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Questionable Form:

An Inquiry into the Relationship Between Philosophy and Literature

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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Through a comparative reading of philosophical and literary texts, I examine the distinction between the projects and practices of philosophy and literature. I argue that, like philosophy, novels make arguments and explicitly engage the range of philosophical questions; and like literature, essential elements of philosophy include aesthetic considerations. Moreover, the presumed distinction between philosophy and literature does a disservice to both. If we overlook the literary qualities of philosophy, we risk relegating to the margins important contributions to traditional philosophical problems; and if we overlook the philosophical qualities of literature, we risk passing over some of the most profound elements of art and culture. This claim, however, implies far more than that philosophers should aspire to be better writers, or that scholars should read more fiction and poetry. I conclude with a sketch of the ethical and political implications of this project. If "literature" is shorthand for essential philosophical considerations, philosophy will need to redraw the cultural boundaries of the philosophical community, and reevaluate what kinds of discourses and texts contribute to traditional theoretical projects. Specifically, voices explicitly defined by their particularity—e.g. race, gender, sexuality, nationality, socio-economic position, and historical situation—will increase prominence, and productively decentralize and democratize the practice and project of philosophy.

For Amma

TABLE OF CONTENTS PAGE

PREFACE

"How should one write, what words should one select, what forms and structures and organization, if one is pursuing understanding? (Which is to say, if one is, in that sense, a philosopher?) Sometimes this is taken to be trivial question. I shall claim that it is not."

— Martha Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*

The leading question of this dissertation is a mundane question. Perhaps all philosophical questions are rather mundane. They do not emerge exclusively in the academy, but also in the street and the home. Anyone who takes seriously the task of *living,* which is to say, engaging the question, explicitly or not, *how* one should live, a question that necessary adheres itself to any kind of responsibility, adopts the work of a philosopher to some degree.

Nevertheless, I came upon the question of the value of literature in what I imagine to be a very common way: out of a love of *reading*. We read a story that moves us to tears or anger or introspection, and we inquire about the nature of this thing before us, this text. Other things, of course, can have this effect as well—any place where we might ascribe beauty. Yet, not much is usually at stake when encountering the question in this way. We take for granted the value of the object or person or place on account of having already been moved; our question is, in many ways, an idle curiosity, or an expression of our gratitude, perhaps even our love. The experience of having been moved, though, is rarely forceful enough to turn someone toward the concerted study of ideas, which is to say, to Philosophy.

I encountered the question a second time when I tried to actually make something beautiful. I tried to write a novel. I thought I would scribble an entertaining tale spun out of a tumultuous dream. It would have been a story of sailing and hurricanes, both common tropes in

literature. But as I began to research and write, a question emerged that seemed to subtend the narrative: how do science and mythology each contribute to knowledge. You see, it seemed as though not enough was known about hurricanes to enable me to write the story I wanted to tell *as if it were true*. Granted, in choosing to write a novel I aspired to write something fictional; but the fictional parts were to be the characters and the events. I did not intend to invent laws of nature, or speculate about the structure of the universe. This, however, is precisely what I would have needed to do in order to make the story believable. Was a work of art the appropriate place to explore these questions? They emerged at what appeared to be the limit of science, the edge of what passes as objective knowledge. Was "art" equipped to bear them?

The next fall, I applied to graduate programs in Philosophy. Thus, a comically reductive explanation of my reasons for writing this dissertation (and perhaps for pursuing a PhD in Philosophy at all) could be, "I tried to write a novel and didn't think it would be good enough yet." Of course, that's not the whole story, but it is a significant part of it.

In structuring this project, I confronted a methodological dilemma—the question of the epigraph above. What form should the inquiry take? On the one hand, if I examine the question of form *with* the form of discourse, which is to say, as a novel, I risk begging the question; in order for such a text to function as an inquiry, I must presume that novels can function as philosophy before I have actually asked the question. Yet, on the other hand, if we examine the question only with the content, which is to say, as a traditionally philosophical text, I risk precluding the question; in order for such a text to function as a fair inquiry, I must presume that the way I speak is a secondary consideration, or that there are objectively better ways to ask *any* question, again, before I have actually asked the conclusion.

Ultimately, this dissertation errs on the side of a traditional philosophical style. A Philosophy dissertation written as a novel would have been a bold and unprecedented, perhaps even foolhardy, endeavor. Convention and cautiousness, though, were not the deciding factors. Rather, I did not know the answer to the question. Being a lover of literature, my inclination was to believe that the form *was* important; thus, I *should* write it as a novel. But what if, I thought, in attempting to answer the question, I concluded the opposite; the novelistic form, though necessarily significant to the argument, would get in the way. Eventually, I was able to diagnose my dis-ease. I was struggling with the feeling that the argument should demonstrate the ideas as well as articulate them. Moreover, if I did not also demonstrate them, I would not have adequately articulated them. In short, the dissertation needed to be an Example; or rather, it needed Examples.

This enabled me to split the difference, so to speak. I could present and produce examples, and pair them with traditional philosophical explanations of why they were chosen or created. Hence the structure of this project—I begin with six examples, followed by a theory of the Exemplary, and conclude with a lengthy discussion of the methods and contributions of other efforts to ask the same question, which is to say, efforts to confront the same methodological dilemma.

Thank you, reader, for asking this question with me.

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INTRODUCTION: The Distinction Between Form and Content

In the contemporary discourse we make a distinction between philosophy and literature. Philosophy is critique, whereas literature is art. Philosophy is evaluated in terms of truth and goodness, whereas literature is evaluated in terms of beauty and expressiveness.

Insofar as they converge, philosophy is the content, the meaningful aspect of a text; it is *what* one has said or written. Conversely, literature is the medium or form; it is the structural or material aspect of a text; it is *how* one speaks or writes, i.e. the way that the text *appears*. Though all discourses have both form and content—and in that sense are both philosophical and literary—the two aspects are, nonetheless, viewed independently, converging as if accidentally in a given text. Any particular content could, in principle, be expressed through any number of discursive forms—in the same way that a chair, for example, may be made out of any number of materials, such as wood, metal, or plastic.[1]

A few questions emerge from this distinction that will guide my entire inquiry. What if the form and content of discourse are mutually constitutive rather than mutually exclusive? What if the choice to write a narrative or an essay is more than the secondary considerations of efficiency and rhetorical force, not to mention beauty? In short, what if form bears content—and not simply additional, implicit content that, in principle, could be rendered explicit? And what if content has an aesthetic element? In other words, what if certain contents require a certain way

[1] We could invoke Aristotle, and describe this picture of discourse as "hylomorphic", i.e. a coincidence of the Aristotelian causes of *morphē* and *hyle*. These causes would correspond to the discursive content and form/structure respectively. Here, however, the term "form" suffers from an unfortunate ambiguity. *Morphē*, traditionally translated as "form", is more accurately analogous to the "meaning" or "content" of the discourse, since it refers to the Idea of a substance, as in the Platonic *Form* of which it partakes. Complementarily, *hyle*, traditionally translated as "matter", is analogous to the structure or "form" of discourse, since it refers to the material of a substance. For the sake of clarity, I will use the Greek for the Aristotelian senses, and I will reserve the English term "form" for the aesthetic sense. Thus "discourse" consists of—but is not limited to—words, syntax, and conventional structures of expression (aesthetic: "form"; Greek: *hyle*) and semantics (aesthetic: "content"; Greek: *morphē*).

of speaking and writing? If form and content are mutually constitutive aspects of discourse, then philosophy and literature would be more akin than the contemporary discourses suggests.

From the side of Literature, these are hardly questions, since it is taken for granted that writers are engaging in a philosophical exercise, i.e. they are raising questions and endeavoring to say something about human life and experience. From the side of philosophy, however, these remain pressing questions, and it is primarily towards philosophers that I direct them.

If philosophy and literature are akin in a meaningful way, then at stake in this inquiry is not simply the claim that philosophers should be better writers, though this may also be the case. I will argue that, like philosophy, novels make arguments and explicitly engage the range of philosophical questions; and like literature, essential elements of philosophy include aesthetic considerations. Moreover, the current distinction between philosophy and literature does a disservice to both. If we overlook the literary qualities of philosophy, we risk relegating to the margins important contributions to traditional philosophical problems; and if we overlook the philosophical qualities of literature, we risk passing over some of the most profound contributions to art and culture.

Framed more as a criticism of philosophy, this project will focus on the literary considerations that philosophy needs to reincorporate in order to achieve its own ends. More pressingly, the distinction between philosophy and literature renders "literature" shorthand for the "philosophical" considerations that, to the detriment of philosophy, philosophy has excluded from itself.

There are three basic literary considerations. First, the success of this project hinges upon the Proustian idea of the universal. Though universal claims are general, they are always also particular. In Chapter Two, which is the philosophical heart of this project, I describe in detail

the Proustian idea of the universal as characterized by the Example. I explicate the most salient quality of the Example, namely the Beautiful. We must, however, conceive of the beautiful in a relatively novel manner. In brief: as a concept, if it is a concept, beauty characterizes the prescriptive force of the exemplary. Exemplary truths, exemplary ethical activity, exemplary citizens, exemplary artifacts and expressions of culture and experience—these are all beautiful. Beauty, in this sense, ceases to be merely an object to behold; rather, it is a dynamic force and an activity. Beauty becomes, as Toni Morrison notes, "something one could *do*."[2]

Second, the collaborative role of the reader is an inextricable component of every philosophical or literary project. This collaboration occurs in a number of ways. First, every writer is also her first reader. Second, the necessary moment of articulation occurs in a language that is neither private nor personal. Third, the activity of reason(ing) is a function of being in the world, which is an inherently inter-subjective phenomenon. And fourth, the simple and pragmatic intention to communicate something to someone—a "someone" who may be oneself—is the contingency that instigates the labor of articulation. Third, there are inherently narrative structures to the practices and projects of both philosophy and literature. These include, for example, the concrete, temporal practices of reading and writing.

Third, there is an inherently narrative structure to edification. In other words, there is a durational element to learning, understanding, and believing that is at the heart of philosophy. Consider simply that in order to understand our lives as meaningful, or even coherent, whereby events correspond to *our* lives, we impose something like a narrative arc. Thus, the reduction of any philosophical project to a conclusion is never sufficient. If, as I will argue, philosophy—as the process by which we grow, develop, learn, and evolve—aspires to move us, it premises a

[2] Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, "Afterword", 209

point of origin, viz. the place where we are now, and posits a point in the future, where we will be different.

