sense horror, fantasy or melodrama are as effective as the most austere dramas). The real then becomes the index for finitude: not a lack, but the cut into infinity. This in turn is not another essence, something altogether different, but the void that makes possible the sharing of finitude (what Granel calls 'the original formality of the world'). In a sense then one could still admit cinema as mimetic provided that the term is understood otherwise than as faithful reproduction of a model.[5] Mimesis in this sense is the ability to capture what in the given is not given. The model is not given, but created. Nancy puts

[5] For an interesting genealogy of mimetic space and its relation to cinema see Jean-Christophe Bailly's *Le Champ mimétique* (2005).

it as follows: 'mimetic art is the technique that exposes what the given, as given, does not make manifest – its very donation, its coming into view or into the world' (2013: 60). Cinema can be called a mimetic art precisely in the sense that it takes care of the real. Taking care of the real as mimesis would designate the possibility to open up what in the given remains withdrawn. It is not therefore a matter of rendering a scintillating copy of what is, but of making manifest what in 'what is' remains at a distance. Cinema addresses in this sense the real as the non-given that must be sought through the given. To bring the world into view implies that we rest, as if arrested, on its force, a force that by its own nature revokes the model, the possibility of conformity. It is then a matter of drawing this evidence out while remaining submitted to it, addressing the form received from it as the birth every time singular, every time new of the world. Taking care of the real does not mean representing it, copying or reproducing it, but opening up a stance toward the world, a gesture that is at once ontological, aesthetic and ethical, collapsing the distinction between the three. Taking care of the real implies the effort to install oneself in the world's formative principle, which never donates a completed form one can conform to, but a relation, one whose outline is in every case to be made again, to be *realized*. If cinema takes care of the real it is because it can realize the world in this sense, in establishing a relation with it, which goes beyond the form of a particular thing, while individuating, singularizing the thing. What the world offers has to be offered again through an appropriation that releases. Cinema then establishes a contact not with a form but with the formation of the thing and this is what distinguishes taking care of the real, from being absorbed in it. Following Nancy's analysis of mimesis one can speak of cinema's force in terms of its taking care of the world's forming power, a forming that is not completed in a vision or in a definitive form, but in the singularity of a stance. Nancy writes 'how does the world form itself and how am I allowed to embrace this movement?' (2013: 64). This movement could also be identified in Cavell's idea that cinema allows us to 'guess the unseen from the seen' (1984: 14).

Embracing and taking care require a degree of distance or at least the taking into account of what Granel calls the nemesis of philosophical impatience, 'the reticence of the world (la pudeur du Monde)' (2009a: 9). The world, to use Granel's words once again, 'does not have a form, since it is not something given: it is the *formality of the gift*, which is something altogether different' (2009a: 11. *translation mine*). This not-being-given, this archi-formality, is precisely what cinema turns itself to, by turning to and

insisting on nothing else but the given. For Nancy this is then both the essence of cinema, its task, and its most contemporary, urgent possibility. The name Kiarostami here indicates only one instance of the 'secularity of cinema' in the double sense of being over 100 years old and belonging to the world. Nancy acknowledges how for example Claire Denis and Edward Yang in very different fashions commit their work to the same gesture. *Yi Yi* (Yang, 2000) begins with a wedding and concludes with a funeral and for over three hours opens the camera up to a form of life, that is to the impossibility of reordering or categorizing this impulse according to a teleological movement or unity. If the film is an epic (as it is sometimes described [Tweedie 2013: 423]) it is so only in the sense evoked by its title: it is the epic of the bare succession of one (thing, event, day, marriage, affair, funeral) after another. *Beau Travail* (Denis 1999), which Nancy calls explicitly a 'philosophical film' (2004: 17), turns instead to the vulnerability of this world's sufficiency, releasing its images as fragments of a figurative force that can be communicated only by announcing its exhaustion and renewal, beyond any attempt at recognition. Nancy writes that 'everything in the film indicates something of a nonrepresentational, non-figurative affirmation of the image: the power, the intensity, the fire even of a self-presentation' (17). These three names together, and many more can be added, say this: 'with usage and time, you have scoured all its possibilities of representation. And so you have brought out, little by little, a possibility of looking that is no longer exactly a look at representation or a representative look' (EF: 14). If cinema has exhausted all its possibilities by working through them, this also means that it has rejoined its initial demand: not to exhaust the possibility of images, but to explode our relation with the world they grant access to. Thus it is the very idea of image that changes: the image as access to the world releases what of the given does not give itself over for capturing. As Morrey puts it for Nancy the cinematic image 'is not that which falls beneath our senses (which falls beneath sense), so much as that which strikes the senses (and strikes at sense)' (2008: 20). The word 'image' indicates a tension according to which what becomes 'imagined' is not what is captured but the passage through which sense is disrupted (the opposite of the permanence of a presence). It is not a composition, but the agitation of a look, not the thing captured, but the thing's escape, not a complete proximity with the world, immediacy, but distance, a measure through which something like access becomes possible. Ian James writes that 'the image here does not "re-present" a given and determined

reality; it does not offer a copy or resemblance of that reality. Rather, it opens onto, or gives access to, the real of an existence itself' (2007: 73). The image domesticates what it imagines, but, Nancy says, a different configuration is possible: the image becomes overtaken by what it tries to contain and releases what it frames. This release always produces at once the exhaustion of significations and the reopening of sense. As Ross accurately puts it for Nancy this exhaustion is 'the event of the gradual emergence into view, and in its full scope, of presentation [...] as a question' (2007: 140). In his *Notes on The Cinematographer* Robert Bresson writes that the task of cinema is 'to retouch the real with the real' (24). To take an image here is not to 'take a view', but to let the look be seized, to seek the point of pressure that agitates it so that it can carry us (the audience) in the same direction. The look thus is this regard not for the sign it produces but for the engagement and interest it solicits, for the patience it demands. Nancy sees a transition here of cinema from representation to presence. This presence 'is not a matter of vision: it offers itself to an encounter, a preoccupation or a care' (EF: 31). Where Cavell writes that cinema has brought the problem of reality to a head, by addressing it automatically, Nancy says that there are no fixed points in cinema—therefore no signs to decipher. With film then nothing needs to be deciphered, what is on the screen asks us to become interested.

Since the given is withdrawn (and this is the original situation cinema installs itself onto, Cavell calls it our displacement) the given is to be given again and to look means 'to test oneself against a sense that we can't master. The capturing of images in a film is a capture only inasmuch as it is a delivering [...] a realization of the real' (EF: 39). Nancy's insistent evocation of the phenomenological lexicon (evidence, gaze, vision) serves to mark his departure from this register even more explicitly. Opening the eyes is not a gesture that seizes the phenomenon, but the possibility to deliver oneself to a chiasm, so that 'my eyes and the world are opened together, the first included in the second, which, at the same time, penetrates them' (AD: 47). This look that is commanded and penetrated, is in turn commanding, renewing the command it receives. Film shows us that we are always *passible* to the world, carried to the moment where a pressure exercises itself. Nancy insists that the crossing of looking with the evidence of the world is a consequence of having been looked at, therefore of addressing that which always already 'shows' itself. The intimacy achieved here does not exercise itself as the proximity of a grasping of the given, but

as the pressure that, while imposing a distance, produces a stance, an ethos. Evidence and look translate not into certainty, firmness, assurance, but as regards and conducts, ways of being in the world. Cinema takes care of the real and realizes it, precisely because this real is not what is always already there, but what in what is there awaits acknowledgment and expression. If the world is without sense, then this (and only this) is what cinema can address: the fact that 'everything refers back to everything and thus everything shows itself through everything' (2014: 54), without this referral elevating itself beyond this world here and the fortuity and contingency of its sense. The address and response are never final, the world is the very impulse of an unfinishable. Film's work begins just before and immediately after the given. It addresses the 'just before' because no capturing 'captures' the world, no 'composition' can complete and enclose its sense. It addresses the 'immediately after' because capturing is not the right pose, the world demands rather to be made to circulate once again, looked at and shaken, addressed and responded to. *The world is not a given, but the reticence that comes with the given.* This reticence, the Granellian *pudeur*, is given to be given again, to be constantly given. It is then a matter of looking at this surface not in order to grasp what lies deep within, beyond or behind (nothing lies 'in' the world), but so that a look can start resonating with it, being looked by what it is looking at. To say it with Jean-Luc Godard 'since it is a matter of seeing what cannot be seen […] the camera is a tool for the blind' (Fleischer 2009). Echoing Derrida's words, the camera's look is 'the respectful observance of a commandment, the acknowledgment before knowledge, the gratitude of receiving before seeing' (1993: 29–30). In his analysis of Cavell's automatisms Rodowick makes a similar point: 'automatisms circumscribe practice, setting the conditions' (1999: 43).

Following the suggestion that comes from Kiarostami's film (*Life and Nothing More* [1991]) Nancy invokes the logic of life-death to describe what is at stake in cinema. Nancy writes that death is itself 'the blind spot that opens the look, and it is such a way of looking that films life […] a way of looking through which we have to look but that is not to be seen itself, that is not of this order' (EF: 18). Cinema insists on that which passes, therefore it insists on life and on its lack of direction, the continuous motion that goes nowhere, and in going nowhere exposes itself as movement. It is in this sense then that cinema opens up in the world the world's logic: the passage of sense or sense as passage. Nancy says it

explicitly: cinema structures the world of today because in its looking at a passage without direction it re-cognizes—that is acknowledges—the order of this world that catches itself in its own passage, withdrawing from 'every kind of visionary seeing, foreseeing and clairvoyant gazing' (EF: 20). Thus if the camera is for the blind as Godard says (and wrongly used by most as if they could see), if the best moments of a film are blind, this means that the camera opens our eyes onto the world and therefore removes them from it, removing the possibility of vision. It teaches that to look means to account each time for 'a reconfiguration of experience and therefore of the world' (EF: 20). A reconfiguration of the whole world implies the acknowledgment of the inherent singularity of our many encounters with it. Cavell puts it in a succinct way: film teaches us how '*different* different things are' (WV: 25).

Conditions of a Life

In his account of film Cavell sees a unique opportunity to test the very conditions that structure our relationship with the world. As Rodowick writes, Cavell's work on film is directed at assessing 'the limits of our existence and our powers of reasoning' (1999: 124). Thus Cavell's work on film points to a more general demand he casts on (his) philosophy. Taylor captures it as follows: 'for the work of philosophy to be successfully undertaken […] it must found itself in the tangible, material, embodied conditions of our existence, even if that state of embodiment is one that provokes thoughts of disconnection' (2013: 191). For Cavell the lapses in memory and the declaration of intentions, always possible in our responses to films, are a proof that cinema addresses itself to the real: 'that it is reality that we have to deal with, or some mode of depicting it, finds surprising confirmation in the way movies are remembered, and misremembered […] Movies are hard to remember, the way actual events of yesterday are' (WV: 16–17). The connotation of the memoir as metaphysical reveals that this is not the recounting of a period of Cavell's life, but 'an account of the conditions it has satisfied' (WV: xix).

At the end of *The World Viewed*, Cavell writes that 'film's presenting of the world by absenting us from it appears as confirmation of something already true of our existence' (226). Cinema's ability to provide access to the world depends on and is made possible by a loss of intimacy (call it a loss of *given sense*) that has unfolded over the course of our intellectual history. At the same time cinema does not simply reinforce this distance,

but articulates it, making this withdrawal of given senses and therefore of given positions, its very figure and strategy. To rebuke, as Cavell does, the common assumption that cinema has changed our ways of looking, insisting instead that it provided the evidence for a world that already 'looked' different amounts to the conclusion that cinema from the outset directed itself at the conditions of the world. Since this seems to me one of those 'philosophical vistas' opened up by Cavell's work to which 'we still have not properly adjusted our vision' (Rodowick 2014: 74) it is worth attempting to clarify its content.

The conditions Cavell evokes, and whose description begins with the term 'skepticism' (understood broadly) amount to a displacement of immediacy. It is this displacement of immediacy that the world of film not merely registers but exposes and screens. Nothing else then is in question in film than this, the opening up of a distance of the world from itself.

Cavell's contention is precisely that this distance or loss that film confirms does not (or should not) sanction our despair, but inaugurate and rekindle our interest. The truth that Cavell's philosophy wants for itself—in inheriting Descartes, Emerson, Thoreau, Wittgenstein and Heidegger among others—is the acknowledgment that 'the human creature's basis in the world as a whole, its relation to the world, is not that of knowing' (CR: 241). Our work begins precisely from the acceptance of this truth and not from a stubborn refusal of it. If the truth of skepticism is thus what works through us, and therefore what truly needs to be worked through, the situation cinema makes evident is neither just a symptom of our malady nor a sign of our recovery. In the world of film our relation to the world is never at rest, but taken up every time anew. This makes of film not simply a figure of the conditions that have brought it about, but an active reorganization of these conditions. This is also why in Cavell's writing, as Sinnerbrink puts it, 'fragments on film are as essential to composing the theoretical whole in which such fragments find their most apt expression' (2011: 41). In other words the world of film is not a matter of images and likeness, but a gesture that endlessly invokes, convokes, provokes and acknowledges the conditions of the world. In a parenthetical remark from 'Knowing and Acknowledging' Cavell writes that acknowledgment is an existentiale (MWM: 263). Since for Heidegger an existentiale forms part of the ontological (rather than ontical) structure of Dasein, it becomes clear that here Cavell is borrowing the term to illustrate how the concept of acknowledgment puts in play the entire relation of the human creature with the world. Acknowledgment is the existential possibility of our

relation to the world. This can take the form of an acceptance of the world (because it cannot be *simply* known) or of a refusal of it (because it simply cannot *be known*). Depending on the choice (and both choices are open in all our choices) acknowledgment will produce a different relation to the world or even a denial of relation (as Cavell writes 'since the granting of consent entails acknowledgment of others, the withdrawal of consent entails the same acknowledgment' [CR: 27]).

Estrangement and Realization

Cavell's philosophical interest in film—just described as essentially determined by what one could call our (loss of) interest in the world—structures his understanding of the real that film addresses. The displacement of the world operated by film '*explains* our prior estrangement from it' (emphasis mine) (WV: 226).