Given the philosophical/ literary bent of this project, my argument will proceed primarily through the analysis of examples. In Chapter One, I analyze six texts that exemplify the convergence of philosophy and literaute, and thus call into question the distinction between form and content. Traditionally, we describe this convergence in two ways, or rather from two directions: philosophical literature and literary philosophy. The literary philosophical texts include Plato's *Theaetetus*, Descartes *Meditations on First Philosophy*, and Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

In the *Theaetetus,* I will argue that the dramatic context, which includes the dialogical form itself, functions as additional "content" that is, nonetheless, irreducible to the explicit content. In other words, the presence of characters provides important context for claims and actions, context that functions as additional premises in the explicit arguments. In Descartes' *Meditations,* the presence of the narrator is not merely a rhetorical trope; rather, the narrator of the *Meditations* is an essential premise, without which the fundamental *cogito* ceases to be a syllogism, much less a syllogism that provides clear and distinct knowledge. And the *Phenomenology* demands a narrative structure. In other words, the *Phenomenology* is, effectively, a Bildungsroman by necessity. The "formative education"(¶28) of Spirit, which is the project of the *Phenomenology,* consists in the development of spirit (and the reader). This development presumes two moments, a developed and undeveloped state. The *Phenomenology* as a material artifact must facilitate the movement between these two moments.

The philosophical literary texts include Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler*, Melville's *Moby Dick*, and Proust's *In Search of Lost Time.* In *If on a winter's night a traveler* I

will argue that driving the story is an argument and an analysis of the relationship between the reader and the text. The inherent reflexivity of the subject matter—an argument about reading must also be *read*—demands a text that performs and articulates its premises and conclusions; otherwise, the text would serve as its own refutation by counterexample.

Second, just as the *Phenomenology* is a philosophical text that demands a narrative form, *Moby Dick* is a narrative that demands a non-narrative form. In other words, on the analogy of inside jokes, the story of the White Whale is what we might call an "insider's story"; unlike the majority of whale references in literature and philosophy, *Moby Dick* is a *whaler's* story of whaling. In order for the lay reader—i.e. the non-whaler, to whom *Moby Dick* is addressed—to understand and appreciate the story of the White Whale, she must be educated to the standpoint of the whaler. The "story" presumes numerous non-story perspectives and references that constitute the whaler's world. Consequently, *Moby Dick* must embed in the narrative encyclopedic, para-narrative accounts of the routines and mythologies of whalers.

And third, the philosophical and literary import of *In Search of Lost Time* undergirds my entire project. Rather than recounting the entire argument of the Dissertation through the lens of the Proustian text, in this section I merely explicate the Proustian idea of the universal, specifically through Proust's rich analogy of love. As noted above, the idea of the universal is characterized by the Example, where, as Proust notes, "the particular and the general lie side by side."[3] The experience of love, Proust illustrates, functions as a compelling metaphor for this idea of the universal. Though we are educated and solaced by anecdotes and claims about love, our experiences of love are singular, and thus resist abstraction. The knowledge of love is only

[3] Proust, vol.6, 312

knowledge of our particular loves. The Example bears the same structure; it is singular but has the purview of a law.

In Chapter Three, I engage directly the two most pressing objections to this project, both of which respond to the question, What is the place of literature vis-à-vis philosophy? The first response contends that literature is either rhetoric or art, but not philosophy proper. In other words, literature is either an escape to a sensuous space wherein we luxuriate or become corrupted, or a medium to render ideas accessible or compelling. I argue that this sort of exclusion of literature is ethical and political, but not ontological. In other words, like the Poets in Plato's *Republic*, literature may be excluded for being dangerous, but it is not, on that basis, "un-philosophical".

The second response concedes that literature may supplement philosophy, but it is a supplement nevertheless. I will argue that the critics and the advocates of the view that literature is merely a supplement to philosophy presume that literature does not function critically. Thus, literature is precluded from philosophy before the question of its value is raised. Ultimately, the question of the place of literature is the wrong question, since it begins with a faulty assumption, viz. that "philosophy", traditionally conceived, is the broader category within which literature may find a place. If literature and philosophy are not akin, then it is because we conceive of the practice and project of "philosophy" too narrowly.

Following these objections, I evaluate one of the sincere, contemporary attempts to produce a philosophical text that explicitly addresses the literary considerations discussed in this Dissertation, *A Thousand Plateaus* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Though Deleuze and Guattari are ultimately unsuccessful, their efforts are instructive. The failure of *A Thousand Plateaus* suggests that what is at stake in a "philo-literary" text is more than simply the integrity

of a concept, e.g. the concepts of the rhizome or the Multiple. The aesthetic elements, which include the performance of the text, are as important, if not more so.

And finally, I conclude briefly speculating on what is at stake in this inquiry. Aside from the metaphysical questions—What *is* philosophy? What *is* literature?—there are important ethical and political implications to this project. If, as I argue, "literature" is shorthand for essential philosophical considerations, philosophy will need to redraw the cultural boundaries of the philosophical community, and reevaluate what kinds of discourses and texts contribute to traditional theoretical projects. Voices explicitly defined by their particularly—e.g. race, gender, sexuality, etc.—will increase in prominence, and productively decentralize and democratize the practice and project of philosophy. Voices that historically have presumed to speak for all will betray their particularity. For example, the question of Justice will begin from a real and relevant history of injustice(s), rather than from an imagined ideal space.

CHAPTER 1: The Question of Form

1.1 Literary Philosophy

There are two senses in which philosophy could be literary. One, the *qualifier* "literary" indicates the use of literary tropes in philosophical discourse, usually employed for rhetorical purposes. Philosophy is only "literary" insofar as it must be expressed or written down; the moment of articulation, however, is accidental.

Alternately, Merleau-Ponty argues that "speech does not translate a ready-made thought; rather, speech accomplishes thought."[4] Until the thought is articulated, it is incomplete. One could, of course, 'write' a thought in one's head, and this seems to be what is meant when we say one has 'composed one's thoughts.' This, however, seems comparable to writing the thought down literally on paper, for in both cases the thought has been put into words. Thus, the second sense of the term "literary" is definitional; philosophy is literary insofar as it is good, or rather 'accomplished', which is to say, insofar as it is philosophy.

The first sense of 'literary' precludes the question of form. The second sense, however, suggest that what the text *does* is at least as philosophically relevant as what it *says*. In order to adjudicate between these two senses, or at least suggest that the priority of the first sense is questionable, let us analyze three canonical examples of literary philosophy.

First consider Plato's *Theaetetus*, where these alternate senses of 'literary' yield divergent interpretations of the text. I will suggest that, whereas one may presume that the philosophical

[4] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, 183. The distinction between the oral and the written is not important here, the latter being a longer lasting version of the former. Merleau-Ponty indicates elsewhere that his claims about speech apply to writing as well. Similarly, any claims about listening apply equally to reading. Nonetheless, there may be formal aspects of speech and writing that are irreducible to each other, and significant. Consider, for example, the perennial challenge of capturing speech in writing, where accent, inflection, and tone of voice are, arguably, untranslatable.

content of the dialogue is of priority, what is considered 'content' necessarily includes both the arguments presented by the characters and the dramatic context. Second, consider René Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy,* which is effectively a narrative. Moreover, in order for the famous and fundamental "*cogito ergo sum*"[5] to constitute anything like an argument, much less one that grants, for Descartes, certainty, we must consider the presence of the *narrator*. And third, consider G. W. F. Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit,* the structure of which is explicitly narrative. The attainment of Absolute Knowing, Hegel argues, requires the "formative education"(¶28) of Spirit. This does not consist merely in presenting an insight; rather, the *Phenomenology* must facilitate an experience in the reader, which is not the same as simply 'telling a story'.

In each of these cases—the Platonic dialogues, Descartes' *Meditations*, and Hegel's *Phenomenology*—the literary elements are necessary for the most comprehensive reading and appropriate functioning of the text.

[5] This particular formulation actually occurs in the *Discourse on Method* (pt. IV). Nevertheless, the same argument, along with its conclusions, occurs in the *Meditations* (pt. II).

1.1.1. The Dramatic Content of Plato's *Theaetetus*

There are at least two ways to read Plato's *Theaetetus*. If we consider only the explicit 'content', then the dialogue functions as a formal, systematic attempt to define 'knowledge'. Alternately, if we consider not only what is said but how it is said, not merely the 'content' but also the dramatic context, then the dialogue functions as an inquiry as to the nature of philosophy. Let us call these, respectively, the analytic reading and the dramatic reading.

The explicit leading question—What is knowledge?—is posed to Theaetetus in the guise of Socrates' "small difficulty"(145d). The dialogue, then, divides roughly into three parts. Each part corresponds to the rigorous analysis of a proposed definition of knowledge. The three proposed definitions are knowledge as 'perception' [*aisthesis*], knowledge as 'true opinion' [*alethes doxa*], and knowledge as true opinion with an 'account' [*logos*].

The analytic reading focuses primarily on the explicit arguments. This reading, however, yields the common criticism that in the first section Socrates misrepresents Protagoras' position. The problem itself emerges from the dramatic elements of the dialogue, but we will bracket that point for now. The problem arises when Socrates attributes the first definition—knowledge as perception—to Protagoras. Since Protagoras, however, is absent from the dialogue, Socrates offers to speak for him. One could argue that Socrates suggests that Protagoras endorses an extreme subjectivism, a position that is indefensible. Yet, we know from other Platonic accounts, and from historical accounts, that Protagoras was not an extreme subjectivist. Therefore, Socrates' characterization of Protagoras is unfair. Since Socrates seems to have a stake in refuting Protagoras, one is inclined accuse him of having resorted to that contemptible debating practice that we commonly refer to as the 'Straw Man'.

Alternately, the dramatic reading considers, in addition to the explicit arguments, the context. As noted above, this reading reframes the leading question as concerned with the nature of philosophy. The question concerning the nature of knowledge is implicated in the question of philosophy, but it is, nonetheless, secondary. The three components of the dialogue correspond to the three intellectual proclivities, for which the three adult characters are caricatures. Socrates is a caricature of Philosophy, Theodorus of Mathematics, and Protagoras of Sophistry. Consequently, the exchanges throughout the dialogue are not attempts to define 'knowledge' *per se*. Rather, the exchanges reflect a tripartite, agonistic dynamic, by which one will determine which intellectual proclivity is of priority vis-à-vis knowledge.

In other words, according to this reading, the leading question of the *Theaetetus* is, 'which intellectual proclivity should be said to 'have knowledge'—regardless of what 'knowledge' *is*; should it be philosophy, mathematics, or sophistry? Since Protagoras is intended to be a *caricature* of Sophistry, ultimately the historical accuracy of Plato's presentation of Protagoras is secondary, if not irrelevant. Moreover, the representation of Protagoras as an extreme subjectivist turns out to be necessary for the purpose of sufficiently distinguishing Sophistry from Philosophy or Mathematics.

In this section, I will, first, explicate the analytic reading. Then, I will analyze the dramatic reading, arguing ultimately that it is a more comprehensive and coherent understanding of the dialogue as a whole.

<u>The Analytic Reading:</u>

First of all, the historical account of Protagoras describes him as a pre-Socratic philosopher who lived in ancient Greece during the fifth century BCE. Like many of the pre-

Socratics, he served as a professional advisor and educator. As we learn in the *Theaetetus*, he was renowned for his somewhat controversial claim that "man is the measure of all things."(152a) This claim is controversial because at face value it is an endorsement of extreme subjectivism, or "utter relativism". This is how Socrates interprets Protagoras' claim in *Theaetetus*. If man is the measure of all things, then it seems to follow that each man is his own measure; or in other words, the truth *is* as each man perceives it. There is no objective criterion of truth. Each man determines the truth for himself, and that determination is definitive.

Consequently, Protagoras is characterized as the sophist *par excellence*. He is more concerned with persuasiveness [*pithanologia*] than with truth; he claims that wisdom is the ability to "change the appearances"(166d) rather than the ability to identify the ideal. For if each man is his own measure, then all that remains to adjudicate between competing measures is one's physical strength and/or the relative impact of one's rhetoric.

Let us consider Socrates' refutations. First, Socrates claims that Protagoras' maxim contains a performative contradiction (161cff). If each man is his own measure, then no one may offer a truth wherein the purview of the claim is beyond the speaker. In other words, it cannot be *absolutely* true that the truth is what each man decides. It is, of course, theoretically possible that every man could simultaneously decide for himself that he is his own measure. In this case, it would be universally true that every man is his own measure. Yet, this universal truth would be only contingently true, and no one would say it aloud as a truth. At best, one could make a speculative observation or the sort, "it appears, to me, to be the case, that each man is his own measure." Nonetheless, the claim renders the distinction of truth vacuous. Since, then, the only condition of truth is that someone believes it. Contradictory claims simultaneously held will be

equally true, and each man will find himself "the equal in wisdom to any man or even a god"(162c).

Second, Socrates argues that if knowledge is "nothing more or less than [sense] perception" (160d), then there are cases where it appears, absurdly, that one simultaneously knows and does not know (163aff). Consider the experience of hearing a language that one does not understand; or alternately, consider the experience of remembering. In the former case, one obviously hears the language. And since hearing is perceiving, and perceiving is knowing, then one allegedly knows the language. Yet, just as obviously, one does not *understand* the language, and thus does *not* know it. Similarly, in the case of memory, imagine that one remembers but does not see, perhaps because the circumstances have changed, or one has simply closed one's eyes. Well, since knowledge is perception, and seeing is perceiving, then while one does not see, one does not perceive, and thus one does not know. Yet, insofar as one remembers, one would also maintain that one *does* know.

Socrates' refutations, however, do not reflect the only, nor even the most compelling, interpretation of Protagoras' maxim. Let us consider Protagoras' response:

First Protagoras criticizes Socrates' methods. He accuses Socrates of taking advantage of a "small boy", viz. Theaetetus, and then attributing to Protagoras Theaetetus' hasty and "foolish" replies (166a). Basically, he accuses Socrates of sophistry, in the pejorative sense. Socrates has woven his refutation out of "verbal traps" and word games(166c). Moreover, Socrates' "unjust" cross-examination is merely the sowing of "controversy", rather than the sincere engagement in "discussion". Merely sowing controversy ultimately does a disservice to philosophy, Protagoras continues, since the general effect is the embarrassment rather than the edification of one's

interlocutors (167e). The unfortunate consequence is that the *polis* will "take refuge" in themselves, rather than in philosophy (168a).

Second Protagoras addresses Socrates' arguments. At the outset, he simply concedes Socrates' conclusions, but with an important qualification. Protagoras says that if his maxim is to be misconstrued in this manner, then, indeed, one both knows and does not know at the same time. Yet considering the conditions of the refutation, it is only an apparent one, i.e. the refutation of a Straw Man. Protagoras, then, reinterprets his maxim, inserting an interesting addendum. He makes a distinction between truth and goodness. Though each man is the measure of his own *truth*, he says, the wise are those who can identify the good *and*—as alluded to above—make the "better" (167a) *appear* "truer" (167b). Therefore, while man is the measure of all things, all men are not equally wise.

Thus, Protagoras is *not* an extreme subjectivist, and Socrates' portrayal of him as such is unjust.

The Dramatic Reading

If we take a step back from the argument and consider the dramatic structure of the dialogue, one could argue that Plato intends the reader to recognize Socrates' rhetorical maneuvers. We may notice that Protagoras' self-defense is ventriloquized by Socrates. So in a sense, Socrates has, ironically, refuted himself. Moreover, the refutation has included an indictment of sophistry. Such a dramatic moment should at least give the analytic reader of the *Theaetetus* pause.

Later in the dialogue, Socrates offers a final refutation of the first definition of knowledge: knowledge as perception. Socrates leads Theaetetus to concede that one does not

perceive *with* the senses, but rather *through* them (184c). Socrates then considers that the purview of each sense is an exclusive realm. One cannot, for instance, see or feel smells, or taste or hear colors, or see or taste sounds. For instance, one cannot directly compare the sweetness of honey to its amber translucency or its warm stickiness. Each sensation is unique and incommensurable.

Yet, one can compare the objects of our sensations with regard to their non-sensual qualities, such as being (existence), identity (quality), and number (intensity/magnitude). One makes this comparison, Socrates argues, with the soul. The soul perceives sensual object through the body (186c). And the soul also perceives the non-sensual qualities, yet through itself. Thus the soul is the ultimately precondition for knowledge. Consider that grasping being, for instance, is the precondition for grasping truth. If something does not exist, it cannot be true or false. One grasps being with the soul rather than with one's senses. The activity of the soul, viz. reasoning, is thus distinguished from the activity of the body, viz. perceiving (186c-e). And since grasping truth is the precondition for knowledge, knowledge is acquired primarily through reason rather than through perception. Therefore, knowledge is not perception.

Upon closer analysis, however, we notice that Socrates has not actually refuted Protagoras here. Socrates has refuted the claim that knowledge is *only* (sense) perception. But he has not refuted the softer, initial claim that knowledge is perception (of some kind); nor has he refuted the more general claim that that knowledge *includes* (sense) perception. One may also wonder why Socrates did not begin with this argument. Why did he drag us through this long and circuitous route, which included a self-indictment of his own sophistical activities?

Though we have only considered one definition of knowledge at the point in the dialogue, we have learned more than one thing about knowledge: 1) though perception is not

identical with knowledge, perception contributes to knowledge, and 2) regarding the priority of the three intellectual proclivities vis-à-vis knowledge, sophistry is excluded, moreover, by Socrates own actions. Considering the arguments dramatically, Socrates' sophistical maneuvers and Protagoras' arguments have demonstrated that sophistry is not concerned with truth and knowledge, but rather goodness and persuasiveness.

On a final note, the dramatic comportment between Theodorus, the mathematician, and both Socrates and Protagoras is also instructive. Consider briefly the fact that Theodorus refused to defend Protagoras against Socrates. Perhaps, as a caricature, such a defense would be akin to the mathematician defending the sophist. The mathematician, who argues by demonstration, would not deign to defend one who argues by persuasion, if for no other reason than that such a defense would need to be *persuasive* rather than simply *demonstrative*. The truth, Theodorus would claim, needs no defense; if sophistry is indefensible, so be it.

Thus, though Socrates' representation of Protagoras is analytically unjustified, it is dramatically effectively.

1.1.2. The Narrator as Premise in Descartes' *Meditations*

The *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, by René Descartes, is one of the most curious texts in the Modern Philosophical canon. On the one hand, the famous and fundamental *cogito ergo sum*—I think therefore I am—as we will see, is woefully misguided.[6] First, if we presume that the *cogito* constitutes an argument, then the indubitable conclusion, "I am," though true, does not follow from its premises. And second, the subsequent inference that one's existence is fundamentally as a thinking thing is simply false.

On the other hand, Descartes stylistic choice is philosophically interesting in ways that redeem aspects of the *cogito*. First, the explicit presence of a narrator—indicated by the presence of the first person pronoun—functions as a parallel, implicit argument for the certainty of Descartes' existence. And second, in spite of Descartes apparent pretention to speak from the place of an abstract authority, the presence of the narrator renders the voice of the *Meditations* necessarily, yet refreshingly, particular. Moreover, the presence of the narrator is so striking and fundamental to the text that I am *almost* inclined to read the misguided *cogito* more charitably. Consider that by 1637[7], the explicit use of a narrator in a work of philosophy had few precedents, and has been rarely repeated since.[8]

In this chapter, I will begin with a brief summary of the narrative and logical moves that lead us to the fundamental moment of the *cogito*. I will then present three criticisms of the *cogito* when it is framed as an argument. First, the unreliability of Descartes' beliefs does not imply

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[6] This exact phraseology—*cogito ergo sum*—does not actually occur in the *Meditations*, but rather in the *Discourse*. Nonetheless, the same point is made clearly and thoroughly in the *Meditations*.

[7] The *Meditations* was actually published in 1641, but the *Discourse*, published in 1637, also uses the first person pronoun to similar effect.

[8] Even in the Platonic Dialogues, which, as argued above, are literary for philosophical reasons, the first person pronoun rarely occurs as the voice of the narrator, the famous opening line of the *Republic* being one of the few: "I went down to the Piraeus yesterday…".

their falsity, merely the limitations of his knowledge. Second, Descartes' doubt is insincere; in other words, methodologically he has stacked the deck. And third, as a syllogism, the *cogito* begs the question. Nevertheless, the fallaciousness of Descartes' fundamental argument does not belie its certainty. I will then parse the parallel implicit argument of the *cogito,* which leads us to the necessary premise of the narrator. I then examine the ramifications of this implicit yet necessary premise. First, we can appreciate more fully Luce Irigaray's criticism from *Speculum*—Descartes has erroneously reversed the causal order, strangely deducing himself from himself. Second, we can appreciate anew Charles Mills' critical premise from *Blackness Visible*—whereas Descartes presumes to speak as if his claims were abstract, his voice is particular and indicative of a certain relationship to power. Finally, I conclude with a brief explanation of the ways in which the particularity betrayed by the explicit presence of a narrator is actually a virtue of the text.