Cavell writes that the only difference between the world of film and the world we inhabit is that the former does not exist *now*: 'there is no feature, or set of features, in which it [the world of film] differs. Existence is not a predicate' (WV: 24). By feature or set of features one should hear 'criteria'. It is worth recalling here that for Cavell criteria tell us what something is or as Mulhall puts it 'criteria are criteria of judgment; in using them a human being counts something under a concept' (1999: 82). Criteria do not tell us *that* something is and furthermore, as Affeldt makes clear, 'what we specify as our criteria for a concept will depend upon the specific occasion of asking and the specific need which our asking is to address' (1998: 14). In his discussion of Wittgenstein and Austin, Cavell associates the two, despite their different use of the term, precisely because for both criteria are criteria of identity and not of existence. The notion is crucial for Cavell, not simply for technical reasons, but because, as Glendinning highlights 'this shift of emphasis leads to a completely novel reading' (2014: 429) and allows Cavell to inherit Wittgenstein's thought not as a philosophy of language but as a study of 'the soul's investigation of itself' (CR: 15). One should then understand Cavell's use of criteria as derived from a particular reading of the *Philosophical Investigations*, one that, as Gould points out, Cavell deploys 'to realize and demonstrate that Wittgensteinian criteria are not intended, and not bound, to refute skepticism' (1998: 98). Cavell goes to considerable length to describe how the term 'criterion' as used by Wittgenstein differs from the same term deployed in ordinary language. This is so at least for three reasons: for Wittgenstein the appeal to criteria

does not proceed from the establishing of standards; the objects and concepts judged through criteria are ordinary; the source of authority is not a special jury, but 'us', or rather our agreement in 'forms of life' (PI: §241). Cavell's conclusion is that 'criteria are the means by which we learn what our concepts are' (CR: 16) and therefore what objects are (called). Criteria help us satisfying the wonder directed at what things are. They do so by telling us 'what we say when'. Cavell contests the view according to which Wittgenstein's criteria are meant to establish with certainty that something is and therefore fail at their task (they are non-satisfactory). As Cavell writes 'criteria of pain are satisfied […] by the presence of (what we take as, fix, accept, adopt, etc…, as) pain-behaviour (certain behaviour in certain circumstances)' (CR: 44). In other words when someone is feigning pain, displaying pain-behavior, what he is feigning *is* pain, not something else, therefore the criteria for pain are still valid (if they were not valid we would not even know that someone is feigning or what someone is feigning). The full reach of criteria is then revealed here: they respond to our wonder and tell us what things are 'not in the sense that they tell us of a thing's existence, but of something like its identity, not of its *being* so, but of its being *so*' (CR: 45). Criteria establish what something is and do not provide us with certainty that something is. To achieve something resembling existence something like our 'voice', our willingness to mean what we say in a specific context, has to be expressed and acknowledged. For example in *On Certainty* Wittgenstein writes that in the expression 'I am here' the meaning of the words 'is not determined by the situation, yet stands in need of such determination' (1972: §348). Cavell would explain this by saying that the problem is not simply with the words or with the context but with one's expectations, with one's desire to say more and yet less than what one means.[6]

This interpretation does not dismiss the question of existence, it rather points to two conclusions: skepticism is a natural possibility (language is indeed groundless); its conclusion can be taken up anew and used to revive our interest in the world. Wittgenstein's famous statement, 'explanations come to an end somewhere' (PI: §1) and other similar passages are not to be heard as cries of despair. They rather describe Wittgenstein's (and Cavell's) response to skepticism: the conclusion of skepticism (our

[6] Conant explains the passage in this way: 'the problem with his words thus lies neither in the words themselves nor in some inherent incompatibility between his words and a determinate context of use, but in his confused relation with respect to his words' (2005: 57).

relation to the world is not one of knowing with certainty) is irrefutable. Precisely because it is irrefutable the problem of our relation to the world does not entail a failure of knowledge but rather (a failure of) acknowledgment. Existence is not something we can define according to criteria. In this sense existence is always problematic and precisely because existence on film is still *always* problematic, film itself will cause the emergence of this balance between satisfaction and disappointment, the condition we and the world are in.

It becomes increasingly apparent from this that the problem of film, the problem of determining what film is (a question Cavell explicitly asks) is not the question of how similar things on film are to their counterpart or model in reality. Following Cavell one can say that they are not just similar they are exactly the same or, as Rothman puts it, 'the objects and persons projected on the screen are real' (2003: 207). For Cavell they are exactly the same because they are grammatically the same and grammar 'tells us what kind of an object anything is' (PI: §373) expressing therefore a thing's essence. We do not deploy different criteria and concepts for describing objects in real life and objects in the world of film. It should also become clear now why Cavell puts so much emphasis on remembering films, on expressing our memories of them, on wording and trusting our reactions, accepting that 'without this trust in one's experience, expressed as a willingness to find words for it, without thus taking an interest in it, one is without authority in one's own experience' (PH: 12). To be without authority in one's experience is to be without a world. As Kelly emphasizes for Cavell we must put ourselves in a state of 'heightened responsiveness' and 'carefully insist upon the significance of our experience' (2013: 166). The impulse for using criteria depends not on our anxiety as to something's existence (the anxiety is not dispelled by the perspicuousness of criteria) but on our desire to take something into account and to account for it. It depends on our desire to implicate ourselves in the world, to make sense of it and to expose its sense. Because film calls our attention to something, tells us that something counts as something, it teaches us 'how *different* different things are' (WV: 19) and because of this, as Rothman says, each reading of a film 'is at once criticism and philosophy, at once an experiential and a conceptual undertaking' (2003: 216).

One could therefore understand Cavell's investigation of film as grammatical in a Wittgensteinian sense. A grammatical investigation will attempt to answer two questions: How do you know what something is? How do

you know what knowledge is, consists of, amounts to? The answer to this second question can only be had once one has engaged actively, is absorbed in, the previous one. Knowledge is then not about the ground for certainty, but about what we call 'getting to know', identifying 'different objects with and from one another' (CR: 17). Cavell reconstructs from Wittgenstein three main steps to a grammatical investigation: we want to know something, we remind ourselves of what we say about this something, we ask ourselves what we go on, what motivates our saying some particular thing (CR: 29). In other words an investigation of this kind asks: What do *we* say when…? The 'we' is crucial because it is the fact that 'we' (all of us, human creatures, speakers) say something about something that provides authority to the answer. The 'we' has authority precisely because it does not depend nor realize any particular authority. In defending Austin from his critics Cavell writes that when a philosopher like Austin uses 'we' he is stressing that we imagine and act together and that something of his 'we' will touch *our lives*. It is therefore not the accumulation of empirical data that affords Austin the right to say 'we'. In fact nothing does, and this is exactly the point. Nothing grants him that right apart from the fact that Austin is (as we all are) speaking about and to the world. One can speak of 'we' when one is speaking of 'those necessities we cannot, being human, fail to know' (MWM: 96). The problem is not then that the claim to voice what we say implies a discounting of our subjectivity, but that this has to be included in as exemplary a fashion as possible. Cavell's method in *The World Viewed* is then this: not to convince the reader, but 'to get him to prove something, test something, against himself' (MWM: 95). Cavell's insistence on appeals to memory and to the *experience* of film depends on the lack of authority that bestows on every speaker the opportunity for authority. To get to the right depth of this one could say that in a sense the experience is more important than the works.[7] There is no single way, no set of evidences or empirical data that would provide us with certain knowledge of what a work is and therefore settle the question. We must constantly appeal to our

[7] As Cavell writes these experiences determine the difference between film and books or music: 'the events associated with the experiences of books and music are only occasionally as important as the experience of the works themselves. The events associated with movies are those of companionship or lack of companionship' (WV: 10). In *Pursuits of Happiness* he refers to Marx, Nietzsche, Emerson and Thoreau as writers who provide 'companionship in knowing' (7). For an intriguing assessment of the importance of companionship to Cavell's philosophical project see Dula, P. (2010), *Cavell, Companionship, and Christian Theology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

experience and refine its articulation, rather than giving it up. We can't give up expressing precisely because we can't know with absolute certainty what a work is. Once again this is paradigmatic of our relation to the world. It is the expression of our knowledge (acknowledgment) of the world that is at any stage defining of our relation with it. It is our way of articulating and rearticulating again the sense of the world that tells us who we are and what that sense might be. If this is the method then it makes sense for Cavell to express the crucial difference between paintings and film and photography by appealing to expressions such as 'what I really mean…', 'when I say…', 'you can always ask…' or 'when asked of…'.

Cavell and Bazin agree on two points: that photography is *of* the world; that it is based on an automatism that produces what Joel Snyder calls 'a fracture in nature' (1993: 364). However they disagree as to the origin and consequences of these facts. Bazin contends that photography due to the automatism through which it operates, has satisfied 'our obsession with realism' (1967: 12). Cavell's response is that photography was never in competition with painting for the simple reason that our obsession has never been with realism, in the sense of a more perfect mimesis, a more perfect absorption of the model. Photography was never going to satisfy our desire for likeness for two reasons: our desire was not for more mimesis; mimesis is not photography's territory. The craving that photography sates matures from a lack that became increasingly manifest at a particular moment in the history of the West and that epistemological skepticism and the gradual replacement of God with Reason also tried to meet. This lack is not a mimetic deficiency, but metaphysical finitude turned into (taken to be) an intellectual lack. In other words the metaphysical apprehension in question here responds to a deficiency with regard to the world, our desire for the 'power to reach this world, after having for so long tried, at last hopelessly, to manifest fidelity to another' (WV: 21). Our obsession has never been with realism, but with reality, with the realization of the world. Photography's response ultimately was that 'the connection with reality is not the provision of likeness' (WV: 21). This provision was perfectly available to painting and sculpture (at least since the Renaissance). As Cavell writes painting itself sacrificed likeness at some point because it became aware that likeness itself did not provide access to the world, connection with it.[8] Film's images establish a connection with reality and this

[8] See Jean-Marie Pontevia's *Tout peintre se peint soi-même: Ogni dipintore dipinge sè* (2002) and Gérard Granel's 'Le monde et son expression' (1995: 93).

connection is not due to the provision of likeness. Cavell insists that in these images the world exhibits itself (or as Trahair puts it, 'the world gives us an image' [2014: 132]) and plays therefore an 'active' role (WV: 123). As Rothman puts it 'the screen-frame, constantly in flux, can be made "the image of perfect attention"' (2000: 70).

Film and photography were never in competition with painting, since the latter's way of establishing connection with reality was always of a different kind. If film satisfied a wish it satisfied our ability to find a way into the world without having to theatricalize the self. To rewrite the human into the world without simply representing the terror produced by our abandonment to sense, this is the ambition film responds to. Thus film responds to a wish for otherness and selfhood, a wish that for Cavell is not satisfied by simply representing our response to the lack of given sense. What we are after is *making* sense of the world from within its absence, not *making* a picture of it, redoubling that absence.

This is also what Cavell is suggesting in aligning his ambition with Romanticism, Heidegger and Wittgenstein. Once the world has grown distant, once its sense is not given anymore, once we are *abandoned to* sense, the desire to access the world comes together, is conditioned by and is a condition of the need to write the world away from us. What Cavell invites us to think then is 'to wrestle the world from our possessions so that we may possess it again' (WV: 22). This double use of 'possess' calls for a clarification. The first occurrence ('our possessions') indicates that we must let go of the world, forgo the desire for total intelligibility after the desire for an omniscient God has been dissipated. The second use of the word 'possess' ('may possess') points toward a renewal and reversal of the very idea of possession. The second 'possess' does not restore what has been wrestled away, it radically changes the sense of possession, in a direction that aims to solicit a new relation with the world. In this relation what we have to possess is the power to be possessed, to make our experience of interest to us, available. The fact that we no longer possess a world on the one hand points to our present condition (sense is not given to us; as Nancy says 'there is no longer a world'), and on the other addresses our opportunities to articulate this absence: we can now possess it, as long as we become possessed by it. Our route back into the world does not lead to a given signification, a new ultimate order, but to interest, the possibility to be called and seduced by strangeness and the ability and authority to express this interest. To be seduced by a close-up means to be able to see it as 'part of an object supported by and reverberating the entire frame

of nature' (WV: 25). In other words the close-up calls for the ability to install oneself in this reverberation channeled by the object itself. This perhaps becomes more convincing once one emphasizes how for Cavell film has not provided the *solution* to the problem of the world. This problem is not one for which it is possible (or advised) to find a solution. Film does not provide in any sense a possibility of complete intelligibility. It releases the world once again from our wish for complete intelligibility—complete because exhaustive but also because independent of us—and it is in this sense that *film realizes the world*, making the sense of the world itself the impulse and drive of our interest and quest.

If this is the direction in which Cavell asks us to read his work, the material he offers on film's relation to the world becomes clearer. 'We might say that a painting *is* a world; a photograph is *of* the world' (WV: 24). At the edge of the canvas the world the painting *is* comes to an end. The frame completes that world by bringing it to an end. In a photograph it is only a photograph that comes to an end. The world that photograph is *of* does not. One could say that painting confirms our presence to the real by making the world our own, making the world into *a* world, producing a world on the canvas. Film on the other hand confirms reality by releasing the world from us, confirming its independence and our essential distance from it, but also its distance from a specific, apprehensible, given sense. Grammatically the difference is essential. Cavell writes: 'the camera being finite crops a portion of an infinitely larger field' (WV: 24). The camera, as finite, confronts and opens onto an infinitely larger field. This field is the world itself or better the sense of the world that opens itself up to finite reception. This passage can be read together with the one by Wittgenstein already recalled: 'the infinite is that whose essence is to exclude nothing finite' (PR: §138). The camera as finite is that which opens the possibility of an infinite field. It does so only by including it into a finitude, or rather by excluding it, by selecting and limiting only a part, by realizing the resonance and reverberation of 'the entire frame of nature'. This entirety exists then only in the 'cropping out' produced by the camera. If Cavell writes that the film's frame is limited in largeness only 'by the span of the world' (WV: 25), it is equally true that the span of the world is only realized by the limiting offered by the frame. This seems confirmed by Cavell in two more passages: 'the camera has been praised for extending the senses; it may as the world goes, deserve more praise for confining them, leaving room for thought' (WV: 24). Leaving room for thought suggests here that the finite amount of world the film frame presents *automatically*

makes room for the rest of the world, producing by delimitation a renewal of interest. The second passage completes the first by drawing a similar conclusion from an opposite tension: while cinema discovered the possibility of calling attention to the things of the world, for instance, through the use of close-ups and extreme close-ups, 'it is equally a possibility of the medium not to call attention to them, but rather, to let the world happen, to let its parts draw attention to themselves according to their natural weight' (WV: 25).