Turning to the text, the *Meditations* is a narrative of sorts; it consists of six chapters or meditations, corresponding to six evenings, over the course of which Descartes seeks certain and indubitable knowledge. He adopts a method of skepticism, following the implicit claim—articulated in his *Discourse on Method*—that all knowledge should be grounded on clear, distinct, indubitable ideas, which function as first principles. He, thereby, discards anything that does not absolutely exclude the possibility of falsehood or error.

On the first night, during the first meditation, Descartes famously doubts his senses, since they are occasionally misleading. He recognizes, however, that there are many other instances when his senses are apparently reliable. Moreover, the fact that one can often distinguish between the misleading and indubitable instance suggests that the senses are not inherently unreliable. Descartes then considers the difficulty of distinguishing between one's dreaming and

waking states. Yet, he concedes that despite his inability to distinguish the two by means of his senses, a world of objects in each state must be acknowledged. Furthermore, those objects exhibit consistent characteristics in both worlds, such as quantity, place, and dimension. These characteristics implicitly legitimate arithmetic and geometry, and mathematics more broadly.

Descartes then considers the extreme possibility that an all-powerful, malevolent being has subjected him to such a thorough deception that he could not possibly know whether or not he was in fact deceived, now or ever. Even the seemingly consistent characteristics of the world—quality, place, dimension, and the laws of mathematics—could be otherwise under the influence of this powerful deceiver. As in George Orwell's *1984*, two plus two could equal *five.* On this precipice of belief, that the only thing of which we may be certain is that *nothing* is certain, Descartes retires for the evening, ending the first meditation.

From the epistemological apogee of the first night, where, having apparently doubted everything, he claimed to be certain of nothing, Descartes begins the second meditation/ evening with the revelation that he cannot doubt his existence as long as he doubts. Since doubting is an act of the mind, i.e. a permutation of thinking, he says, "this proposition I am, I exist, is necessarily true each time it is expressed by me, or conceived in my mind."[9] Thus he arrives at his first indubitable claim, a clear and distinct idea. Elegant and simple, the famous dictum reads: *cogito ergo sum*—I think, therefore I am. Upon this Archimedean point, Descartes reconstructs, over the course of the remaining four medications/ evenings, all that he has discarded, including the existence of a benevolent deity.

[9] Descartes 94

Read cursorily, the narrative and argument of the *cogito* is incredibly intuitive. To doubt one's existence generates a paradox: we must *at least* exist in order doubt our existence. And even if, at this juncture, we cannot know what 'doubt' is *per se*, we are, nonetheless, engaged in some kind of activity of which we are aware, and which, for the sake of simplicity, we may *call* 'doubting'.

This argument, however, suggests, additionally, that *only* Descartes exists. Furthermore, all existence, most importantly *his* existence, is a consequence of *his* thoughts. As Luce Irigaray, notes in *Speculum*, the subject's "condition of being results from self-reflection."[10] His thoughts are the condition of being, because it is only his thoughts that are beyond the possibility of doubt. His existence is singular because, first of all, Descartes is alone 'in his head', so to speak; and, second, it is only the activity within the space of his thoughts that generates the paradox.

Read more critically, this argument is misguided for at least three major reasons. First, the conclusion conflates the epistemological question—How do I *know* that I exist?—with the ontological question—Do I exist? The argument is *not*: I *know* that I am thinking, therefore I *know* that I exist. In this formulation, self-reflection is not the condition of being. The salient concern is the *reliability* of knowledge, not its truth. In other words, this formulation admits that though self-reflection implies my existence, it make a minor claim regarding the nature of that existence. It admits the possibility that there is unreliable, perhaps even unknowable, information that is nonetheless true. Such information includes the possibility of one's existence in the absence of knowledge of that existence, or prior to a moment of even tacit reflection on my existence.

[10] Irigaray 181

Stated as a conditional, we note that self-reflection is the antecedent—IF *I think* THEN *I exist*—the denial of which does not imply a denial of our existence. Speaking as Descartes, this formulation enables me to concede that, for example, though I did not know that I existed while I was an infant or a toddler, I could have existed for others. Or, since the moment of self-awareness is accompanied by such a novel and content-ful world, it probably existed prior to my self-awareness. One may retort, of course, that the all-powerful, malevolent being could be responsible for precisely these kinds of illusions. Perhaps I am the malevolent being, having facilitated my own delusion, a delusion that extends to the knowledge of my origins, supplanting that knowledge with an imagined childhood and a rich world full of endless possibilities.

If self-reflection is the condition of being, not simply the condition of knowing, then the *cogito* becomes a bi-conditional: 'I think if and only if I exist'. In this case, of course the world emerged through an act of the will, like the will of the Abrahamic deity in the book of Genesis. The objection that a deity of this sort would need a body before it could think, or rather that it must exist in some form prior to the allegedly causal moment of self-reflection, is indeed, as Irigaray notes, naïve. Irigaray explains:

> And if the objection is raised that you have to 'breathe' before you think, and therefore exist, such naiveté will elicit the retort that, whether or not I am breathing, if I am not aware of breathing, nothing can prove to me that I am in fact doing so. Therefore, that I exist. My certainty of being, even though it cannot precede predication, will make do, if need be, without my breath.[11]

Irigaray's irony is not lost on the reader, betrayed by the rhetorical "Really?" that follows her explication of Descartes' argument. The bi-conditional formulation of the argument, we note, is merely a posited premise in the *Meditations*, not a proven point. If we do not accept this premise, then the unreliability of my beliefs does not imply their falsity.

[11] Irigaray 182

Second, Descartes' doubt is disingenuous. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel levies this criticism against Kant, who, in this regard, carries the mantle of Descartes. Sincere doubt is not, as Hegel explains, "shilly-shallying about this or that presumed truth, […] so that at the end of the process the matter is taken to be what it was in the first place."[12] Sincere doubt "brings about a state of despair", since it renders us "incapable of carrying out what [we want] to undertake."[13] Unlike Descartes, we would be inclined to doubt our method as well as our beliefs; we would be skeptical even of our skepticism. Hegel argues:

> [I]f the fear of falling into error sets up a mistrust of Science [...] it is hard to see why we should not turn round and mistrust the very mistrust [...] Indeed, this fear takes something—a great deal in fact—for granted as truth [...] it takes for granted certain ideas about cognition as an *instrument* and as a *medium*, and assumes that there is a *difference between ourselves and this cognition*. Above all it presupposes that the Absolute [i.e. Truth] stands on one side and cognition on the other, […] an assumption whereby what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of the truth.[14]

In short, Descartes has adopted his method of inquiry uncritically. Consequently, he never arrives at the truth of which he is certain, viz. the actual *cause* of his existence. So whereas Descartes "finds" the *cogito*—i.e. the "I *think*"—following from the indubitable fact of his *thoughts*, we observe that he had already placed the *cogito* in the path that he expected to take. In other words, it is no surprise that self-reflection is the condition of being, since self-reflection is already presumed in the method.

Sincere doubt would have anticipated Irigaray's incisive inquiries:

> *And what if illusion were constitutive of thinking?* Not in the sense that the cogitations 'fail' to correspond to (their) objective reality, but in that whereby illusion would serve as fiction of proof of the cogitatum itself, as coming to the

[12] Hegel ¶78
[13] Hegel ¶78
[14] Hegel, PoS, ¶74; emphasis in original,

> same thing as the entity who is now thinking (himself)? […] What if, therefore, the crucial thing to do were rather, or especially, to conclude that the other exists—and the self in the other—from the fact of thinking?[15]

Irigaray's question is not simply the one raised above—How do we know that we are doubting?—a question easily brushed aside by the observation that 'doubt' is merely shorthand for self-reflection. Rather, Irigaray's question examines the possibility that self-reflection is the activity of a being the nature of which inherently escapes self-reflection. Consider an analogy: given the human placement of the eyes, a singular ocular-centric existence yields a limited self-knowledge. Many of us might not recognize, for example, our own gait, or the sight of our bodies viewed from behind our backs. Similarly, if self-reflection is innately corporeal, or more radically, the activity that we have been calling '*self*-reflection' is actually a dynamic that requires, most importantly, an Other, then certainty lies not in the self, but precisely in an entity 'outside of our heads'.

And third, as an argument, the *cogito* begs the question. First, we must modify the expression in order for it to comprise a syllogism, much less a fallacious one. A syllogism requires at least two premises. A 'conclusion' following from a single premise is merely a restatement of the premise. Thus, at best the 'argument' reads: I think therefore I think. Or more accurately, since all that we purportedly have at our disposal are the thoughts, as yet unattributed to an existent Descartes, the 'argument' reads: thoughts exist therefore thoughts exist. In order to conclude that, therefore, a *thinker* necessarily exists, we must introduce the assumption that these thoughts belong to someone. This assumption, however, is already present in the text, given by the first person pronoun. We need only ask, 'To whom does the pronoun refer?' which yields the

[15] Irigaray, 182-3

obvious identity of Descartes. The argument now reads: Descartes thinks therefore Descartes exists. Parsed into its components yields:

(1) If thoughts exist, a thinker exists

(2) Descartes is the thinker

(3) Thoughts exist

(4) Therefore, Descartes exists

Presented in this manner, the circularity of the argument is apparent. Descartes' existence must be presumed in order to conclude that his existence is necessary.

Nevertheless, the fallaciousness of Descartes' 'argument' does not belie the conclusion. Descartes addresses an aspect of the circularity in the "Objections and Replies". In the Second and Sixth series of objections, Mersenne argues that the argument, *cogito ergo sum*, implies an infinite regress, if not a *petitio principii*. Mersenne argues that, given the extremity of our skepticism, we cannot know what thinking is such that it implies our existence. Mersenne says:

> "Indeed, you don't even know that you are saying or thinking anything, since this seems to require that you should know that you know what you are saying; which in turn requires that you be aware of knowing that you know what you are saying, and so on ad infinitum. Hence it is clear that you cannot know whether you exist or even whether you are thinking."[16]

In short, if we know what thinking is, the argument begs the question; if we do not know, then we confront an infinite regress. More broadly, Mersenne shares our second criticism: Descartes' doubt is insincere. Presuming otherwise renders the argument incoherent. Nevertheless, Descartes deftly replies:[17]

[16] Bennet, R&O, VII 147

[17] Whereas the above objection occurs in the Sixth series of objections, the reply below actually occurs in the Second series. Nevertheless, the reply in the Sixth makes the same point, albeit less concisely: "It is

> "When someone says 'I am thinking, therefore I am, or I exist', he isn't inferring existence from thought by means of a syllogism; rather, a simple intuition of his mind shows it to him as self-evident [….] he learns it by experiencing in his own case that it isn't possible to think without existing."[18]

Strikingly, Descartes evades Mersenne's objection and the charge of circular reasoning by conceding that though 'I think' occasions the revelation that 'I am', it is not a syllogism. Our existence is not something that we deduce, certainly not something inferred from self-reflection.