Moments of Innocence

Unlike Bazin, whose ontological argument Nancy and Cavell partly accept, both philosophers highlight how cinema contributes to our access to the world (thus continuing our problematic relation to it, by making it into *the* problem) by detaching itself from the ways in which this question was posed by other arts. Cinema opens up a new mode of access to the world, rather than remaining a new support for already accepted forms. Both Nancy and Cavell shift the focus from cinema as providing the mimetic illusion of reality to cinema's realization of the world. However this shift does not imply that their attention is now turned to film itself if this means to film's revelation of its own procedures. In different ways both displace the thematic importance of the 'film on film' idea. Nancy confronts Kiarostami's *Close Up* (1990), a work that explicitly deals with a multiplying of the figure of the filmmaker and with the proliferation of filmmaking. Bernard Stiegler comments that the film 'floats in a halo of indeterminations that sanctify the transgression of its main character' (2014: 40). *Close-up* narrates the actual case of Hossain Sabzian, a man who introduced himself to a woman on a bus as the popular filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf. Following this first introduction Sabzian convinces the woman's family to take part in rehearsals for his new film. At the end of the film, once the imposture has been exposed and the imbroglio has run its course, Makhmalbaf himself picks up Sabzian from the local prison and the two drive on the director's motorbike to the house of the family. Here Sabzian offers his apologies and a bunch of flowers. Kiarostami himself appears in the film as he interviews Sabzian in prison. Nancy's reading of the film stresses not the element of illusion, but the film's attempt to return cinema to the real. Sabzian provides the key to this interpretation. In one of the most convincing scenes of the film the aspiring director explains to a judge the motivations behind his decision to impersonate

Makhmalbaf. He denies the charge of fraud saying that for there to be fraud there has to be some element of deception, 'like carrying a briefcase to look the part'. No such make-believe has been enacted, Sabzian was just being 'himself', without props or disguises. He continues by saying that Makhmalbaf's *The Marriage of the Blessed* (1989) and Kiarostami's *The Traveler* (1974) spoke *for* him and depicted his suffering, thus granting him access to that very real feeling he could not express otherwise. Nancy concludes that Sebzian 'usurps a well-known filmmaker's identity so that, thanks to this simulacrum, he may touch what he considers the reality of an expression of life in its suffering' (EF: 21–22). The audio fading in and out in the closing shots of the film seems to confirm this idea: it is not a film that depicts and destroys the illusion of cinematic devices; at the opposite these devices are used to return cinema to the real, to acknowledge that cinema's opening (onto) the real causes the cinematic apparatus to be overwhelmed. Before any choice, gesture, camera movement or frame, cinema must bring itself to the point where it has to acknowledge a resistance from the real and in this resistance a sort of participation with it. Serge Daney captures this interested resistance with usual eloquence: 'because it is impossible to predict everything, what one needs to do is accommodate the "more" that comes from the real […] The filmmaker looks once and then he too becomes passive and disappears between what he has rendered and what he didn't want' (1993*:* 60, *translation mine*). Then the film-on-film mode is reversed here. The elements that seem to lead to a reflection on film's apparatus are actually fragments that show how the real and the look convoke and summon each other. Cinema as engine of illusions implodes and carries in this implosion also its opposite, the idea of cinema as *mimos*. Both converge toward a different paradigm: cinema as acknowledgment and mobilization of the world.

A very similar approach could be developed in relation to at least two other films. The first one is *Certified Copy* (2010). Here Kiarostami reverses from beginning to end the Platonic world of authentic representations. Where Plato moves from an original purity to which corresponds an original and exemplary similarity, Kiarostami makes of false pretenders the true original, thus disrupting the very logic of representation. This original disparity from the idea, whose intensity in the film constantly varies, demands to be judged as constitutive and therefore in itself, not referring to any previous identity. The disparate becomes the unity of measure. The two protagonists in the film (played by William Shimell and Juliette Binoche) spend the first half of the movie pretending

to be a couple, but end up forming a couple whose disparity does not proceed by reference to any previous identity. They liberate themselves from resemblance to another couple, an allegedly authentic, married one, and come to constitute a completely new one. The idea of resemblance itself comes under threat here. It is substituted by the completely new agitation they introduce by adhering to the model (husband, wife) with a zeal that culminates in the dissolution of the model. There is no first love, no original love, no authentic claimant and with a set of usurpers. There is only a chaotic opening of one to the other that slowly liberates unanticipated conditions. These are new to the point that they effectively exceed any anteriority. The claim they make is not against or in view of the original, but signals the emergence of an entirely singular relationship.

The second film is Makhmalbaf's *A Moment of Innocence* (1996). The story takes its cue from a biographical moment. At the age of seventeen the now-popular director was an active supporter of a change of regime in Iran. Together with a number of friends Makhmalbaf planned to disarm a policeman, use his gun to rob a bank and put the money at the service of the anti-Pahlavi resistance. The execution of the plan proved unsuccessful and Makhmalbaf was jailed, tortured and freed by militants following Khomeini's return in 1979. This is the story that serves as the basis for the film's plot. However this factual and documented experience does not tell us anything about the film. Another way of reconstructing the story (closer to what we actually see on the screen) would have to say that a police officer pays a visit to film director Mohsen Makhmalbaf, after having realized that this famous director is the same guy who once tried to kill him. The policeman offers his services as an actor, but Makhmalbaf casts him instead as a director. The policeman will have to direct *himself*, or rather his younger self, while Makhmalbaf will direct his own younger version. Once the parts of the 'young policeman' and the 'young Makhmalbaf' have been cast the four together will stage the assault that took place some 20 years earlier. However the actors refuse to reenact the event. As Hamid Dabashi writes 'we in effect have a crisis, a conflict, between what Makhmalbaf and the police officer did when they were younger, and the youngsters who now refuse to do what they had actually done in the past – trying to kill people' (2008: 123). What precisely is the nature of that *fact* that needs to be renegotiated via the interference of fantasy? What are the tools that can let us see that fact through the cinematic reenactment and only through this? What formal principles are we to use? What do we say about these formal principles once we take the fact to be immediately

caught up in its cinematic rendering? We start with a documented fact, but as soon as the film unfolds there is an erosion both of historical certainties and of the ways in which cinema lets them emerge, so that an answer can only come from this confusion.

A Scene of Instruction

Cinema can teach us, as Cavell writes 'how *different* different things are' (WV: 19). Film can be said to provide an education. This instruction however does not originate from a mimetic power, it is rather a matter of what Nancy, playing with the etymology of 'education', calls a 'bringing out', a gesture according to which the look learns to attend to the world and therefore is led toward that which escapes its capturing power. What in the world instructs the look is also what imposes on it a certain immobility, an arrest and a distance. This distance produces a stance, a way of regarding things.

Cavell insists on a similar point in order to reach this very measure, the acknowledgment of distance. Cinema is of the world and its frames produce a resonance onto the world that is therein implicitly included (because explicitly excluded). This satisfies for Cavell our wish, which modern philosophy had placed as our limit, to see 'the world itself' and therefore to fulfill 'the condition of viewing as such' (WV: 102). Film's e-ducation lies in its disclosure of this condition: film forces us to face our yearning to frame the world without this framing being revealed as *ours*.

Film does so by showing us the world's distance from us, its independence and separateness. Then one way to make something cinematically significant will be to articulate this separateness, the world from us and us from each other. One can see this double burden becoming a matrix of cinematic gestures in Asghar Farhadi's films. His work constantly returns to the problem of the camera's presence: this has to be granted permission in order to let the world exhibit itself and our distance from it, the paths of the world's separateness. The camera witnesses its own outsideness (by showing that what is relevant is often beyond the frame) and tries to transgress it (by showing us the world beyond frames, through broken windows, in private quarters). Gates and faces behind fences are recurrent in *Fireworks Wednesday* (2006), *About Elly* (2009) and *A Separation* (2011). Equally prominent is the motif of a broken window through which one sees the inside and from which one—unseen—peeps at the outside.

The most explicit instance of this strategy occurs perhaps in the first shot of *About Elly*. The frame is entirely dark save for a gap breached by a ray of light. As the shot is held the gap is revealed as a letterbox. The shot then morphs into a bright spot at the end of a tunnel on a busy highway. *A Separation* starts with a black frame, the inside a photocopy machine whose intermittent white light scans identification documents.

This film offers two more instances of this same reflection. The first one concerns the turning point of the film. Nader pushes Razieh out of the flat and closes the door behind her. The camera's view once again is blocked, so that the decisive seconds following Razieh's abrupt exit remain 'invisible'. The camera misses this defining event, or rather it is simply outside of it (an outsidedness epitomized by a door). The second instance concerns the scrutiny of Razieh's body. The question that recurs is: can we tell on film whether a woman is pregnant? This translates into an observation about the camera's ability to make something manifest. Where does the camera's power of visibility stop? Can the outward sign the camera manifests offer us criteria for what is happening to others? Farhadi acknowledges that what the camera manifests can at any time be more and less than what is visible. This can serve as a reminder that what a camera can do is no more and no less than what we can do: acknowledge that the world will not bend to my desires, that I risk absorption or disappearance. My separateness is not a dismissal of responsibility, but its beginning. As Cavell writes film develops as a natural vision the fact 'that actions move within a dark and shifting circle of intention and consequence, and that their limits are our own […] that their fate is to be taken out of our control' (WV: 153). The fact that we are sometimes beyond reach, sometimes unable to reach, can be the occasion of companionship without natural or divine backing. The problem is whether we can bear this endless responsibility.

In a passage on Baudelaire, Cavell writes that 'film returns to us and extends our first fascination with objects, with their inner and fixed lives' (WV: 43). The fact that objects are fixed implies that they have no power (unlike humans) to become other than they are, but the fact that they have inner lives has wider implications. Cavell continues the passage as follows 'where they [objects] are placed and why – this is something with a drama of its own, its unique logic of beginning, middle and end; and they create the kind of creature who may use them' (WV: 43–44). To say that objects create the creature who uses them means that by attending to them, by

patiently investigating what one can do with them and how one can do it, humans come to realize something about who they are. By attending to the world, by rediscovering our interest in it, we come to elucidate the conditions and modes of our life with it and with each other.

From this Cavell concludes that from film we learn the world itself, 'which in practice now means learning to stop altering it illegitimately, against itself' (WV: 102). Film thus invokes our situation in the world in two ways: on the one hand it tells us that a certain powerlessness is natural to us and on the other it invites us to think that it is not natural to assume that we are always naturally powerless. In other words, our displacement from the events on screen tells the story of our responsibility toward the world. This story has two sides: our displacement is natural inasmuch as our attempts to possess the world are constantly and inevitably rebuked (the world is not to be possessed, not something we can possess by perfecting, refining, honing our knowledge); unnatural if following the failure of these attempts we feel free to decline responsibility for what we say and do. Cavell insists that our inability to know is dictated by our unwillingness to know, in particular when this takes the form of wanting to know too much. One could say then that the problem arises not from wanting *too much* from our knowledge, but from wanting *knowledge* too much. We wish to overcome our displacement from the world, but we do so in the wrong way and therefore we guarantee it a new lease of life.

On the one hand film enlarges our fantasy of possession and on the other it shows us that possession of the world is precisely *our* own fantasy and that from within this fantasy we can give possession over (and be possessed), wrestle the world away from us so that we can possess it again. Similarly in his analysis of Wordsworth's poetry Cavell regards participation in the splendor of the everyday as achievable only after we have foregone the grief that follows our inevitable departure from childhood.

As the final scene of *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) reveals, only Rosemary herself is in a position to give the child over to the Devil, for it is only 'from within a fantasy of possession that the child could (logically) have been given' (WV: 89). In the very different *Five Easy Pieces* (1970) Bobby Dupea (played with subdued solemnity by Jack Nicholson) discovers that it is entirely up to him to let a new possession take hold (in the form of a father, his brother's girlfriend or Chopin's *Prelude in E Minor*) and, perhaps unsurprisingly, decides against it. In other words he accepts to remain somewhere between his successful dis-possession of the world and the incapacity to express anything different (be possessed). The truck

driver who picks him up at the petrol station after he has left his girlfriend behind suggests that this somewhere, this place between, 'is colder than hell' (and Dupea is not adequately attired). Another place exists where we can express the world after having learned how not to 'alter it illegitimately, against itself'. In this place we are *interested* and cinema reaches for it 'naturally'. As Cavell writes the camera left to itself 'awakens the self' to the unnatural naturalness of its lack of interest. Left to itself, the camera brings us outside and educates, claiming 'our attention wholly for *that* thing *now*' and showing that it is not 'novelty that has worn off, but our interest in our own experience' (WV: 122). If this is the case, if the camera can produce this turning when *left to itself*, it can also make evident how the world left to itself, not manipulated 'illegitimately, against itself', can elicit this interest. Rothman aptly captures this movement in Cavell's argument when he writes, 'that we do not know reality with certainty is a fact about what knowledge for human beings is. It does not follow that we cannot know the world' (2003: 207).

Film's astonishing facility to reach for the world can be seen by looking at the remainders of beauty offered even by the most unconvincing cinematic instances. This residue is almost impossible to erase (although its erasure could be the creation of a new 'medium' for film), it is for Cavell the power of cinema itself, its affirmation of the world despite or beyond the creative gesture: the truth of its automatism. Cinema reproduces the world automatically and because of this 'natural' overcoming of subjectivity, every instance of it, regardless of what formal decision informs it, makes the world arise from below once again. The essential feature of film thus, if there is one, is precisely that no instance of it can completely negate the medium. Its power to grant us access to the world is renewed each time, no matter how unpromising its material, how shallow or fraudulent its handling.

This allows us to see under a different light the idea of cinema's education. If it brings us outside, outside of the self sealed off from the world, outside of its nebulous theatricalization and expressionism, it is because it brings us to see that even the most unpromising material has its own orbit. This is in fact another way to express what Cavell has elsewhere called our quest for the ordinary.

The camera returns us to the everyday (and in this return there is a turning toward it, a turning of it) and shows us the eventual in the actual. Take Cavell's passage: 'that is what the camera, left to itself, is like: the objects it manufactures have for us the same natural interest, or fascination,

or boredom, or nothing, or poignance, or terror, as the world itself' (WV: 104). The problem is that this interest is not natural for us (anymore). The camera left to itself 'awakens the self' to the unnatural naturalness of its lack of interest. Left to itself, the camera brings us outside and educates. It does so simply, as simply as it did the first time an audience saw the succession of long shot, medium shot and close-up, enacted without cuts by the movement of a train. Almost 100 years of cinema later the train becomes a can that rolls and that Kiarostami lets roll. This shows that this same gesture of e-ducation is constantly repeated, that cinema can still 'spare our attention wholly for *that* thing *now*' and that it is not 'novelty that has worn off, but our interest in our own experience' (WV: 122). We can't entirely suppress this movement, for the medium of cinema is more effective than any of its instances and inevitably forces in some element of this interest. If this is the case, if the camera can produce this turning when *left to itself*, it can also make evident how the world left to itself, not manipulated 'illegitimately, against itself', can elicit this interest. The camera left to itself can give us the world: unpromising, uneventful, unmelodramatic and yet strange. Cavell reinforces this idea in another passage, this time on Akerman and her discovery of the violence of the ordinary in *Jeanne Dielmann* (1976): 'that Akerman's camera can as if discover suspense in what is not happening […] shows a faith in the sheer existence of film, the camera unadorned capacity for absorption, that approaches the prophetic' (2006: 257). This prophecy does not point to a more that we could see and therefore know, it rather achieves the absolute acceptance of the moment, 'by defeating the sway of the momentous' (WV: 117).

Cavell's interpretation of Frank Capra's *It Happened One Night* (1934) offers another instance of this. It is worth mentioning that Cavell's essay frames the film as an exploration of knowledge and the limits Kant set for it. In passages that show the extent of what Sinnerbrink calls Cavell's 'aesthetic receptivity' (2014: 56), the philosopher takes the makeshift wall, a blanket erected by Gable and Colbert in the shared auto camp cabin during their first night together, as a figure for the limits of knowledge. The blanket must fall so that the happenings of the night can be unveiled, revealing what Cavell identifies as 'the central problem of the pair' (PH: 102). Surprisingly however the character played by Gable instead of accepting the transgression he longs for (he has said so himself) withdraws and panics after the barrier has collapsed. In other words he shows himself incapable of living up to what he desires: acknowledging *this* woman, *her* singularity. He declares to want 'a girl who is hungry

for those things'—and he wants chiefly for the girl to be 'real' and 'alive' (but also willing to jump in the surf with him). When these things seem to become real and alive he can't put together 'his perception and his imagination, his and her day and night' (PH: 109). The girl capable of sharing that hunger is right there in front of him, in body and words, she has crossed the blanket to reply unwaveringly: 'take me to your island, I want to do all those things… nothing else matters'. She finds though that he is too busy putting up another blanket. For Cavell the film shows that substituting knowledge for acknowledgment produces a specific kind of violence on the world (and therefore on others). Our finitude puts us in a position where we have to forgo the desire for a position outside the world, from which to view and arrange our fate. In these matters there is only one option, to make things happen, but 'to make things happen, you must let them happen' (PH: 109). Without this acceptance of loss there is no knowledge whose grasping would produce the intended result. What then puts the camera in a position to educate is its power to disperse not the loss, but the terror of loss, our inability to lose the sense of loss, the paralyzing dread at the forfeiture of propriety implied by our emergence from innocence. To allow propriety to vanish means to put oneself in the position to attend to the world, 'the reception of actuality – the pain and balm in the truth of the only world: that it exists and I in it' (WV: 117). For something to be so received one has to be capable to let things be, 'to act without performing, to allow action all and only the significance of its specific traces' (WV: 153).

The idea of acknowledgment then seems to run against that of self-exhibition. Cavell's passages on the contrast between the two help clarifying what one could mean by cinema's ability to *realize the world*, or as Cavell puts it, to produce 'automatic world projections' (WV: 105). Cavell's argument in *The World Viewed* could be reduced to three points: the question 'what is film?' should be answered by looking at the physical basis of film; this basis is *of* the world and presents us with the automatic reproduction of the world itself; each instance, each film, rediscovers the medium itself and the best films are those that give fullest significance to the possibilities of the medium's physical basis. These possibilities cannot be known in advance of particular solutions offered in the medium's instances, but will nonetheless always have to acknowledge what film 'can do': automatically reproduce the world.

What does 'giving fullest significance' stand for here? One way to understand this would be to follow Cavell's effort to explain why self-exhibition

is the wrong strategy for the right purpose. The right purpose is the fact that each film has to acknowledge its medium and it is in this acknowledgment that a new possibility is realized (Cavell's name for this correspondence between element and significance is 'cinematic circle' [WV: xiv]). The wrong strategy points to an essential confusion: what needs to be acknowledged in the medium is not the medium's procedure, but what the medium itself acts upon. As Düttmann writes 'no "element" is encountered for its own sake, as a dumb thing, and no "significance" rises above the "elements" as an abstract thought' (2009: 58). While Cavell's movement between a historical analysis of modernity and a structural one makes the reading of his argument at times difficult, one conclusion can be drawn: each film has to acknowledge both the lack of an ultimate possibility (accomplishment of signification) and the limitation of possibilities provided by the medium's conditions. Painting's condition is total thereness, its being wholly there, totally open, in denial of physical spatiality. The denial of representation in favor of abstraction is painting's way to admit to itself the failure of representation to open access to the world and to attempt to establish again presentness to and of the world. Film does not need to establish this presentness: the world is automatically there and motion releases the subject from the last residue of theatricality (which still 'threatens' photography). Then the question that emerges is: what is it that requires acknowledgment in the making of films? What is it that films have to acknowledge in order to give fullest significance to their medium? Cavell takes objection with the answer that 'for a work to acknowledge itself is to refer to itself' (WV: 123). The work that needs to be done by films is for Cavell of a different nature. To understand what movies have to acknowledge means to understand what forms acknowledgment can take. Acknowledgment of other people (their pain, joy, suffering, *this* existence) is not achieved through a reference to the self, but through an expression or denial of the existence of others. This work surpasses any knowledge we can have of this particular existence (of this pain) and is therefore never finished. Self-reference can be seen to run counter to acknowledgment. Instead of providing conviction by showing self-awareness, the insistence on the self invalidates conviction. Following this logic Cavell writes that 'self-reference is no more an assurance of candor in movies than in any other human undertaking. It is merely a stronger and more dangerous claim, a further opportunity for the exhibiting of the self' (WV: 124). Self-reference can nonetheless be used to comic effects, to show how for instance film can undo the theatricality that is the domain of photography.

While film escapes into candor naturally, photography has to work for it. An instance of this is offered by Martha Raye's famous 'Watch the birdie' routine in *Hellzapoppin'* (1941). The scene could be read as a demonstration of the movement from photography to film and vice versa, developed by juxtaposing the casualness that motion imposes to the posturing imposed by photography. As Raye sings 'Watch the birdie, come on and give it all you've got' we are presented with the passage from motion to slow motion to stillness and can test against ourselves the different effects these stages produce. The subjects moved by the presence of the camera to stop and 'strike a funny pose' are condemned to become subjects not for the still camera (we could assume it has no film inside) but for our laughter (by falling in to a swimming pool or by being asked to get out of the way). The comedic tone of this attempt is redemptive inasmuch as it refuses to take seriously the idea that we could escape the self by preparing a stage for it, a position from which to gain ultimate assurance, a step to step out of the world.

What the camera wants to reveal by revealing itself is the same thing we want to reveal when we feel that what we say does not make a connection with what our words are meant to address. The discrepancy makes us feel that the connection should be stronger, language is not doing its job, we want either our words to do more, as Cavell puts it, or we wish to 'speak above the conscience at the back of our words' (2003a: 42). The readiness of the camera to exhibit itself responds to the same anxiety. To borrow once again from the argument exposed in *The Claim of Reason*: the necessity of the connection between 'our words' and 'what we mean' is not revealed 'by universals, propositions, or rules, but by the form of life which makes certain stretches of syntactical utterance assertions' (CR: 208). It is not by revealing rules and universals that we come to *mean what we say*. Equally the camera's attempt to acknowledge its work by putting itself (or the entire cinematic apparatus) in view runs against the impossibility of actually achieving the surplus of meaning we are after. The camera's visibility does not get it any closer to the immediacy that we anxiously craves. At the opposite the camera's gesture to reveal itself distances it from what belongs to it: immediacy and candor are achieved through the camera's ability to let something reveal itself. Whether this denial is a denial to see or a denial to the time and space it takes for things to be seen, it produces the same effect, carrying us a step further away from the connection we covet. We should rather keep in mind that 'we are at the mercy of what the medium captures for us, and what it chooses, or refuses, to hold for us' (WV: 126).

Cavell concludes that the presence of the camera 'has to be acknowledged in the work it does' (WV: 128). But isn't this exactly what it is a matter of when the camera shows itself, makes itself visible, becomes part of the film? Showing that his intention is both to explain self-reference and to ultimately deny its significance, Cavell rebukes this zeal by asking in return: 'but isn't the projected image itself a sufficient acknowledgment?' (WV: 128).

As one would expect though the question is not settled. The camera's revelation of its work follows the same logic as the acknowledgment of another existence: in both cases it is a matter of expressing 'something specifically done or not done' (WV: 128), of articulating the knowledge of something rather than accepting one's presence to it as sufficient. In *Pursuits of Happiness* Cavell speaks of the camera's 'instinct' and 'motivation', 'inflections' and 'allegiances' as if suggesting that its behavior is to be likened to that of an agent. The passages dedicated to Cukor's *Adam's Rib* (1949) illuminate the philosophical complexity of the idea, while providing an insight into what Klevan calls Cavell's 'acuity and perspicacity' (2011: 49). In one of the most memorable scenes from this memorable film Tracy and Hepburn speak to each other from different rooms, while the camera frames the empty space that separates them. The camera *abides*, holding a still frame and this apparent silence becomes the most appropriate response to the pair's exchange. The camera's silence, its acceptance of exclusion, is a particular response to something occurring between the two characters. Every inflection of the camera has to work as a particular response or adjustment or denial, or repression of something happening in the film (one could call this the marrying of content and form). Assigning significance to these silences and gestures is what Cavell calls the determination of 'why the cinematic event is what it is *here*, at this moment in this film' (PH: 202–203). The singularity of these observations in turn allows us to decide 'what the cinematic event is'. On the other hand a self-referential confession forces the camera to assume it can know the knowledge it produces prior to having gone through what it takes to know. What it takes to know in this case is what the cinematic event is. For Cavell 'no event within a film is as significant as the event of film itself' (PH: 207). However this can be tested and revealed only by testing and revealing one's own experience of specific films because this event is disclosed in specific films or as Ray puts it in his discussion of Cavell's descriptive method, 'each movie amounts to its own specific case' (2013: 174). As Cavell writes 'what the maker of film does with the facts

of film (call this his or her style) is to reveal that event, to participate in discovering its unfolding significance' (PH: 208). The camera reveals itself by doing something in a particular way. This doing says something about the camera's subjects and about the relation between the two. The establishment of this relation is in turn revealing of the cinematic automatism itself, something that is beyond the singular film itself and yet realized only there, something whose significance exists only within the particular film, without ever being completely decided by one film.

The relation and the questions it prompts cannot be forgone, neither by the camera revealing itself nor by the camera disappearing in its subject's point of view. *Dark Passage* (1947), the third installment in the Bogart-Bacall series, provides an illuminating instance of this. The opening scenes are all shot in subjective point of view, therefore we never see the protagonist's face, but only what his eyes are seeing. We later discover that this is the view from the one who will never come into view, since the character's face is revealed only after a surgery has completely altered its features. The change of face brings the camera back to the other side. The question of identity as a matter of visibility is resolved here through invisibility, but could be otherwise developed in terms of transparency. This is the strategy adopted by Hiroshi Teshigahara in *The Face of Another* (1966). In the film's exposition the character introduces himself as someone in exile from his own self, while we see a rotating X-ray shot of his head (a skull then, not a face). A specific configuration of the identity-visibility couple is worked out in Spike Jonze's subtly stylized *Her* (2013). Here one of the two main characters (voiced by Scarlett Johansson) is a disembodied operating system. The operating system gives itself a name (Samantha) and is identified early in the film by a logo or by the earpiece its owner/boyfriend Theodor (Joaquin Phoenix) uses to communicate with it. When Samantha decides to hire a woman as a stand-in for a sexual encounter the experiment fails. Theodor's reluctance seems to signal that the visibility produced by the voice provides, as things stand, enough satisfaction.

The question is not how the camera finds a way to erase itself or jump in full view. The question is what position it occupies and how. The camera is the blind spot of viewing, the blind spot that produces the evidence and cannot enter into this evidence. In this sense the POV, where the camera and the character's eyes hide within one another, is a doubling of the camera's unknownness, to use another of Cavell's terms (the possibilities of the subjective point of view have been explored very early on in film, famously by Gance in *Napoléon* [1927]). Not surprisingly the strategy is used often

in dream sequences and horror films, where a character, having become an enigma to herself experiences a sense of categorical isolation. Film has introduced a whole range of psychologically unstable characters, Norman Bates and Mark Lewis (*Peeping Tom* [1960]) being the most recognizable epitomes, whose instability is shown in POV. In *The Tenant* (1976) Polanski uses the subjective shot precisely to show us the difference between character and camera, between the everyday of the hallucinating mind and the actual every day. The character sees his neighbors as demons plotting his downfall and forcing his suicide. For long spells the character's view is all we have: we too are afraid of the spiteful and distorted faces, we too hear the heightened sound of the tap dripping. When the camera changes position however we see not demons, but perplexed and worried humans. The same device was in incubation in the earlier *Repulsion* (1965), where two skinned rabbits become for Deneuve the visible evidence of the perceived monstrosity of the world. David Lynch often adopts a similar strategy albeit to different effects (in *Lost Highway* (1997) this possibility inhabits the entire structure of the film).

The camera's responsibility is precisely that of acknowledging itself as the blind spot of its own vision (but then this vision is not 'its own' anymore). The camera has to acknowledge its being outside the view it produces and because of its outsideness it has to take responsibility for the separateness of what it makes visible. This is a harder acknowledgment but not one anything can satisfyingly substitute. In this context of knowing and being known the piece of knowledge that the camera has to acquire is one that can be so acquired only by being relinquished. In this sense, Lynch and Polanski's films challenge us because they represent fear as inherent in our craving for the world: its independence and strangeness can at any point appear deadly.

The truth that the world exists and I in it (I have this existence, this world, and no another) is phrased by Cavell with a concise formula: 'the camera has to be somewhere, it can be anywhere' (WV: 143). The matter is twofold: that the camera has to be somewhere means that wherever it is this place will have a significance, a significance that cannot be simply sidestepped (we can't forget it because the camera will not forget us). On the other hand to say that 'it can be anywhere' means that *this place* implies a specific kind of responsibility. The responsibility is toward the cinematic event itself, what every film has to acknowledge.