At this juncture, we recognize that the certainty of the *cogito* is not granted *by* the *cogito*. Rather, the persuasive engine of the *cogito* is provided by a second implicit argument that functions in parallel. The argument occurs in the unparsed paradox generated by the *cogito.* The attempt to doubt one's existence yields, as Jaako Hintikka explains, an "existential inconsistency."[19] Given that one exists, certain kinds of sentences are self-contradictory. Sentences of this sort employ the first person pronoun as its subject. The first person pronoun, in most cases, is a deictic, indexed to the speaker of the sentence. The sentence becomes a kind of action, viz. an utterance.[20] Consequently, the occurrence of the first person pronoun implicitly

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true that no-one can be certain that he is thinking or that he exists unless he knows what thought is and what existence is. But this doesn't require reflective knowledge—·i.e. knowledge gained by looking into one's own mind·—or knowledge through demonstrations; still less does it require knowledge of reflective knowledge, i.e. knowing that we know, and knowing that we know that we know, and so on ad infinitum, this being a kind of knowledge that can't possibly be had about anything. All that is required is to know it by the internal awareness that always precedes reflective knowledge. This inner awareness of one's thought and existence is so innate in all men that we can't help having it."(Bennet, R&O, VII 147)

[18] Bennet, R&O, VII 25

[19] Hintikka 10

[20] Hintikka makes a nice distinction between 'sentence', 'statement', and 'utterance'. He says, "A sentence is of course a grammatical entity that involves no reference to any particular utterer or any particular time of utterance. An utterance is an event (a speech-act) that may be specified by specifying the uttered sentence, the speaker, and the occasion on which he makes his utterance. Utterances of declarative sentences (with prima-facie fact-stating intent) are typical examples of statements. (The term does not seem especially happy, but I shall retain it because it appears to be rather widespread.) A statement is an event (an act) occurring in some particular context. Usually it is a speech-act of a certain kind, but we shall not insist on that. For our purposes a statement may equally well be made, e.g., by writing a sentence. Any act will do which is prima facie designed to serve the same purposes as the act of uttering a declarative sentence with the intention of conveying bona fide information." (Hintikka p.11-12, fn.21)

entails the claim "I, the speaker, exist". Thus an utterance that explicitly claims that the speaker does not exist yields a contradiction, an existential inconsistency.

We can productively contrast the existentially inconsistent utterance "I do not exist" with the unobjectionable statement "Descartes does not exist." If all of the words in the sentence are presumed to be meaningful in their normal senses, the former statement, rendered an utterance as opposed to merely a sentence, is self-contradictory. If it were true, it would never have been uttered in the first place; moreover, if it were not an existential claim, it would be analytically false. The latter statement concerning Descartes is simply synthetic, subject to existential verification.

This implicit argument by existential inconsistency, as opposed to the inference from self-reflection, grants the certainty of the existence of the speaker of the *Meditations*, or as we can now say, the *narrator*, Descartes-of-the-*Meditations*. Moreover, it is an argument for which the first person pronoun is necessary. Stylistically, it might have appeared as though the use of the first person pronoun were merely a rhetorical choice, a function of Descartes' eloquence and sense of persuasion. One might speculate that had Descartes been a less talented writer, he may have articulated his point more staidly, i.e. absent the first person pronoun. Yet, without the presumption of a speaker, functioning ultimately as a premise, the *cogito ergo sum* betrays itself as merely a fallacious syllogism.

The employment of the first person pronoun harbors farther-reaching philosophical implications than merely securing the existence of the narrator. First, we can now appreciate the poignancy of Irigaray's criticism that Descartes has reversed the causal order. The narrator is not his own cause, much less an entity born from the fact of his thoughts. The narrator is an

invention of an Other, in this case the author. Moreover, this narrator is distinct from the author; the narrator is a character of sorts who occupies the 'narrative instance,' as Gérard Genette calls it, which is a spatio-temporal realm other than that of the author. Descartes-of-the-*Meditations*, for example, is "seated by the fire, clothed in a winter dressing gown," existing always in the present tense, i.e. in the time of the reader. Even if the narrator was created in the image of the author, the narrator's character and beliefs are fixed on the page, whereas those of the author are underdetermined and evolving. The difference between engaging the author and the narrator is like the difference between engaging living interlocutors and literary characters. The latter, of course, may be known but not affected.

Second, the first person pronoun betrays the particularity of Descartes' voice. The *Meditations,* thus, exemplifies Mills' critical premise in *Blackness Visible.* Mills says, "The universalizing pretensions of Western philosophy, which by its very abstractness and distance from vulgar reality seemed to be all-inclusive of human experience, are thereby shown to be illusory."[21] In spite of Descartes' pretension to speak as if his voice were like that of God, from an abstract place of purportedly absolute authority, the voice of the *Meditations* explicitly tethers his conclusions and observations to a perspective.

Consider the opening sentence, where the first person pronoun occurs as many as six times:

> Several years have now elapsed since I first became aware that I had accepted, even in my youth, many false opinions for true, and that consequently what I afterwards based on such principles was highly doubtful; and from that time I was convinced of the necessity of undertaking once in my life to rid myself of all the opinions I had adopted, and of commencing anew the work of building from the foundation, if I desired to establish a firm and abiding superstructure in the sciences.[22]

[21] Mills, BV, 9
[22] Descartes 86

Is this philosophy? Metaphysics? The findings of metaphysics, viz. first principles, are presumably universal; they pretend to apply indifferently to everyone, across time and space. Yet, the first person pronoun in this passage indicates exactly the opposite, a particular speaker, here and now. The *narrator* "accepted" false opinions; the *narrator* was "convinced" to find an indubitable basis of belief. The tone of angst in the above passage makes the text read like the opening lines of a *Bildungsroman*: a youthful protagonist, having suddenly reflected on his naïveté, which presumably consists in identifying too closely with his parents and community, asserts his equally naïve independence; he aspires to rid himself of the 'superstitions' and "many false opinions" of his community, and "establish a firm and abiding superstructure" with which to fashion his purpose and place in the world.

Rather than the timeless revelation that some beliefs are unfounded and must be discarded on that basis, uttered as if from the mouth of an omniscient deity, the use of the first person pronoun renders Descartes' skepticism entirely his own. This skepticism is born of the desires of an historical being. From the first pages there are indications of Descartes situatedness, i.e. his perspective and his physical and historical place in the world. The language suggests that his observations are subjective in a way that does not extend to everyone. For example, the seamlessness with which the reader is led to believe that the narrator and the author are the same person suggests that, though the two are in fact distinct, we may attribute characteristics of the author to the narrator; thus Descartes-the-narrator is presumably male and French, living in the seventeenth century, and has enough leisure and security to spend six consecutive evenings—if we take the narrative of the *Meditations* literally—alone in his study contemplating the nature of his existence, effectively staring at his navel.

Descartes probably took for granted that his intended audience shared his situatedness. Otherwise, he would have anticipated the possibility that the first person pronoun could have alienated some readers. One could argue that the first person pronoun is a reflection of Descartes' unabashed hubris. In the *Discourse,* Descartes suggests, simply, that he was better equipped than most to determine the True. He says:

> "I was thus led to infer that the ground of our opinions is far more custom and example than any certain knowledge. And, finally, although such be the ground of our opinions, I remarked that a plurality of suffrages is no guarantee of truth where it is at all of difficult discovery, as in such cases it is much more likely that it will be found by one than by many. I could, however, select from the crowd no one whose opinions seemed worthy of preference, and thus I found myself constrained, as it were, to use my own reason in the conduct of my life.
> "But like one walking along and in the dark, I resolved to proceed so slowly and with such circumspection, that if I did not advance far, I would at least guard against falling.[23]

The particularity implied by the first person pronoun in this passage is purportedly incidental since Descartes believes his perspective to be authoritative.

Nevertheless, in this regard, the text speaks for itself; the explicit presence of a narrator has philosophical implications that outstrip the intentions of the author. Only under particular, privileged circumstances, such as those enjoyed by the narrator of the *Meditations*, could one enjoy the luxury of the Cartesian intellectual exercise. If we presume that Descartes' skepticism is sincere, only those who can bear the psychological upheaval of changing their minds can doubt their beliefs. And finally, only those who do not fear the wrath of an omnipotent deity can afford to question the authority, much less the existence, of such an entity. And finally, and perhaps most importantly, only those who enjoy physical and emotional security can afford to doubt the existence of their bodies, or question whether or not they are dreaming. Such a

[23] Descartes 15-16

privileged vantage point is inconceivable to anyone who, by virtue of their places in the world, has found themselves physically vulnerable, confronting perhaps the threat of violence or death.

Additionally, whether or not I share Descartes' observations—much less presume that *all* others share them as well—requires a secondary moment of abstraction that the reader must introduce into the text. In other words, in order to read the explicitly particular voice of the *Meditations* as universal and abstract, I must interpret the text. I must translate the "I think therefore I am" into "one thinks therefore one is"; or more radically, I must remove the subject entirely: "existence follows from thought". This subject-less formulation, however, cannot occur in the *Meditations*. As argued above, the first person pronoun is necessary for the argument to function at all.

Highlighting the explicit particularity of the voice of the *Meditations* is not, ultimately, a criticism. On the contrary, the explicit particularity is a point to be praised. On the one hand, my larger argument in this dissertation includes the claim that all texts have a particular voice, and that the pretension to non-particularity is frequently harmful. Even when innocuous, such a pretension is naïve and misguided. Nevertheless, as will be argued below, in spite of, or perhaps because of, the particularity of the *Meditations*, the text makes a claim to the universal, though a universal of a different sort—a universal characterized by the Example.

In the *Meditations*, the dramatic dissonance produced by placing reflections on metaphysics in the mouth of a particularly speaker, i.e. Descartes-the-narrator, suggests a subversive and ironic—perhaps even deconstructive—project, especially given 1) the relatively recent persecution of Descartes' contemporary and colleague-of-sorts, Galileo; and 2) Descartes' audience, which included Galileo's persecutors, viz. the "very sage and illustrious deans and

doctors of the sacred faculty of Theology of Paris". Moreover, we know from Descartes' letters that the *Meditations* were intended as a criticism of Aristotle and scholasticism.[24]

The subtext reads: contrary to the traditional philosophical discourse, i.e. the scholastic discourse, even our most abstract philosophical quest, viz. metaphysics, the search for first principles, is situated in a time, a place, and a perspective. Though these are traditional literary qualities, their proper consideration in discourse bears upon the content of the text.