This brings us back to the beginning. The cinematic event is the possibility to automatically produce world projections, in order to let the

world exhibit itself. In order to do this film's automatism declares that its innermost possibility resides at its very limit: it can reveal only what is revealed to it. But crucially it can reveal all that is revealed to it. For something to be so revealed film has to be capable to let things be, 'to act without performing, to allow action all and only the significance of its specific traces' (WV: 153). What film is responsible for is to allow the world to reveal itself without manufacturing a response, because its own very response is the world's revelation. The camera has to acknowledge its 'outsideness to its world' (WV: 133). The camera is outside the vision it produces and opening access to the world, letting the world reveal itself, setting reality in motion, is only possible if this being outside, as a blind spot, is directly accepted. This can also be seen in what becomes of people on film. Cavell establishes early in *The World Viewed* the distinction between the actor on stage and the type on screen. While on stage there are two beings—character and actor—on screen, as Rothman and Keane write, there is only 'a "human something", not in principle separable from the being the performer is' (2000: 74). Rather than being a reductionist approach to the role of acting or characterization on screen, this remark points to the fact that subjects of film do not 'act'. Film shows us all to be actors, in the sense of showing us all as not completely in control of the foreign animation the camera imposes on us. Cavell calls a natural vision of film the fact that trivial matters achieve a splendid casualness and that despite the studied nature of the performance, what we do is pushed out of our range of control. This has become the theme of many a film, but it achieves a particular significance in Woody Allen's *Another Woman* (1988). The idea that sometimes our confessions do not confess us, that we do not grant ourselves whatever we take for granted (we rather deny it to ourselves), that the life of others can show us what risks hide behind our safest choices is developed in this film to an extraordinary degree. Marion, played by Gena Rowlands, a teacher and writer of philosophy and the 'other woman' of the title is other than she thinks she is, other than she takes herself to be. Everybody else apart from her seems to be aware of the small tragedy of this discrepancy (although we are not allowed to see this until Marion meets an old friend). This revelation comes to her from a 'talking' radiator. The film's insistence on the visual imbalance between Marion and Hope (Mia Farrow) is key to the success of this strategy. The voice Marion overhears is for long spells disembodied, while the camera patiently attends to Marion's physiognomy and bodily expression. When Hope is finally revealed as the source of the voice Marion can hear from

her apartment the imbalance is reversed: Hope's pregnant body forces on Marion a degree of invisibility. The voice of the radiator needs to be suppressed (this is shown by Allen with a graceful lightness that adds gravity to the situation), but stubbornly resists Marion's attempt to reduce its noise. The radiator pronounces threatening words: 'I began having troubling thoughts about my life, like there was something about it not real, full of deceptions… these deceptions had become so many and so much a part of me now, that I couldn't even tell who I really was… And suddenly I began to perspire. I sat up in bed with my heart just pounding, and I looked at my husband next to me, and it was as if he was a stranger'. Following these sequences we come to perceive a false sound in whatever Marion expresses; her words do not wear the warmth of her breath. It is not routine that she has to struggle against, but the control she thinks she has on herself. She gets to finally learn this and pays the fee this tuition exacts. To act without performing, this is something film can realize naturally, the world in its candor. In his analysis of Cavell's writing on melodrama Rothmann notes that the philosopher 'argues that on film it is the human condition to be embodied, hence that film's emphasis on the bodies of women reveals that the medium singles women out as examplars' (2003: 214).

One can then conclude that what film has to acknowledge is that with it reality can be revealed only by accepting its independence from us, but also that through it 'reality is freed to exhibit itself' (WV: 43). The word to pay attention to here is 'freed'. Reality is not said to be *free* to exhibit itself, it is rather 'freed', released to exhibit itself. Its exhibition is *realized*. Another way of saying this is that the camera opens up for us a moment of metaphysical wait: 'you cannot know what you have made the camera do, what is revealed to it, until its results have appeared' (WV: 185). The authority of what has been realized, set in motion, is total, the appearing of the real through the camera cannot be fathomed before it does appear. Film settles the question of our connection with reality 'at a stroke' (WV: 195) by automatically establishing connection with it. As Cavell writes: 'the insistence on reality is not a matter of ethical purity but of cinematic fact' (WV: 198). The question of reality then is that of a connection at a distance, it is the acknowledgment of our separateness from it, a separateness that instantiates and instigates, rather than covering up our responsibilities. We are responsible for letting the world reveal itself and with this revelation we are responsible for the whole world that resonates within and beyond the frame.

Nancy's idea that cinema is an ethos, a condition rather than a strategy of representation, comes here together with Cavell's expression that the camera, if it is to reveal anything, has to acknowledge its distance from the reality it reveals, its inability to master its view, but only to realize it and to free it. Both philosophers seem to invoke a *power of patience* that could open one's access to the world, to open it in the only way it can be opened, as something going beyond myself, extending the reach of my words and actions, pushing them beyond my reasonable control, beyond my epistemological doubts. In order to have the world one needs to let it be and the fascination therein produced is always accompanied by partiality, outsideness, contingency. It is a limited access, but it is this very limitation that ultimately awards it its singularity. The world is received on this condition or else it is missed. Unless one can open and maintain a connection with the world from the fragments of it that one is given, accepting its survival beyond the reach of one's actions and accepting that responsibility for it extends beyond the privacy we wish upon ourselves, the world will drop out, an inert object. As Wolfe writes: 'if the demand for foundational concepts, abstract synthesis, and unity of judgments only drives the world away from us in the very act of trying to grasp and apprehend it, then thinking must be reconceived' (2010: 242).

The last seven minutes of Antonioni's *Eclipse* (1962) offer an anticipation of what the access just described might amount to. Following the last failed approach between Vitti and Delon the film abandons the two characters and moves to its epilogue. This final sequence is often read as an exemplary illustration of nihilism, precisely because the human characters rather than acting on the world seem to receive the world's actions. Cavell writes that in this scene Antonioni is acknowledging the possibilities for one's thoughts to turn to the stars, a gesture that is possible only for those who live in this world and are conditioned therefore by this world's conditions. This opening toward the stars of our world comes by way of an acknowledgment of what Cavell calls 'nature's own patience' (WV: 142). This is not what we would call an image of nature, but the agitation produced by attentiveness.

Nancy arrives at something similar in his reading of Kiarostami. *Close-up* (1990) and *The Wind Will Carry Us* (1999) present images of a rolling thing (a can in the first one, an apple in the second). The camera follows this movement that seems to elude the film's direction, its goal and intention. While this movement could be taken as a 'figure' for cinema, Nancy reads it otherwise, as 'the truth of the thing'. The filmmaker responds to

the patience demanded by the thing to see where this movement and this truth are going. 'The thing rolls and while rolling it goes nowhere else than toward immobility, a stop (almost a 'freeze-frame') that posits the truth of motion as motion formed the truth of the thing, whose shape makes it roll' (EF: 27–29, *trans. mod.*). Immobility is not stasis, but that which opens our eyes onto motion, the possibility of turning our thoughts to the 'place of waiting and thinking' (EF: 31, *trans. mod.*). Thus one has in this immobility not the thing as sign of something, but the thing as engagement with the world. The look is this regard not for the sign it produces but for the engagement and interest it solicits, for the patience it demands. Nancy sees a transition here of cinema from representation to presence. This presence 'is not a matter of vision: it offers itself to an encounter, a preoccupation or a care' (EF: 31). There is an animated look that tries to put fragments of attention together through its engagement with what is offered to it. It is a matter then of being attentive, letting things present themselves and letting them withdraw. Nothing we do allows us to break out of the singularity of our engagement with the world. In Emerson's *Experience* one reads 'Patience and patience, we shall win at last' (2003: 310). Cavell responds that precisely this 'is the work of realizing your world' (ET: 136).

CHAPTER 5

The Patience of Film

The Image: Running Away from Us

Cinema realizes the world by calling attention on the one hand to our interest and the other to our partiality. What becomes of the cinematic image once we understand the power of film as a power of patience, the possibility to realize the world by attending to it, by letting it reveal itself? The shift could be said to be between the image as enclosure that captures the world to the image as the limiting that releases the world. If, as Heidegger notices, the world as picture is always the world reduced by man to an object, then the cinematic image discussed by Nancy and Cavell moves in the opposite direction: the image as that which bars the way of man's precedence over what is. The film is the event through which an element of the world comes to us, a singular presentation of 'the syntaxes of the world' (Granel 1995: 107). I take Cavell's remark that film brings the problem of reality 'to some ultimate head' to translate the idea that while film connects us with reality automatically, this connection is accompanied by a withdrawal. This withdrawal cannot be made into a picture; it is what the cinematic image releases. What becomes then of the cinematic image if this puts itself always under this logic of release and realization? One could start by saying what this does not mean. It does not mean that anything the camera records in whatever fashion will be significant. It also does not mean that naturally the world will tell us what works and what does not. The world does not speak to us unless we are already drawn to interest,

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ready for a response. The task is not that of hoping for the world to reveal itself, but to put oneself in a position where this is possible. It is not absolute passivity we are looking for, but the ability to be struck and therefore respond. It is one of Cavell's tenets that any achievement worth this name implies that we are neither dictating to the world nor dictated by it, but spoken for by the way in which we respond to the world. Cary Wolfe in his reading of Emerson calls it a 'maximally [...] active passivity' (2010: 262). If what is revealed in our responses is mystery, opacity and obscurity, this will also inevitably speak of an obscurity in the sense of the world. What is revealed by the film is always automatically 'compromised' by the subjects' revelation. Another way to say this is that film is not capable of *not* revealing what the world reveals of itself, it is a most difficult task that of removing the world from a film. In Nancy's words 'the film-maker (*réalisateur*) doesn't make (*ne réalise*) anything else than a realization of the real' (EF: 39).

These images will allow us to see, as Cavell puts is, 'that there is no one something' (IQO: 136) that guarantees our relation with the world and provide the answer to the question 'What would it be to see such things?' or better to see things in this way. Ultimately perhaps there are images that provide an evidence of this nothing the truth of which, as Heidegger says, 'will be given over to man when he has overcome himself as subject, and that means when he no longer represents that which is as object' (QCT: 154). Then if cinema is this non-representative art, it provides an exit from that which had provided an exit from God, namely Reason as God, and provides the tuition that things must be taken 'one at a time' (WV: 115).

The cinematic image then is opened to another register. It won't be the register of the copy, of the weakened appearance, of the simulacrum. It is always the whole world that resonates in the image and whose sense therefore always continues in and beyond the image, by way of it, through the piercing this has produced. The filmmaker himself—Cavell calls him a 'passive trickster' who waves goodbye to his work, who has to sit back and become external to it before it is accomplished—has this one task: to eliminate the superior and the inferior, the distinction between depth and surface. His making pertains to the world and amounts to finding the way to make two gazes look at each other. The image demands this from the ones who make it, that they subject themselves to what in the image looks at them. The first gesture is always one of meeting the world, and

this meeting is always also a realization, a respect that realizes. To make an image in this case would be to find a way to meet the world on equal footing (and not as if it 'belonged' to us) and by so meeting it to make sense of it, cutting into the passage of sense that happens there and nowhere else. As Nancy writes: 'respect meets that which it respects on an equal level: on the same level yet in otherness. Otherness is that of another gaze' (EF: 39). There is no beyond that controls our doing, there is only the pressure exerted on us by otherness, by the world *to* which we are. If the image opens two looks to each other, if it becomes the meeting point of a pressure, then it is not a surface or a ground, but a passage, a resonance. What appears of this passage is not *something* but the necessary distance between two looks, their reciprocal pressure, their crossing that establishes the conditions of looking as such.

The image is not the fixing of things (both Cavell and Nancy insist on motionless and stillness in cinema as that which engages the trembling of the world, without ever fixing or recording anything), their being pinned down, but that which carries and is carried away by the patience of the world, its continuous passing into presence and then returning to passage. Patience as the possibility of looking makes possible the return of the other gaze, the gaze of that which is always other, the world itself in the act of looking, 'so that we may see for ourselves and may gladly grant that we are somewhat spoken for' (WV: 189). The image must then reaffirm what Cavell calls the camera's outsideness to the world it realizes. Far from being a natural consequence of the placing of the camera, this distance is the very first sign of our aiming for something, of what we mean by and through an image. As Cavell puts it 'for separate creatures of sense and soul, for earthlings, meaning is a matter of expression […] expressionless is not a reprieve from meaning, but a particular mode of it' (WV: 107). Nancy calls this distance an impregnation. The image can only receive at the price of becoming pregnant with this distance, receiving and disposing itself for it (in *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche links thinking with pregnancy: 'this task will rule among and in the individual facets of his destiny like an individual pregnancy […] Our vocation commands and disposes of us even when we do not yet know it' (10) and this then with patience: 'there are highly gifted spirits who are always unfruitful simply because […] they are too impatient to wait out the term of their pregnancy' (264)). It is in this distance that something like an evidence can be recognized. While the evidence then offers no possibility to doubt, it also subtracts itself from an agent that grasps, from the mastery of a vision.

When it is a matter of evidence it is also a matter of something running away from us, a piece of life offered and withdrawn, offered because withdrawn. The image opens itself to the world by opening itself up to what cannot be contained within the image, but which the image nonetheless releases. Following the logic invoked by Granel (1995: 132) one could say that the border of the image is the opening of the world.[1] Cinematic images cannot be said to copy or mirror a reality that would both be external to them and already granted in its identity. The image is a form of 'exposure' and what it constantly exposes is the irreducibility of the world to something like a ground or identity. The mystery, which the image receives, is the world's irreducibility, but the image does nothing to elucidate its secret, it presents it and in presenting shows itself as constantly turned toward the outside. Where the image makes contact with the world, it produces a separation and through this separation the only kind of intimacy one can achieve, an intimacy of two outsides, one tending toward the other, a patient distension of one toward the other. It is worth noting here how Nancy recuperates from the etymology of evidence the idea of energy and power, 'the distance of the evidence gives both the measure of its removal and of its power.' (EF: 43). As Ian James notices the language used by Nancy throughout the text recalls the idea of 'the sudden pressure of an exterior force' (2007: 72). Evidence here would then be the energy the image receives and through which it distends itself. As energy, evidence exercises a force, maintains the distance, thus becoming available for the image (not *as* image), thus providing the image with a certain power. To be able to keep oneself at the right distance requires a power of patience. This power however is one that excludes any reciprocity, fusion or immediacy, it lets us envisage a rupture and through this rupture an access to the world. I take Cavell to imply something similar when he writes that the 'splendid vision' that opens us to the world again once the immediacy of childhood is renounced proceeds from the knowledge of loss, from the acknowledgment of the world's separation and independence. The image then opens onto the world itself, avoiding any interiority or absorption and this is images' privilege. In Nancy's words: 'it is a matter of the image insofar as it opens onto the real and insofar as only the image opens onto the real. The reality of the image is the access to the real *itself*' (EF: 17). The sense of the passage 'only the image opens onto the real' can be understood as the insistence on the real as that which is neither

[1] Granel writes: 'it is at the Closed that the Open itself begins'.

given nor determined, but presents itself only when we open ourselves to it. Unless we engage ourselves, we commit ourselves to this opening, which is reception and expression at once (in one word, patience), there is no sense. Thus when Nancy says that Kiarostami 'thinks' and therefore 'films' he is not describing the privilege of thinking over filming or assigning to himself the authority to guess what Kiarostami thinks. What is at stake is the solidarity in the irreducibility of the two gestures. Both gestures, the philosopher's and the filmmaker's, have to release a power that patiently realizes the world, that patiently receives and expresses the excess the world is with regard to its assigned significations. Confronting the excess the world *is* (in excess of our certainty, mastery, knowledge) always requires finding a measure. The image as measure is not that which contains, but that which accepts and delivers its very unverifiability. As measure the image also interrupts every form of self-sufficiency. This leads Nancy to also refuse the idea of subjectivity as imposing itself on the world. If subjectivity is involved in the automatic presentation of the world that is at stake in film, it is *a patient subjectivity*, one that expresses itself out of the interruption it receives. As Nancy writes 'the image is then not the projection of a subject, neither his representation nor his phantasm, but it is this outside of the world where the look loses itself to find itself again as regard for what is there' (EF: 65). The camera brings itself before the world, it receives a distance (it remains outside, Cavell would say) and in thus tending to the world it lets the world expose itself to it. There is then in this exposure an insistence that the camera can only receive, a resistance to a pre-given attitude (we often feel that what we see through the lens is very different from what we see with the naked eye; this depends not only on the type of lens, always different from the naked eye, but on the different pressure exercised by the world once it is framed).