[24] Descartes writes in a letter to Mersenne: "I may tell you, between ourselves, that these six *Meditations* contain all the foundations of my *Physics*. But please do not tell people, for that might make it harder for supporters of Aristotle to approve them. I hope that readers will gradually get used to my principles, and recognize their truth, before they notice that they destroy the principles of Aristotle" (Kenney, *Descartes' Philosophical Letters*, 1/28/41, p. 94).

1.1.3. The Narrative Structure of Hegel's *Phenomenology*.

The argument of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* functions as a narrative. Moreover, it must function as a narrative if it is to *work.* The project of Hegel's *Phenomenology* is to facilitate the 'edification of spirit' to the standpoint of Absolute Knowing, or "Science," which is the culmination philosophical thought. Edification is inherently durational, and thus characterized by narrative. Edification premises a point of origin, viz. the place where we are now, and posits a point in the future, where we will be different.

The point of origin in the *Phenomenology* is the place of the reader, who, in reading the text, occupies the place of natural spirit. 'Spirit', the protagonist of this narrative, refers to the totality of knowing subjects. These knowing subjects are not generic; they consist of the actual readers of the *Phenomenology*, viz. you and me. The point in the future is the standpoint of Absolute Knowing, which is the moment, or the place, or the condition wherein knowledge in its entirety—which consists not only of "facts", in a broad sense, but also, and most importantly, of actual knowers, viz. us, the readers—is aware of itself.

One might parse these unfortunately cryptic and technical Hegelian formulations as the enrichment of the reader to the point where her words coincide with her actions. This *coincidence* of words and actions in the Hegelian sense is not simply the ethical condition of something like "keeping our promises". Keeping our promises entails, as we may note, two moments: first, the making of the promise, which is merely a collection of words, otherwise empty, perhaps even meaningless; and second, the engagement in the promised behavior, which, in principle, may have been accomplished without the words, and may not necessarily have been done because of the words.

The Hegelian coincidence of words and actions that characterizes Absolute Knowing is more analogous to something like speech acts, where the words are the action and vice versa. In the case of a speech act, the words comprise the action in the given context—an apology, a pronouncement of marriage by a licensed officiant, an indictment or acquittal by a court of law, the naming of a child upon her birth by her guardians, etc.[25] If we were to personify the speech act, we would approximate something like Hegel's idea of Spirit.

This "conclusion" of the *Phenomenology*, so to speak, viz. the standpoint of Absolute Knowing or "Science", is "knowable" at the outset; it is stated for the reader readily and repeatedly through the text. In the Preface, Hegel tells us this is the point when philosophy "can lay aside the title of '*love* of knowledge' and be *actual* knowing"(¶5). It is the qualitative difference where Truth ceases to merely comprehended, and becomes also intuited and felt. It is the dissolution of the difference between knower and known, or rather the realization that the difference is merely an apparent one, where "everything turns on grasping and expressing the True, not only as *Substance*, but equally as *Subject*."(¶17) And the final chapter, entitled "Absolute Knowing", is ultimately a distillation of the text, a concise 20-page restatement of a 500-page document. The project of the text could seemingly be accomplished in a concise, exquisitely crafted essay, if only reader could grasp the insight.

The reader's incomprehension is similar to a moment in Plato's *Meno*, where Socrates offers the eponymous character a definition of color. Whether or not the definition is "true", Meno cannot understand it, and thus, in spite of having a definition in hand, still does not know what color is. Socrates' ironic reply suggests that he is not obligated to make his words

[25] Promises are often included among examples of speech acts. And indeed, the act of promising is an action whereby, with one's words, one enters into a contract of sorts. Nevertheless, the future orientedness of promises, such that they are never fully accomplished by the words, renders them, at the very least, a different kind of speech act. Until promises are fulfilled, they are only words, more like statements of facts, which may be subject to future verification. Conversely, speech acts are accomplished by the words, fulfilled at the moment of their utterance.

intelligible; Meno must bear the burden of understanding. Socrates' reply is ironic, however, because, as the reader the *Meno* is aware, Socrates is trying to teach Meno something. Thus Socrates *is* invested in Meno's edification, however marginally. His is explicitly facilitating an experience *for* Meno. Arguably, Socrates' reply is an attempt to dislodge Meno from his passive education attitude, where he believes that knowledge should be given to him, rather than actively sought.

Nevertheless, the nature of the True, the grasping of which is the project of the *Phenomenology*, is such that Time, duration, suffering and despair on the part of the reader, is a constitutive element of the True. "The True is the whole." Hegel says, "But the whole is nothing other than the essence consummating itself through its development."(¶20) The True is an end, a result informed by a process, and unless one has endured the process, the presumed knowledge of the results is literally uninformed, empty.

Absolute Knowing attains the culmination of philosophical thought. A culmination, in the Hegelian sense, does not mean that the *Phenomenology* supplants the entire history of philosophy. A culmination, in this sense, suggests that there is historical progression to philosophical thought; there is a movement or growth. Moreover, this movement, which Hegel calls 'dialectical', is necessary. The reason, Hegel tells us, is that the Concept in particular, and philosophy in general, is not something that can be stated simply as an *aim*, nor simply as a *process*, nor simply as a *result*. Hegel says in the preface, "The aim by itself is a lifeless universal, just as the guiding tendency [or process] is a mere drive that as yet lacks an actual existence; and the bare result is the corpse which has left the guiding tendency behind it."(¶3) The true Concept, "the real issue"(¶3), as Hegel says, *die Sache selbst*, is the one that takes these three 'aspects' (so to speak)—i.e. the aim, the process, and the result—collectively.

Yet, in order to *sincerely* take these collectively—rather than simply reducing all of them to instances of one of the three—, one must substantiate each of them, or rather articulate them (in the intransitive sense). In other words, in order to 'know' a concept, one must have an aim, undergo a process, *and* arrive at a result. For example, in order to claim sincerely that one knows the answer to, say, a difficult math problem, one must provide more than simply the number or the answer, i.e. the result. Additionally, one would need to illustrate the process of solving the problem, or as one says conventionally, one would need to 'show one's work.' The result alone is insufficient because one could have stumbled upon it accidentally. Such accidents are not sufficient for knowledge because it is not evident that the process could be repeated or that the 'knowledge' qua result could be applied. One has the answer, but one does not know *that* it is the answer because one does not know *why* it the answer. The result in this sense supplants the process of solving the problem. Conversely, *if* one knows the answer, then the number, i.e. the result, does not supplant the process of solving, but rather entails it. This result that necessarily entails the process is what we mean by the Hegelian sense of 'culmination.'

Thus, in order for a reader to attain Absolute Knowing, the *Phenomenology*, as a text, cannot simply state the end; it cannot simply articulate the moment of Absolute Knowing, since that would amount to supplanting the process with the result. Rather, the *Phenomenology* must escort the reader through the long "formative education"(¶28) of Spirit. The reader must pass through and 'linger'(¶29) over a series of moments. And the *Phenomenology* must facilitate this experience, this labor. During each formative moment—i.e. every moment except the last one—the reader must learn despairingly why it is not the final moment. This labor is necessary so that when spirit attains Absolute Knowing, not only does spirit know *that* it is the last moment, but spirit also knows *why* it is so.

We can delineate the dialectical movement, i.e. shape of the edification of spirit, at almost any moment in the *Phenomenology* since the progression is recursive and periodic. The narrative cycle is characterized by three moments. The first moment is characterized by a radical internalization; it is the moment when the essential quality of identity is its being *in itself*. The second moment is characterized by a radical externalization; this is the moment when the essential quality of identity is its being *for itself*. The third moment takes the first two moments together, which produces a new first moment, except of course in the case of the last moment. In the last moment the internal is identical with the external, the being in-itself *is* the being for-itself and vice versa.

The first two moments are analogous to what Hegel describes as the ancient and modern conceptions of science. Hegel characterizes the ancient science as a radical internalization. Though not explicitly named, one can assume that the quintessential philosopher that Hegel has in mind is Plato. According to the traditional Platonic ontology, the true world, the real world, 'nature' in the Hegelian sense, is not the world appearance, but rather the ideal, purely intelligible world of the Forms. Hegel says, philosophers "had a heaven adorned with a vast wealth of thoughts and imagery. The meaning of all that is, hung on the thread of light by which it was linked to that heaven. Instead of living in this world's presence, men looked beyond it"(¶8). One could interpret Hegel's metaphor of 'the thread of light' as a reference to the rays of the sun in Plato's analogy of the cave. As we know from Plato, insofar as anything appears, it 'partakes' of the Forms. Yet, the essential quality of the appearing object, i.e. its *form*, itself does not appear; rather it inheres within the object. These Forms are accessible through philosophical reflection. According to Plato, one does not need experience to acquire knowledge of them, since

everything there is to know is already within us, having left its impression upon our soul prior to birth.

Hegel characterizes the modern science as a radical externalization. Though not explicitly named, Hegel has in mind the empiricists who dominated the philosophical landscape from the fifteenth century up until Kant's Critical philosophy. According to the empiricists the 'true' and the 'real' is the world of experience, exactly what Plato called the world of appearance. The essential quality of an object *is* its appearance, its 'given-ness', its phenomenological being, which is accessed *only* though experience. Whereas the criticisms of the ancient science were motivated by a need to reorient philosophers toward the alleged meaningfulness of the world of experience, Hegel levies the opposite criticism against the empiricists. He says, "as if they had forgotten all about the divine […] sense is so fast rooted in earthly things that it requires just as much force to raise it."(¶8)

Neither of these moments are the final moment. Thus neither the ancient nor the modern sciences reflects the 'True' or the 'Real'. Nonetheless, both moments are dialectically necessary. Let us turn to the text of the *Phenomenology* in order to observe the movement through these moments, and in order to better understand how and why they are necessary. Though we may observe the movement anywhere, the movement from Sense-Certainty to Self-Consciousness provides an easy translation into the language of science.

The dialectic progression is as follows: beginning with some version of the question "Of what are we certain?" we refer initially to our senses. We quickly find our sense inadequate because though we are certain of them, we cannot attribute truth to them; that is to say, we cannot articulate *why*, or even of *what* we are certain. As it turns out, the problem lies in language, since every word that we articulate is a universal and does not capture the immediacy

of the 'this' object of which we are certain. In order to resolve this structural fission, we delimit the immediacy of the object as an allegedly unique conglomeration of attributes, i.e. I perceive it as a Thing. The Thing, however, soon becomes inadequate, because we then realize that the unity of the attributes is not only due to the Thing itself. The unity of the Thing is also dependent upon a perceiving consciousness. We identify this relationship between the Thing-perceived and the perceiving-Consciousness as the dynamic of 'Force', which we subsequently take to be essential. The salience of Force, however, renders the objects of experience ephemeral, which I can only account for with the concept of natural laws. Law, however, becomes inadequate because it is a pure universal. Like the pure 'This', we do not experience it *as* law. As law, it is only *for us*, or as Hegel says, for consciousness. The necessity of the law, however, (without laws we would lose the phenomenal world to its chaotic ephemerality) highlights the essential role of the 'for-consciousness,' bringing consciousness face to face with itself. Thus emerges the object of certainty and truth, self-consciousness, i.e. our self-aware selves.

Throughout this progression, we should note the moments of despair, or disillusionment, and their importance. Each object of our knowledge, of our certainty, vanished "in our experience of it."(¶166). The moments of despair are precipitated by the realization that the truth of the object laid elsewhere. The truth of sense-certainty lay not in the immediacy of the "This", but in the universality of language; "This", which was intended to refer to only one object of which we are immediately certain, equally and indifferently referred to every object of sense-certainty. The truth of perception lay not in the "Thing" that we supposedly only apprehended, but in the relationship to a consciousness that *took* the "many" attributes of the "Thing" to be a unified object. And the truth of force lay not in supersensible world behind the ephemeral world of appearance, but in the self-satisfaction of explanations in terms of Laws, where as Hegel says,

consciousness is “communing directly with itself…although it seems to be busy with something else”(¶163).

The moment of sense-certainty reflects the ancient Science. Though we experience the certainty of the Platonic world of appearance, the truth of that world can only be given in terms of the universal *Forms* of language. Our two kinds of ‘knowledge’, truths and certainties, are irreconcilable, and thus we can never know whether or not our truths are the same as, or ever refer to, our certainties. The moments of perception and Force, reflects the modern Science. Though we experience the empirical certainty of the Thing, the truth of the Thing can be traced to an act of judgment, which is fundamentally not empirical. We are left with two irreconcilable kinds of ‘knowledge’, phenomenal certainty and the truth of judgment.

These moments, however, are dialectically necessary for the edification of spirit, because, in terms of its self-understanding, Spirit *learned*, i.e. *now knows*, two important things: 1) knowledge does not consist solely in sense data, nor in language, nor phenomenal consistency, nor in judgment; 2) rather knowledge consists in the laborious, narrative experience of suffering through the disillusionment of relying on each of these.

One might still contend, why not simply skip to the end and spare oneself the disillusionment, the suffering, and the humbling—perhaps even humiliating— experience of error? If we could know that the intermediate steps are wrong, why not occupy oneself solely with the “true”?

The short answer is, of course, that this question misunderstands the idea of “truth”. Nevertheless, by way of a response, consider a scene from Proust’s *Recherche*. In volume II, Marcel has just discovered, to his extreme distaste, that the painter Elstir, whom he has grown to

admire, is the same personage who used to be known as M. Biche, a character he has heard much about and of whom he greatly disapproves. Upon gleaning this conflicting association, Elstir explains simply that he has grown since the days of "M. Biche", as is to be expected. Moreover, he does not regret those misguided days, because it is because of those experiences that he is the "admirable" person he is today. Had it not been for that fatuous period of his life, when he *was* M. Biche, proudly so, understanding intimately how M. Biche's persona could be construed as virtuous, Elstir might still have been that person today.[26] Unlike, indifference, the rejection of a past self is as constitutive of the current self as one's positive qualities.

[26] Elstirs full response is as follows: "'There is no man,' he began, 'however wise, who has not at some period of his youth said things, or lived a life, the memory of which is so unpleasant to him that he would gladly expunge it. And yet he ought not entirely to regret it, because he cannot be certain that he has indeed become a wise man—so far as it is possible for any of to be wise—unless he has passed through all the fatuous or unwholesome incarnations by which that ultimate stage must be preceded...We do not receive wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves, after a journey through the wilderness which no one else can make for us, which no one can spare us, for our wisdom is the point of view from which we come at last to regard the world. The lives that you admire, the attitudes that seem noble to you, have not been shaped by a paterfamilias or a schoolmaster, they have sprung from very different beginnings, having been influenced by everything evil or commonplace that prevailed round about them. They represent a struggle and a victory. I can see that the picture of what we were at an earlier stage may not be recognisable and cannot, certainly, be pleasing to contemplate in later life. But we must not repudiate it, for it is a proof that we have really lived, that it is in accordance with the laws of life and of the mind that we have, from the common elements of life, of the life of studios, of artistic groups—assuming one is a painter—extracted something that transcends them.'" (Proust, vol.II 605-6)

1.2 Philosophical Literature

The literature side of the convergence functions in a similar way. There are two senses in which we could say that literature is philosophical. One, "philosophical" functions as a qualifier, indicating a category within literature, in the same way that we may qualify *American* literature or *twentieth century* literature. Alternately, "philosophical" functions as a definition; in this sense, all literature is philosophical insofar as it is good, which is to say, insofar as it is literature. As Camus says, "The great novelists are philosophical novelists".[27]

In this inquiry, I am only seriously interested in this second sense. As in the above sense of the 'literary', the first sense precludes the question of form; it presumes that the content of discourse can be extracted as a statement without loss or *significant* remainder. There is, however, always a "remainder", an element that resists translation, so to speak. The old adage, "a picture is worth a thousand words" captures something of the point. The point being, the "translation" of the picture into words is nonsensical, since any presumption of exchange is naïve. Interpretation does not replace the work. The remainder of a literary work consists in its particularity. This particularity includes the style, which entails voice and perspective, and the narrative, which entails setting and plot. The question of form concerns the possibility that this remainder is significant.

Whereas many popular examples of philosophically-qualified literature would suffice—for example "moral",[28] "political",[29] or "speculative"[30] literature—the inclination to reduce the

[27] *The Myth of Sisyphus*, 101; he says, "The great novelists are philosophical novelists—that is, the contrary of thesis-writers." Though he is not explicitly providing a definition of literature *as* philosophy—he is rather presenting a hierarchy between the novelist and the thesis-writer—a definition is implied, since there is no qualitative difference between the novelist and the thesis-writer.

[28] We call literature "moral" when the apparent, authorial intent is to teach a lesson. Consider the traditions of fables, fairy tales, and parables. Fables include the stories of Kwaku-Anansi the spider-man (West Africa and the

text to simply *what* it purportedly says, as distinct from *how*, is frequently an unnecessary distraction from the question of form. In exemplary philo-literary texts, the question of how to write—which includes the question whether to write a novel or an essay—is fundamental, not only for the "literary" and pragmatic consideration of how the text appears, but also for the "philosophical" and metaphysical consideration of what the text says.[31]

First we will examine Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler*, which presents an argument; in brief, the voice of the reader is prioritary. This is an argument, however, that demands a literary form. Any argument about the nature of reading in general must apply equally to the experience of the particular reader to whom the author presents the argument; otherwise, every reader's experience would function as a refutation. The reflexivity inherent to arguments about reading—the argument refers to the context of its emergence and evaluation—demands that the argument proceed by illustration, rendering conspicuous the reader's reading. And since reading is an experience—i.e. an activity that occurs in time and space—an illustration of reading must be also spatio-temporal, viz. a narrative.

Caribbean), Br'er Rabbit (Southern United States), Bouqui et Malice (Haiti), and the works of Aesop (6th century BCE Greece), Jean de La Fontaine (17th century French), and Hans Christian Andersen (19th century Danish); they are frequently characterized by their tendency to conclude with a pithy moral, or rule for right action. Fairy tales usually convey cultural values (such as gender roles or ideals of beauty) rather than morals (i.e. rules of right action), insofar as these are distinguishable; consider the examples of "Snow White", "Sleeping Beauty", and "Cinderella". And parables are frequently offered as *answers* to a specific question, such as the parables of Jesus.

[29] Literature is "political" when the intent is to critique current political or social practices and arrangements. Consider, for example, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (on American Slavery), George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (on pre-WWII Stalinism), And Derrick Bell's *Faces at the Bottom of the Well* (on 20th century American Racism).

[30] The "speculative" content occurs as one of two kinds. One, the discourse entails a "thought experiment", where traditional "philosophical" problems are analyzed under hypothetical circumstances; for example, through a series of narrative predictions of the technological landscape, Ray Kurzweil's *The Age of Spiritual Machines* examines the interrelated "philosophical" problems of artificial intelligence and human consciousness. And two, the explicit topic of the discourse includes canonical texts from the history of philosophy; for example, Jostein Gaarder's *Sophie's World*, which is modeled, literally, as a journey through the ideas of the canonical philosophical texts.

[31] Other exemplary texts include: Richard Wright's *Native Son*, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, G.G. Marquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*, Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, Sadegh Hedayat's *Blind Owl*, and the works of Jorge Luis Borges, Albert Camus, J.P. Sartre, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Franz Kafka, Umberto Eco and many others.

Second, consider Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Now, whereas *If on a winter's night a traveler* is an argument that demands a literary form, *Moby Dick* is a story that demands a non-literary form, or at least significant non-literary elements. The difficult task of writing (and reading) *Moby Dick* consists in gleaning a story that resists narration. The first question posed to the traditional novel—*What happens?*—is misplaced with regard to *Moby Dick*. Rather than a series of events, the story emerges out of the encyclopedic juxtaposing of references and technical knowledge. *Moby Dick* is an example of "content" functioning as "form", information a vehicle for a story.

And third, we will examine the text that hovers in the background of this entire project, *In Search of Lost Time* by Marcel Proust. Much like *Moby Dick, In Search of Lost Time* resists narration. In this section, I will examine the Proustian idea of the universal, characterized by the Example. Specifically, I will examine the ways in which Proust's various accounts of love serve as a rich analogy for the Example.

1.2.1. The Priority of the Reader in *If on a winter's night a traveler*

All texts, whether philosophical or literary, include certain voices. If we align these voices along a spectrum from speaker to listener, or from sender to receiver, they would include the author, the narrator, the characters, the narratee, the implied reader, and the actual reader, with the actual reader being of the highest priority.