Method and chance coexist here. It is easier perhaps to see this in shots of landscapes (which Kiarostami's films abound of). Landscapes meet our gaze and behold it there, in the impossibility of grasping this excess, of deciding over the something that attracts us (what shall we look at), of following their motionless amplification. In a landscape there is always too much to see or nothing left to see (if this means controlling with the eye). In *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (2012) Nuri Bilge Ceylan orchestrates a series of nocturnal landscapes whose darkness is pierced by the headlights of three cars. Regardless of how far and how quick the police cars travel the night won't pass and won't let anything pass through it. The stillness of the night absorbs the headlights of the car, the detectives are constantly looking for something

that can't be seen—a buried body. No amount of light could illuminate this, unless we are willing to see as it were without light (the buried body exists in a place no light can approach, the method needed is one of excavation, of feeling the ground, something a dog may do better than a man). The waiting this film imposes on the audience is the instruction coming from film itself, it takes patience to see, eyes have to get used to the dark (to not seeing), the passage between night and day becomes a task and not a natural alternation.

In the landscapes of Patrick Keiller as in those of James Benning one has the impression that what is at stake is something else than a look, perhaps an 'overlook', both in terms of a look that sidesteps acquired ways of looking at space (psychological projections) and in terms of looking over and over again at neglected spaces. Here landscapes present the world as a voiding of significations, a presence that comes to us as if testing our ability to look: there is too much to see and too little is visible. Patience names precisely this gesture that receives and realizes the world.

The right distance of the image is not a matter of size: close-ups can work as well as wide shots. The right distance is a matter of justice and justice is a matter of measuring up to the real: that life continues without going to a point where it could be said to find its sense. Then images do not alienate this thought, they do not alienate the sense of life beyond completion. They rather present it without representing it, they install themselves in this opening, they fray it and are frayed by it. Every possibility to represent has already been emptied.

Then cinema becomes a condition more than a representation: patience directed toward the refractory singularity of the world, its sense both received and expressed. Nancy writes: 'the just look is a respect for the real looked at, which means an attention and an opening to the very force of this real and to is absolute exteriority: the look does not captivate this force' (EF: 39). When speaking about Nancy's absolute realism, this is what Derrida has in mind as he writes: 'the Thing touches itself, is touched, even there where one touches Nothing' (2005: 46).

Given Reasons, Giving Thanks

The evidence that we confront without mastering, that calls us to vigilance and attention is nothing else than the world itself. What gesture does the world as evidence call us to? Nancy's *Adoration* opens itself up precisely

to this question. When we come across an evidence we encounter nothing new, no new signification. We call evidence that which exhausts itself in its presentation; it is not referable to anything outside and yet it produces a commotion of sense. We can all see it, we cannot avoid it, it flashes in front of us and yet it arrests us only if we pay attention to it. Only in this moment of attention, in this arrest do we start articulating, picking up the shaking it produces. Evidence does not bring something forward, does not let a particular object or person stand in front of us more clearly, it reduces the object to something that cannot be grasped nor assimilated. If this seems to carry the discourse beyond reason, for Cavell and Nancy going beyond reason is always a matter of picking up what reason has left behind, reason's self-repression. To speak of the world as evidence is to open up reason to what commands it and to what makes it work. Cavell's transformation of the failure of knowledge into the need for acknowledgment is precisely such a gesture. Nancy's attempt to pay the world its due by leaving vacant the place hollowed out by God's departure is another such gesture. It is reason itself that demands its own overcoming, that thinks the something that cannot be thought. And at the same time it thinks it all the time, every day, by thinking and gesturing toward the uncomfortable resistance of the singular to its own models of reduction. Yet reason cannot grant itself the right to think that which cannot be reduced. This is what essentially Nancy and Cavell challenge, by collecting and relaunching the problem of modernity. For modernity is the name for the absence of accountable givens, starting with 'God'. But what becomes apparent is that '*the empty place must not be occupied*. […] all the relativisms, skepticisms, logicisms – all duly atheist – will have been attempts, more or less pitiful or frightening, to occupy this place' (AD: 33).

To leave the place of the givens empty means for us first of all not to substitute God with Reason. Once reason is assigned the task that was once God's—establishing a foundation for the world, guaranteeing once and for all the sense of this world—then it simply replicates its gesture: accountability of origins and the completion of sense. However reason proves itself—the epistemological proof is such a proof—to be unsatisfied with this. Not only it wants more, but wants more than anything that can be given to it or that it can fabricate out of the given. The gesture required by the world's evidence is precisely one that allows reason to relate to this desire, not in order to settle it, but in order to let it play. If the skeptical conclusion is a natural impulse, then what nurtures this impulse—reason's

relation to sense as that which cannot be concluded—is what is repressed in that conclusion. The traditional epistemologist gathers its evidence and declares knowledge to be an overall failure. What Cavell and Nancy in their different register ask us to think is this: what if the nothing the epistemologist has discovered is actually the answer? That the world is nothing, not something reason can enclose, but the very unconditioned that drives reason to enclose itself, to give an account of everything. Thus the gesture called for by this evidence is a way of accepting the excess of determined significations the world is. To say it otherwise: experience, the singular existence and its constant exposure to other singularities, is not something that can be reduced, for it is itself the excess that makes us want to speak, listen and move. What if then the fortuity of the world's existence (which includes our contingency, the gift of this chance encounter, this sudden thought, an unnamed strangeness) could become the very resource of reason, rather than its curse? What if this was precisely the task of thinking? Not to recover a lost intimacy toward an alleged ultimate truth of sense, but to affirm the force that draws us toward the world and behind which there is nothing. Essentially then this gesture does not move beyond reason, neither does it try to lower the bar as to what reason can do. Quite the opposite: confronting the strangeness of the world, reason opens itself up to it. Nancy writes that reason knows that '"giving a reason" goes beyond any reason that can be given. It knows that giving one's reasons is an interminable process' (AD: 43). Then to say that cinema realizes the world is to say that cinema realizes nothing, neither a project nor a purpose. It simply realizes the fortuitous movement of the world, the fact that the world is turned toward us and we are turned toward it, whether we want it or not. Our longing for the unconditioned can turn from the desire to be freed of every conditioning into the patience to bear the condition of the world.

Heidegger describes this gesture as vigilance. In this picture man 'acknowledges the concealedness of what is and the insusceptibility of the latter's presencing or absenting to any decision' (QCT: 146). The invitation here is for reason to unfurl in accordance to the excess of assignation that it witnesses in the world, submitting itself to this excess. Reason becomes unconditioned inasmuch as it is conditioned by the unconditioned. In both texts where this reversal emerges, Parmenides' fragment 'τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ νοεῖν ἐστίν τε καὶ εἶναι' serves as the starting point. In *The Age of the World Picture* Heidegger writes that the world (that which is) 'come upon the one who himself opens himself' (QCT: 131). As a

consequence reason is not the instrument that pictures the world, but that which is regarded by it and opens to this excess:

> Man is the One who is looked upon by that which is; he is the one who is in company with itself gathered towards presencing, by that which opens itself. To be beheld by what is, to be included and maintained Within its openness and in that way to be borne along by it, to be driven about by its oppositions and marked by its discord-that is the essence of man. (QCT: 131)

Parmenides' fragment appears also in *What is Called Thinking*. Here Heidegger affirms man's inability to think as a condition proper to man's history. The lack identified in Heidegger's text is not however simply a defect, but depends on our turning away from what provokes us to thinking. Learning to think is a matter of turning toward what provokes, not an attraction that one seeks, but a push that one suffers and at the same time through which one is activated. To be drawn, to let oneself be turned by thinking would then constitute a revolution, in the sense of an unlearning of our ways of thinking (dominated by what Heidegger calls 'making', a condition that crushes thought). Our task is thus first of all to be attentive to the appeal, open ourselves up to what attracts us. Heidegger refers to this most often as listening closely and letting ourselves become involved, but also as 'losing ourselves', 'delivering ourselves from revenge', 'opening to the most apparent', 'being commanded', 'attending to', and finally 'acknowledging' and 'thanking'. These two terms designate two stages of a preparation to thinking, one that ultimately delivers us to the heart of thinking: to think is to take things to heart. The question of acknowledgment emerges in Heidegger's text in the midst of the discussion of the *unthought*. When reading our tradition we are constantly blocked in our attempts to understand what the tradition says by the view that tradition is behind us. Heidegger asks instead that we think of our tradition as something we stand in the midst of, almost held captive by. The importance then of a gesture that allows us to connect with the language of the thinkers essentially puts in play our future, rather than our past. A connection with this language is possible only through acknowledgment. Acknowledgment liberates the inexhaustible singularity of a thinker's language; it is always something unique that we need to prepare ourselves for. It is not this inexhaustible singularity that is incomprehensible. The incomprehensible is only what we refuse to accept in our assumption that we have already understood everything. Instead of stopping under the

pressure exercised by the inexhaustible to scrutinize our power of comprehension, we bypass it and say 'it must be so'. Wittgenstein highlights perhaps something similar in his invitation in matter of games to 'look and see' rather than assuming something to be the case. 'Don't think, but look' (PI: §60), where thinking has the sense of an unshakeable conviction, already assured of its conclusions. In both cases one faces an appeal to turn around our ways of thinking. Heidegger calls acknowledgment the 'readiness to let our own attempts at thinking be overturned, again and again' (WCT: 77). The opposite of this readiness is obstinacy. We can't ignore this obstinacy precisely because we trigger it without being aware of it. The conversion Heidegger demands is such that it brings us outside of our obstinacy and forces us to open ourselves to 'what attracts'. In Heidegger's words this is expressed as the need to reconfigure thinking, not as emanating from man's mastery of Being (the world), but the other way around: 'every way of thinking *takes its way* already *within* the total relation of Being and man's nature, or else it is not thinking at all' (WCT: 80). To come close to this overturning, to prepare oneself for it, one needs first of all to learn 'respecting and acknowledging' (WCT: 81). Acknowledgment runs counter to obstinacy, and as such it runs counter to thinking as forming. Thinking as the formation of ideas reinforces our obstinacy since it opposes (counters) what is, the world. In this sense thinking becomes violent, since it is essentially a pursuing, where the drift between man and what is grows bigger. We do not respond to what provokes us to thinking, we anesthetize the provocation and therefore neglect and pass by what is most attractive. In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche speaks of this as revenge ('the spirit of revenge: that, my friends, has been up to now humanity's best reflection' [2005: 122]), while Emerson invokes it as 'the most unhandsome part of our condition' (2003: 254). Heidegger reads Nietzsche's idea of punishment as hostility that calls itself justice. Hostility becomes 'right' and thinking becomes 'the sphere of representational ideas which basically pursue and set upon everything that comes and goes and exists in order to depose, reduce it and decompose it' (WCT: 93). Deliverance from this is not the abandonment of thinking, but abandonment to thinking, to what calls us and commands us to thinking and as a consequence puts us in question, but also sets us in motion, entrusts us, assigns us to sense. Thinking is a calling, not in the sense of a vocation, but in the sense of a gift. This gift gives nothing, not an object, but a movement, a direction, an attraction, an invitation, a tension that is not yet intention. We become capable of thinking for Heidegger only

once we allow ourselves *to be stepped* into this tension. The logic then is reversed, from thinking as formation, synthesis, construction, making and affecting to thinking as tension received and articulated. Heidegger names this articulation 'thanking'. Heidegger's transformation of thinking into thanking allows him to provide a force to counteract the obstinacy of our logical-rational representations. In the word 'thanks' Heidegger hears this: 'the inclination with which the inmost meditation of the heart turns towards all that is in being – the inclination that is not within its own control' (WCT: 141). Thinking has to be heartfelt and inclined toward that which it is not and cannot become its own. The heart thinks when through it we feel beholden; we become devoted to the gift that gives nothing but attraction. In thinking we give thanks, from the heart. As a consequence thinking will attest our nature as dependent. This dependency can be understood in two senses: we are dependent inasmuch as our thinking should become a tension toward what invites us to be beholden, what moves us by commanding us. We are dependent furthermore because in thinking we give ourselves completely, wholeheartedly. It is not a matter of passivity, but of passion; we leap into thinking and we settle down there once we abandon ourselves completely to the heart of things, to the outside that draws us toward interest and rushes us into sense. This letting go that allows us to leap has to be performed by each of us, it is up to us alone. Philosophy is of no help because philosophy itself has to learn what thinking is. Heidegger even urges 'to burn your lecture notes […] the sooner the better' (WCT: 158).

Powers of Patience

Heidegger specifies then what thinking is not. It is not knowledge in the sense in which science is knowledge, it is not wisdom, it does not solve the ultimate, by which one can understand metaphysical questions, it does not directly empower our actions. Heidegger is not however reducing or limiting the responsibilities and possibilities of thinking. Quite the opposite: the world lays claim to us and these demands can be heard only once we become devoted to the evident, which we fail to see and nonetheless want to control (this double command—devotion to what lies before us—follows from Heidegger's interpretation of Parmenides' fragment and in particular rests on his reading of *legein* and *noein*). The evident however is not the consequence of our doing, it is not our formation, this is what we require conversion from (Heidegger writes that 'we imagine that

the course of the world can be controlled with routine' [WCT: 204]). Becoming devoted thus we take something up specifically and we take it to heart, but taking things to heart means to leave what we take 'exactly as it is', it is a keeping that does not possess anything. Taking up is a receiving. I call this a *power of patience* wanting to hear in this expression the possibility to maintain the tension toward what comes, making it inexhaustible and through this assuring that what comes cannot be consumed and manipulated. Thinking does not begin with doubt, but with patience, a tension that is not the prudency of wisdom, but the conduct of the one who joyfully lets oneself be carried into the world again and again. Patience is wanting more of what has first summoned, moved and attracted us. It is a power to endure the force of what comes, to receive it not in order to absorb it or counter it, but so that by that force we can respond again and again and respond with a 'More, more'. Patience is the power of the one who wants the call not to be exhausted in its reception, the one who does not want to be left in peace. It resounds equally with passion and appetite as it does with attentiveness and responsiveness. It is ultimately the tension for that which has no end, the taking up of the end of all ends. Only the one who wants more can be patient. As Heidegger writes: 'Letting-things-lie before us is necessary to supply us with what, lying thus before us, can be taken to heart' (WCT: 208). So taking to heart is itself a letting things be, allowing what comes to exercise its attraction, its evidence and this evidence—which is always there—can only be dealt with by taking it to heart, by feeling, receiving, taking up as giving oneself over to its pressure. This is our conversion, this is also philosophy's essential distraction, essential in the sense that without this philosophy closes upon itself, clutching the world in its fist to find out that there's nothing there.

Thinking is taking things to heart, the installing of man back into the openness of sense, to which he is equally passible and responsible. This is what it means to be sensitive to the sense of the world. Our access to the world then is patience exercised with (and not against) its force. This force is both what thrusts 'us from far before ourselves' (AD: 71)—call it our interest in the world—and sends us 'far beyond ourselves' (AD: 71)—call it our continual transformation of ourselves. Cavell makes a similar point when reading Thoreau's idea that 'with thinking we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense' (2002: 136). Cavell takes it to invoke a region 'which is inaccessible to everyone, which cannot be inhabited' and not therefore private, but open, 'always already known before I present myself' (CR: 367). This estrangement, this discovery of the strangeness of the

world becomes for Cavell 'ecstatic or fantastic opportunities' (2005a: 149). The transformation of the actual everyday into the eventual everyday can only proceed by our attention to these forces, to the world's force. Nancy calls this *adoration*, a gesture that receives and addresses, that welcomes and salutes. It is a gesture at once of attention to the singular and of reception of an incommensurable value. Our access to the world then appears where 'forces precede and follow us, where forces are not concerned with a subject's calculation and projection, but where one might rather say that a subject, by welcoming these forces, by espousing their impetus, might have some chance of shaping itself' (AD: 48). Origins and ultimate reasons can't be checked, not by man at least, but patience can be used as a power to access the world's suspense. Nancy writes that it is 'separation that renders this address (or its refusal) possible' (AD: 54). This suspense is both reception and expression and reveals that the world is there in order to be taken to heart and released again. The world is, Nancy writes, nothing and this nothing is reality as such, 'what I am in the eyes of an attentive other or what a form or color – of a tree, a tool – is when I allow it to enter and go through me, to not remain before me' (AD: 84). The Heideggerian provenance of this passage is difficult to deny. Heidegger writes that 'the thing that matters foremost is for once to let the tree stand where it stands. To this day thought has never let the tree stand where it stands' (WCT: 44). Again this gesture happens outside philosophy as it is. If it is not philosophy this is nonetheless what philosophy is in need of, to open itself up to our ability to be affected and 'what opens affect in general: a receptivity, passivity, or capacity for sensation that must already be given, and given as already open, in order for something like affection to take place' (AD: 84–85). Thinking takes its revolution from here: it is not the absorption of what affects it, not setting upon, not reduction, but a powerlessness, ability to receive and unleash what surpasses it. What surpasses thinking is not a more powerful Being, a substance, a principle, but the very force that activates it and that thinking itself then puts into play. When thinking abandons the position of a subject facing an object and allows itself to welcome the unique value of the singular, then thinking opens itself to what releases it. The absolute sense of 'each' passes through us and continues to pass beyond us, toward an elsewhere. The condition for thinking then becomes the patience shown to these anteriority and posteriority to myself as a representing subject. The one who adores addresses only by way of a response, 'speech that somehow responds only to itself: to its own opening, to the possibility given within language of going to the

limit of significations and as far as silence' (AD: 64). It is not therefore the gesture that one enacts, but a gesture that one is carried into. The force of the world, without reference and without reason, throws me, presses itself on me and forces me. Nancy writes that the world 'forces me to be inclined to (*m'oblige à m'incliner)*' (AD: 115, *translation mine*). The term indicates the act of bowing, of tilting the head in deference, but means also to invite, solicit, influence, dispose to. The world's force is such that it imposes on me not authority, but a responsibility for sense. We are obliged to sense, but it takes patience to sustain this responsibility, because it is not one that can be exhausted or spent. The responsibility is such that at any moment I am called to respond again, to be lively to the world in order to match its liveliness, its fortuity and independence. It is not more control one needs, not more mastery, but a power of patience. This power is 'the condition of being abandoned to a fortuitous world […] not renouncing our impetus, our desire, without thinking that we can satiate it, either. Accepting that this always opens us anew' (AD: 88). Patience defers satisfaction, closure, satiation, completion, but it leaves us with an appetite, a willingness to be opened, to rejoice our loss of authority. The world cannot be grasped with our hands and yet is never beyond the reach of our response.

To salute the day knowing that it will not deliver the truth but continually defer truth 'itself'. We address what addresses us and addresses us in such a way that it inclines us toward a responsibility for the whole world, not in the sense of humanitarian or charitable work, but in the sense that we are invested with a force that presses us to regard the world as the invaluable value that we can't master.

Nancy writes 'do not the morning sun, the plant pushing out of the soil, address a "salut!" to us? Or the gaze of an animal? And as for us, how do we salute one another?' (AD: 18). The address is always to us, to each one of us and to each one in a different way. It is a different world that calls each of us and yet it is always the world and nothing else: no-thing. We are called to patience at every step. If we don't respond or if we respond too quickly, settling the matter as if the world was just another matter to be settled, then we are left wordless. Philosophy vacillates between too quick (and reductive) a response and no response at all, wanting to return to its own problems, admitting no distraction, unaware that it is this very concentration that distracts itself from what allows its work to begin in the first place, a sense outside of determined, qualified and quantified sense.

The philosophical practice that can produce this turn to and return of the world would move from the idea that 'what is of philosophical

importance, or interest – what there is for philosophy to say – is happening repeatedly, unmelodramatically, uneventfully' (NYUA: 75). It is a practice that for Cavell is based on the most unpromising ground, 'a ground of poverty, of the ordinary, the attainment of the everyday' (77). If philosophy is still awaiting (itself), if for it the moment of this practice is still to come, film can be said to anticipate a gesture philosophy wants for itself.

It is not in fact a philosophy of cinema that Cavell is looking for, but instruction, provocation, transformation. Finding film induces a loss of philosophy as much as finding philosophy requires that we lose ourselves in the world. Cavell writes: 'I have wished to understand philosophy not as a set of problems but as a set of texts' (CR: 3). While in *The Claim of Reason* the definition is associated with a reading of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* in later texts Cavell attaches its understanding to the names of Thoreau and Emerson and from Emerson to that of Heidegger. The intention is neither simply that of aligning philosophy with literature, nor to remind philosophy of the need to go over its own texts, its history. Cavell writes that what Emerson and Thoreau portray as reading and what they recommend to read is not essentially philosophical books and perhaps not books at all. Nature is rather their text of choice as in Thoreau's sentence 'there are the stars and they who can may read them' (2002: 147). But then nature itself is understood as 'whatever is before you' (IQO: 18). Therefore the idea of philosophy as a set of texts implies the idea not of an acquisition of the skills a philosophical curriculum could provide, but of something perhaps less teachable (therefore less appealing to philosophy as a discipline): reading. Philosophy is a kind of reading, but not the reading of texts, not necessarily and not only of texts. What could provoke reading is whatever is in front of you, therefore it cannot be determined beforehand, before, that is, the provocation has been received, the interest has been elicited, the reader has been read. Philosophy as a set of text implies a certain willingness for presenting oneself to the provocation, a capacity, a talent for being interested by something, moved by something, reading as being read. The problem with problems may be said to rest instead on their givenness. This implies philosophical assertion, a desire to speak first, to assign itself to something. This concern with philosophy's arrogation of voice is crucial for Cavell's philosophy and for his understanding of what philosophy can do.

This definition of philosophy as reading and reading as being read is linked with ideas of silence, sitting still and withdrawal. In a text on interpretation Cavell discusses at length the justification for philosophical

discourse, for the breaking of silence and the achievement of responsibility. Emerson and Thoreau are again taken as figures whose willingness for philosophy is satisfied by a withholding of assertion. Emerson expresses his withdrawal as a form of redemption, making 'his going off an indictment of his fellow countrymen' (1984: 50). Thoreau on the other hand writes in order to remain silent or as a consequence of having been silent and still. Silence and stillness offer both his route to philosophy, his access (back) to the world and his act of civil disobedience. The two withdrawals present themselves to Cavell as political and epistemological rebukes. In other words Cavell sees here the opening of a space beyond skepticism and its violence, beyond philosophy as violence or domination. Silence and stillness translate the willingness for being read, for being converted and producing an alternative philosophical practice. This practice of philosophy as a being read is guided for Cavell by three ideas: access to and encounter with our interest is provided by transference; our interest risks turning into seduction; this seduction is necessary because the promise is freedom. This freedom moves us from subjection to the truly unsubordinated or, as Cavell writes, to the understanding that 'in our capacity for loss there is the chance of ecstasy' (1984: 53).

In a text on Makavejev and Bergman Cavell implicitly couples together philosophical ambition with the withdrawal of the first word. Cavell frames this scene of silence seen as the very opening of philosophy with the discovery by film of the range and possibilities of passiveness. One could read this text in fact as a treaty on the 'variety of human passivity'. The reading of Makavejev's *Sweet Movie* (1974) stresses the relevance of the film's exploration of seduction. At one point Cavell writes that seduction is 'an origin and consequence of the human craving for beauty, for a genuine cleansing of the spirit' (1984: 129). The idea of seduction is pervasive in this text and linked to the idea of passivity and the work of film. Film is said to produce a particular kind of distance, making its presence felt only through and as absence. It is this distance that makes up our seduction, our being seduced and therefore near. One understands this specific distance produced by film to mirror and inform what Cavell in relation to Chaplin's eating his shoes calls openness to the distance and splendor of others (1984: 133). It is this distance that produces mutual attraction and it is the possibility of being seduced, of being drawn in, that allows for a new beginning in the world. Seduction is an *origin* for accessing the world because we crave only after having being impressed, seduced, read, we can long for and approach beauty or conversion in the world only if we first

have been moved to it, by sitting still, in silence. It is a *consequence* because the original opening produces a craving for the repetition of that moment, a willingness for impressionability to have a hold on us.

This idea of seduction—at times evoked as 'victimization'—is expressed also in *Pursuits of Happiness* and in particular in Cavell's text on *His Girl Friday* (1940). Here the discussion on Makavejev makes a brief appearance, as does the idea of *actio in distans*. Cavell links again this idea to the feminine side of the human character. *His Girl Friday* is defined by Cavell as the blackest of the remarriage comedies he analyzes, a blackness that captures the heartlessness of the world, the failure of civilization to make us civil. The experience of this blackness, an experience we are condemned to, means that we stand in need of reprieve. Our willingness for knowledge of the world turns us into victims. However the same conditions of our victimization guarantee the possibility of reprieve. Cavell is here writing with two targets in mind: on the one hand his intention is to contrast the perception of films as commodities that nail us to a position of immobility, otherwise known as escapism; on the other hand he aims to emphasize how the passiveness of viewing could produce a reprieve of a totally different sort. What region does the couple viewer/victim describe? Cavell takes *His Girl Friday* to be a film about filmmaking, a study of what film is, reproducing in its characters, camera movements and cuts, what film dedicates itself to. This comedy then shows Hawks as 'a passive trickster', Grant and Russell as 'victims of visibility' and the audience as 'victims of passive knowledge' (PH: 185). As Gould says the variety of human passiveness is then the 'main condition studied in movies' (1987: 114). It is a condition that extends beyond the audience, to the director and the actors. A reprieve from the world, understood in this comedy as a reprieve granted on grounds of insanity, can then come from our being seduced, seduction being necessary to the reception of reprieve. What is our insanity? Our insanity is precisely our inability to be interested by whatever is in front of us, our impatience, our willingness to move away from our lives in search of what cannot have satisfaction, to possess the world and overcome separation, to turn our metaphysical lack into an intellectual one. So it is passivity itself that grants the reprieve. Cavell explicitly links film's enforcement of seduction with the idea of thinking as reception: 'I want the idea of receptiveness here to hark back to the mark that Heidegger, and I have claimed Emerson before him, requires of genuine thinking' (PH: 185). In the conclusion to the text Cavell points out however that the significance of this idea and of the ensuing reprieve depend on how

we take the work of film, 'say actively or passively' (PH: 187). The passage continues as follows: 'in one way it may be taken as an escape (in which case you must keep on escaping); in another way it may be taken as refreshment and recreation (in which case you are free to stop and think)' (PH: 187). I understand Cavell's invitation to be an invitation to receive reprieve in the form of a sitting still and letting the world show itself to us, show our intimacy with it, by turns. Taking the passiveness imposed by film passively—rather than actively as running away—would here mean to stop and enter into thinking. Gould writes that 'the distance created by film allows safety on our side, but also gives us the opportunity to see what others' exposed existence amounts to' (1998: 114). The experience of movies provides the trigger for losing oneself in thought, for activating and responding to our marvel as to the existence of the world and others. The silence we are forced into when watching a movie, the silence actors are forced into by the camera and the silence the director is forced into by the photographic apparatus can be an achievement, a form of resolve, a re-emerging of the world, into the world.

In *Contesting Tears* Cavell furthers this stance by describing film as gazing at us. In the melodramas he analyses Cavell traces a correspondence between the work of film—and the woman's demand for a voice—and Emerson's demands for authorship in thinking as reception and bearing. Cavell writes: 'film's enforcement of passiveness, victimization, together with its animation of the world entertains a region of invitation […] closer to the feminine, but primarily to the infantile' (1997: 209). This characterization is first introduced in relation to Max Ophüls' film *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948). The crucial passage for Cavell comes at the end, when the man the letter is addressed to covers his eyes, as if to defy or prevent recognition both by (in) himself of what stands in front of his eyes and of him by us. The gesture suggests a mutual relation between the two, as if his seeing what stands now in front of him would reveal him to the camera and therefore to us. The man is horrified at the prospect that his acknowledgment of the letter would prompt our revelation of who he is. The coupling of passivity and activity is here explicit: not only seeing something develops into being seen, but our position as audience can reveal and denude the subject. Our passivity becomes an opportunity. Cavell dedicates further energy to the explicitness of this coupling in reading Ophüls' film together with James' *The Beast in the Jungle* (2005b: 384). Here the questions asked of the film are three: how does this film conceive itself? How does it define the nature of film? How does it define

the response to film? Cavell analyses in close detail two different strategies through which this particular film declares the work of film: one responds to the insertion of emblems and allegories of film and the other to the camera's motivations, the ways of working through which the camera declares its existence. In the first set Cavell includes the wax museum and a statue. In the wax museum the film is said to chart its power of fascination in the form of duplicates one has to pay to contemplate and in the possibilities of these to come to life. This scene moves the audience to question what they are looking at, by reminding them that these subjects already are duplicated figures, both of them, even if they remain unaware of it. The second emblem is the statue of the goddess whose arrival is constantly deferred. The emphasis on this figure serves to gather once again the thought that the viewing of films is essentially a contemplation of our own absence from the world screened. This absence could turn us into stones or statues (as also mentioned in Makavejev's text) but has already turned the subjects of the film into such statues, for their arrival has already happened, but in a past I have no access to. If this is an emblem of film then what it dramatizes is my separation from the world, my possibility to view it unseen and the possibility that it will continue without me, but also the risk that a willingness for a sole and proper possession of the world would indefinitely remove us from the possibility to choose human existence and the world of others. In this second sense film offers us the chance to see ourselves as turning ourselves into stones whose beauty, rather than redeeming the world, makes us into outcasts.

Cavell detects then in Ophüls' predilection for complex and articulate camera movements (an example of which can be seen in the opening of *La Ronde* [1950]) a declaration of the camera's partiality. Despite the dexterity of the apparatus the camera is limited to offer only a specific position at a specific time. This however is also what gives the camera its capacity for significance, its ability to draw our attention, or as Cavell puts it elsewhere, to 'confine our senses' (WV: 24). The camera's limits release its ability to limit our vision and grant it the possibility to make the transient permanent and vice versa. While this could of course apply to specific manifestations of the permanent (the unsayable in Dreyer's *Joan of Arc* [1928]) and the transient (Cooper's fidgeting as a vehicle to thinking in *Mr Deeds Goes to Town* [1936]), it seems rather directed to film itself. It is the work of the motion picture camera itself that brings these two categories close, bound to one another. Making the evanescent permanent and vice versa could perhaps be translated as a way of saying that it is proper to

the camera to make the ordinary into the extra-ordinary. If we want things to change things will have to *look* as they are. As Cavell writes: 'one can say that everything caught by film is accident, contingency. Then one must equally say that every accident on film becomes permanent' (WV: 229). So that what looks like a fleeting moment can never truly be escaped, its mystery survives for us. Our freedom rests in taking views that give us a chance, that reveal our freedom. While it is true that the camera is dependent on the world, this dependence also signals the availability of the world, the camera's ability to declare its momentary attention.

Karen Hanson is responding to this duplicity in her reading of the passive side of the proof of existence (not 'can I know?'; but 'can I be known?'). Commenting on Garbo's silences Hanson takes this restraining of the voice as projecting and thus confirming her existence, beyond our ability to actively receive it. 'Gazing at this woman we are assured of human existence, not by any action of our own or special action of hers, but by her passionate revelation of distance' (1987: 191). The proof of existence that Garbo's silences reveal amounts to the acceptance of separation and distinction. However if to know another is to express our acknowledgment or to withhold it one could feel that what is revealed to us here is beyond our ability to acknowledge, since the cinematic image mechanically imposes our absence. The feeling though is not one of failure, rather it is an acceptance of our separation, not as an intellectual but as a metaphysical lack. Recognizing our separation is not an automatic reaction, it requires true acceptance, true subordination to the condition, recognition of evanescence and finitude. This recognition brings out a talent, a capacity, even a power. Hanson concludes by saying that knowing another or knowing something need not be an activity, a kind of grasping. It might be Thoreau's sitting still.

The passiveness imposed by film can lead to the ability to receive whatever is in front of us. This is our reprieve, our return to the world we have denied by too much activity, by strangling the heart of things. Film shows us the road to thinking as letting things be.

This power is not available to philosophy as it is now. Hence Heidegger telling us of the violence produced on thinking by academic philosophy, recommending us to turn our notes into ashes, hence Wittgenstein's destroying our houses of cards. While Heidegger and Wittgenstein go about it in different ways, both preserve this power by calling for a complete renewal of philosophy, by trying to substitute it (with thinking). For Wittgenstein philosophy should leave everything as it is. For Heidegger

thinking is a letting lie before us. Both therefore show that what we require is conversion, throwing ourselves back upon ourselves to ask why we do things the way we do, so that we can come to a point where we don't know why we go on this way. Cavell points out that this is ultimately the task of philosophy, the 'education of grownups' (CR: 125): to get us lost, and not to make us more knowledgeable, so that we can be educated again. But to be educated, once childhood is finished, means to change. 'Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions' (CR: 125). However, as Cavell notes 'the direction out of illusion is not up, at any rate not up to one fixed morning star, but down [...] Philosophy (as descent) can thus be said to leave everything as it is because it is a refusal of, say disobedient to, (a false) ascent, or transcendence' (NYUA: 46). Letting be is a refusal of false transcendence and invitation to conversion or transfiguration of the everyday, 'the ordinary has, and alone has, the power to move the ordinary, to leave the human habitat habitable, the same transfigured [...] the familiar invaded by another familiar' (NYUA: 47). This is the argument for philosophy's poverty, but it is still an argument for philosophy, for philosophy's ability to show itself, to radiate in the place where explanations come to an end. Philosophy's patience would then be the only weapon philosophy has against its own violence.

The idea of philosophy's need for renewal, conversion or substitution, bears heavily on the idea of philosophy's poverty. This idea has at least two features: philosophy is always called for, it is responsiveness, it is reception of the world (and words) of others. Philosophy does not speak first. In Cavell's words: 'what makes it philosophy is not that its response will be total, but that it will be tireless, awake when the others have all fallen asleep' (NYUA: 74).

There is however a second feature: what is of philosophical importance strikes without revelation, it happens ordinarily, together with our lives, both in the same places and within the same conversations that animate our lives. Heidegger suggests that philosophy is not an acquired capacity of certain educated humans, but part of existence, 'philosophy remains latent in every human existence and need not be first added to it from somewhere else' (Heidegger 1984: 18). In the *Country Path Conversations* thinking becomes a 'non-willing' (2010: 3).

Philosophy as response is the characterization Cavell provides for the work of Wittgenstein, namely for the opening of the *Investigations*. Cavell's main intuition is that by beginning with somebody else's words Wittgenstein is showing his work as a response to a call, a push coming

from elsewhere. The whole of the book is then an opening: opening itself up to a scene from the *Confessions* of St. Augustine. What is remarkable is not just that the quotation contains the concepts and the tones for what Wittgenstein is trying to achieve, but the sheer presence of words that are borrowed (they are in themselves unremarkable, not particularly puzzling). The scene is one of instruction, not simply because this is what Augustine's passage is about (the learning of language), but because it instructs as to what philosophy should be doing: responding and maintaining itself *in response*. There are 693 entries in the first part of the *Investigations*, and Cavell takes them to be '693 responses to the words and implications and effects of the single, unremarkable paragraph the book opens by quoting from Augustine's Confessions, in that way providing a developing picture of what philosophical understanding appears to Wittgenstein to be' (2010: 474). The same, Cavell says, is true of Heidegger's *Being and Time,* opening with a line from Plato. Philosophy begins (or has to) by becoming impressed, attracted, pushed to a word, a gesture, a salute, 'forbearing to speak first' (2003a: xiv). And continues by being patient, keeping itself within the impression, relaunching it, responding in order to solicit more world to come its way. If philosophy has any autonomy it lives here, in the possibility to be attracted, 'call it patience, a willingness to give over judging that conversation might effectively have begun or that it has found its useful end' (2003a: xv). To say that Wittgenstein and Heidegger begin with words on loan does not mean that they aim to comment on them, but rather that they are accosted by them. Wittgenstein and Heidegger begin by not asserting and make of this what one could call their first philosophical decision. Then philosophy cannot give up his patience, because its patience is also its very urgency. For Cavell the site from which to assess the difficulties within Wittgenstein and Heidegger's projects as well as the distance between the two bears the name of Emerson. Cavell qualifies Emerson's writing as a finitude demanding an infinite response, hence as the finite opening up onto the infinite, demanding that access to the infinite is sought. Adding to this that Emerson wants his writing to provide the ground for an illustration of the possibility of thinking, one can conclude that the gesture philosophy is called to perform in order to achieve conversion takes the shape of a finite response to the infinite. Within the same introduction Cavell writes that his exegesis is itself to be understood as the response of someone who *has been stopped* by the writing. The sense of response is then doubled from the start. Cavell gets going in thinking only because stopped, arrested

and, as it were, called upon to respond. But this response itself addresses another response, Emerson's writing as an infinite response. The response in question is to what Emerson calls universe, or the world (and sometimes Being). So the transformation of philosophy Emerson requires is one in view of the world, a different relation to the world. It is the world that we 'romance'. But this 'romance' demands separation, the acceptance of the world's independence: 'we do not possess it, but our life is to return to it, to respond to its contesting for my attention' (ET: 13). In this need to respond to the world Cavell detects the very illustration of the ground of thinking, the task Emerson has set for his own writing. This ground is illustrated by Emerson's definition of thinking as a 'pious reception'. Cavell reads this together with Heidegger's idea of thinking as thanking and Wittgenstein's remark that philosophy leaves everything as it is. For Emerson the conversion to thinking demands that we understand thinking as accepting, receiving existence, so that our conversion is not the preparation for great deeds, but the unfolding of a patient abandonment (this presents Cavell with a sound answer to skepticism). It is this abandonment to our romance with the world, abandonment to the response it claims for us that gets us on the way to thinking. On the way to thinking we are to find what Cavell calls 'the heart for a new creation' (ET: 16). Emerson and Heidegger share the idea then that we are not yet thinking, that we have to find the manner to get ourselves on the way. The manner implies a decreasing of philosophical 'activity'. It has already been mentioned how Heidegger invites us to burn our lecture notes. Before him Emerson advised us not to read books for we do not know how to. The condition we are in is one of despair, quiet desperation, silent melancholy. This state is one we have brought upon ourselves, we have caused the world to withdraw. In *Experience* Emerson calls this condition unhandsome: 'I take this evanescence and lubricity of all objects, which lets them slip through our fingers then when we clutch the hardest, to be the most unhandsome part of our condition' (2003: 254). For Cavell what is unhandsome is not that objects slip through my fingers, but what happens 'when we seek to deny the standoffishness of objects by clutching at them. When we conceive thinking as grasping something' (ET: 117). The image of our fingers clutching in vain and in vain attempting to grasp what cannot be grasped (the world) presents our current mode of thinking, thinking as violence. In *What is a Thing* Heidegger defines philosophy as 'thinking with which one can start nothing and about which housemaids necessarily laugh' (1967: 3). Philosophy does not start anything but can

show 'how the attraction is initiated' (1967: 143). Emerson is then reacting to the 'sublimized violence' (ET: 147) our thinking rests on. This violence causes the withdrawal of the world. As soon as we try to penetrate the world we feel as if phenomena erect a barrier against our attempts. As a consequence our language, our words, the tools we have to penetrate phenomena, become violent and mournful. They speak of grief and of violence and chagrin us. What Emerson draws our attention to is that the feeling of a barrier is itself generated by our unhandsome condition, hence by our obsession with penetrating into the world. The barrier rises *because* we want to penetrate. We feel the barrier only insofar as our relationship to the world is enacted according to clutching and penetrating. Because of this frustration we grow uninterested and nothing attracts us anymore. The handsome part of our condition therefore is one that turns away from clutching, in view of what Cavell now calls 'a secular sacrifice' (ET: 132). The secular sacrifice will be not in view of transcendence toward a higher realm but toward the world itself. This is the infinite response Emerson attaches his writing to and that Cavell in turn relaunches, a response to 'the call that I and the world make upon one another' (ET: 117).

For this reason Emerson speaks of thinking as something partial, Heidegger of our being inclined. For Heidegger *being inclined* implies not simply that thinking is within our horizon, but that something (the world, Being) inclines us toward it (Nancy has emphasized the very same point). Similarly for Emerson 'partiality' stands for both that which is not a whole and that which is biased, non-indifferent, interested, inclined toward something. The partiality however is precisely what thinking as violence tries to reduce and therefore leave out. What thinking leaves out is its own partiality. This partiality is philosophy's or better thinking's seduction, its being attracted, the incentive, impulse, drive. The incentives are the forces that push before and beyond us, the pressure exercised on us by the world. In order to transfigure itself thinking must inhabit its own partiality, be dragged into the drive, the impulse, the pulsation that moves it. We are to turn, to welcome the incentive. Cavell writes 'we are not doing something we nevertheless recognize a love for, an instinct for' (ET: 151). And what we should be doing is stated in Cavell's reading of Emerson's *Fate*: take ourselves to new ground by allowing thinking to receive and release the world; 'leading the thought, allowing it its own power, takes you to new ground' (ET: 203). Emerson structures his writing as attraction. This seduction shows us that we are not yet thinking, hence that thinking must contain both pain and pleasure (ET: 205). The pain is due to the fact

that we reject and resist the incentive, rather than abandoning ourselves to it. This idea of philosophy makes thinking hard, not because it is obscure, mysterious, but because it requires a particular power of patience, it is hard to bear. So the thinking Emerson wants of us contains also the acknowledgement that we are fated to thinking or to its repression and what we are doing now is substantially closer to the latter.

It might be then that a certain reluctance to accepting film (the passivity it is said to impose) as having an intrinsic force of philosophical instruction resonates with a specific aversion internal to the work of philosophy. The intolerance for film manifests philosophy's intolerance for reception and seduction, as if philosophical thinking could not be interested, could not account for its beginning otherwise than as a movement of self-generation. For Cavell and Nancy embracing film would also show to philosophy its own repressions, illuminate within philosophy the denial of reception, a tendency to violence and resentfulness. So to take attentiveness and patience as the very founding of philosophy means somehow to open reason to what seems at first its very reversal. Film's ability to tell us 'how *different* different things are' is an invitation to patience, at once reception of the singular and salute of the incommensurable value of the world.

In Emerson's *Experience* one reads 'Patience and patience, we shall win at last' (2003: 276). Cavell responds that this 'is the work of realizing your world' (ET: 136). This realization is, like the one of film, the possibility to endure and bear the excess of the world's pressure. Cavell concludes the passage by writing that 'the recovery from loss is […] a finding of the world, a returning of it, to it. The price is necessarily to give something up, to let go of something' (ET: 138). Thinking has no remedy for this loss of grasp; our curse is demanding a remedy where none is needed. Patience and patience, we shall lose (and this loss will be a thought for the world).

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