In ostensibly literary texts, these voices are, to varying degrees, conspicuous and distinct. Rendering these voices conspicuous contributes in large part to what we commonly think of as the literary structure or form. The separation of these voices from the author's/reader's voice(s) erects a space and a world that is also distinct from the space and world of the author/reader, and wherein the narrative—a feature presumably unique to literature—occurs. Gérard Genette calls this space the "narrative situation".[32]

Nevertheless, an analogous "situation", along with these voices that occupy it, are equally present in, and important to, ostensibly non-literary texts as well. Even if the author aspires to speak as herself in the text—as is often the case for authors of non-literary texts—from the moment the text is written, a narrator emerges who continues to speak in the absence of the author. The distinction between the author and the narrator enables us to describe the evolution of a thinker over time. A distinct narrator enables a thinker to have early, middle, and late "narrative personas", each of which consist of distinguishable characteristics. This narrator addresses a counterpart directly, who occupies the same existential time and space; this addressee is the narratee.[33] And though there may not be characters in non-literary texts whose

[32] Genette, 212

[33] Gérard Genette, in *Narrative Discourse*, describes the narratee: "Like the narrator, the narratee is one fo the elements in the narrating situation, and he is necessarily located at the same diegetic level; that is, he does not merge

manners and physical appearances have a function in the development of something like a story, there are certainly centers of conceptual gravity that interact with the narrator and each other in ways analogous to characters.

And finally, and most importantly, all texts prefigure a reader. Natural phenomena, by contrast, do not prefigure an audience as strictly. The proverbial tree in the forest falls whether or not someone hears; the heartbreakingly beautiful sunset ignites the sky in the absence of a witness. The text, however, is inherently dialogical. The reader is ultimately the condition of possibility for the text. Without the reader, there would be no text. Not only are texts always produced *for* a reader—the novelist Richard Perry says, "The best books are written for a single, specific person."[34]—but the reader also articulates and animates the text, and in that sense, literarily creates.

There is, of course, a unique labor associated with being the author. And all readers of moving and insightful texts are indeed grateful for that labor. Nevertheless, the author of the text is not privileged as the creator of the work, i.e. as the door through which the work enters the world. Rather, the privilege of the author is that she is the first reader, and the first reader does not read a literal text.

A literal text consists, of course, of words—e.g. a book, an essay, a novel, a treatise, a poem, etc. Yet, "text" should be considered more broadly, metaphorically, where, though there are not actual words, we relate to an artifact or experience hermeneutically, as if there were words—e.g. maps, images, music, facial expressions, events, etc. In "Reading a Wave", the opening vignette of Italo Calvino's *Mr. Palomar,* we see precisely this activity of reading a metaphorical text, in this case, the surf. As Calvino's narrator notes, "what Mr. Palomar means to

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a priori with the reader (even an implied reader) any more than the narrator necessarily merges with the author."(259)

[34] Perry, conversation, 11/5/2011

do at this moment is simply to *see* a wave, that is, to perceive all its simultaneous components without overlooking any of them".[35] This task, as it turns out, is relatively challenging, since like most of our sensations and impressions, a single wave is amorphous, ephemeral, and indistinct. A wave consists of forces, which we can only perceive indirectly through its effects; a wave is inherently in motion; and a single wave rarely, if ever, exists in isolation, distinct from other waves or other parts of the surf that are, ambiguously, not the wave. Moreover, we should note, that Mr. Palomar is "not contemplating".[36] Contemplation presumes having seen the wave, since only then can we reflect *on* the wave, or think *about* it.

There is nothing particularly remarkable about the activity of reading metaphorical texts. "Reading" the world, considered as a text, is integral to living in it. Nevertheless, the distinction of the author is that she is what we might call a close reader. Whereas Mr. Palomar ultimately loses patience in his enterprise, the author lingers over her impressions and signs until she conjoins them into a form that is communicable. Her labor consists, as Proust says, in the effort to "make an impression pass through all the successive states which will culminate in its fixation, its expression."[37] This labor is not simply the effort to translate an impression into a contemporary idiom, as if it were intelligible as a whole prior to the moment of articulation. The effort of writing is an encounter with the quasi-intelligible, something on the edge of intelligibility. Mr. Palomar, for example, sees something in the surf, but he loses patience before he gleans the wave, and in that sense never becomes the author of the wave. The metaphorical text remains in this liminal space until it has been articulated.[38] The essential activity of the

[35] Calvino, *Mr. Palomar*, 4
[36] Calvino, *Mr. Palomar*, 3
[37] Proust, vol.VI, 278-9
[38] Consider by way of contrast and analogy, two experiences of reading a sentence in a language that, perhaps, one reads poorly. On the one hand, we may glean the sense of the sentence by translating it into a language in which we are more proficient. Translation presumes an equivalence between the idioms of two languages, whereas frequently

author is not the writing, but rather the articulation. Granted, the "first reading" is the most difficult. But all subsequent readers engage in the same basic activity. The first reader may curate the images, but both the first and the subsequent readers articulate them.

If on a winter's night a traveler is, reflexively, a story about readers and reading. Reading is itself a story. Reading is the first story, the story of the Text. Thus a story of reading is a meta-story, a story of stories. Reading, as we have noted, is the activity of relating to, or articulating, a text. Thus, reading a story about reading is doubly reflexive. The reader-protagonist, rendered a character in the text, is conspicuous, and hence her relationship to, or articulation of, the internal stories is also conspicuous. Additionally, the conspicuousness of the protagonist *as a reader* of the text within which she is also a character, forces an identity between the protagonist and the actual readers, *us.* Consequently, we conflate and compare our actual experience of reading with the protagonist's experience. Our experience of reading, then, an experience that is similar for all texts, also becomes conspicuous. Therefore, the questions entailed in *If on a winter's night a traveler* concern the nature and priority of reading in general.

A story is a text that is self-consciously temporal, which is to say simply that it explicitly considers time. In other words, a story is a text that has a beginning, middle, and an end.[39] *If on a winter's night a traveler* is a literal story, but its subject, reading, is a metaphorical story. The

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idioms do not corresponds in all of the relevant ways. Nevertheless, even in the case of a successful translation, the question remains: how do we glean the sense of a sentence in our native language? The fact that we do not translate the sentence again into another language in order to understand it indicates the limits, and ultimately the futility, of translation as a mean of understanding. This model of reading a sentence might characterize interpretation, but not the creative process of writing. Alternately, on the other hand, we may come to understand the sentence, not as translated, but in the terms of the sentence itself. We read the foreign sentence and glean its sense. More importantly, however, we glean its specificity, which entails an understanding of the limits of its translatability. We might, of course, translate the sentence subsequently. But this would entail a re-articulation—i.e. a re-reading—of the impression, rather than a translation of the sentence. This model of reading a sentence characterizes the process of writing, where the moment of gleaning the sense of the sentence corresponds to the moment of articulation.

[39] Robert Harvey notes that Jean-Luc Godard was once asked if his films had beginnings, middles, and ends. He responded "Yes. But not necessarily in that order."

narrative arc of *If on a winter's night a traveler* follows the narrative arc, so to speak, of the story of reading.

The *beginning* of the story of reading entails the rituals of choosing what to read, and the logistics of preparing to read—apropos of the opening chapter of *If on a winter's night a traveler.* The question, What to read? is as philo-literarily important as the questions how and whether to read/write. The *end* consists of two moments. There is the subjective moment of analysis; this is the moment of reflection when one grasps the entirety of the text, a moment that includes the invitation to re-read. And second, there is the inter-subjective moment of community, when one becomes a member of the readership of a given text.

The *middle* of the story of reading involves the actual *reading,* as it is commonly understood. On the surface, the material conditions of the text determine the manner of engagement. For literal texts written in English and printed on paper, reading means following the words, sentences, and paragraphs from the top left to the bottom right of the page, and from the left most to the right most page. Considered more in depth, this moment of reading involves the nuanced experience of animating, listening to, and becoming the authorial/narratorial voice.

In a number of ways, throughout the beginning, middle, and end of the story of reading, Calvino's text collapses the distinction between experiences that are presumably outside and inside the text, and renders conspicuous the ways in which the reader's voice merges with the voices in the text.

The first lines read, disarmingly: "You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you fade…Find the most comfortable position…Stretch your legs…"[40]

First of all, the opening "you" delineates two voices characteristic of the outside and inside of the text—viz. the voices of the reader and the narrator respectively.

One might contend at this juncture that the reader is not a "voice" in the text, since she does not speak. The reader is a sounding board at best who, ultimately, occurs subsequent to the artifact of the text. The reader may be the condition of possibility of the text, and in that sense, the reader participates in the functioning of the text. Nevertheless, the reader is, necessarily, a passive and external participant.

We must recognize, however, that, though the reader is silent, she listens; and to suggest that the reader does not have a voice in the text *because* she is silent is to mischaracterize the activity of listening. At any point in any dialogue, at least one of the interlocutors must be listening, even if both interlocutors are also speaking. Listening, as any good conversationalist knows, is distinct from merely hearing. Hearing is passive, whereas listening is always active. Whereas one usually cannot help but hear a sound of an appropriate volume, listening requires attention and responsiveness. In this sense, listening is a form of communication. The listener says to the speaker, "I hear and I aspire to understand." And usually, though not necessarily, the listener also says, "In order to hear and understand *better*, I *choose* not to speak while you are speaking." Thus, the silence of the listener, and by extension the silence of the reader in the text, should not be thought of as lacking a voice. The reader's voice is simply a silent voice.

[40] Calvino, 3

Yet, at the same moment that the narrator's tone erects this presumed dichotomy, the narrator also subverts it. The narrator's tone draws her outside of the text. She speaks directly to the reader as if she were outside beside the reader, like a peer who might offer a recommended or critique. Recommendations and critiques require a certain amount of distance. Throughout this opening chapter the narrator speaks *about* the text in the same way that the reader would, as if there were an appreciable difference between the narrator's voice and the context of its emergence.

At the *end* of "Chapter one," the narrator, paradoxically, invites me to begin: "So here you are now, ready to attack the first lines of the first page. You prepare to recognize the unmistakable tone of the author."[41] "*Has* the 'story' begun?" the reader might ask. This "Chapter one" is clearly neither preface nor introduction, yet it describes *my* prefatory and introductory activities. Yet, of course, we have already begun. We are at the end of the beginning of the story of reading. The conspicuous uncanniness of this difference that is not one, between voices that are inside and outside, draws the narrator out of, and the pulls the reader in to the text.

Second, the initial word, "You," addresses and implicates the reader *in* the text in another way. The quality of this "you" is unusual. Every invocation of the second person pronoun does not implicate the reader in the same way. The rhetorical "you" that often finds its home in political speeches is either historically specified, or general and presumptive. In either case, it is unclear whether the speaker is necessarily addressing *me*.

For example, we know from the historical context that the "you" in Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "Letter From Birmingham Jail" is historically specific. Though many of us read the

[41] Calvino, 9

letter, we know that King does not address us directly, if at all. The "you" refers to the eight clergyman of Birmingham—bishops, pastors, and rabbis—who signed the critical letter addressed to King on April 12th, 1963.[42] Nevertheless, we may feel addressed indirectly insofar as we identify with the Birmingham clergy. And even if we do not actually identify with them, in reading the letter, we could do so hypothetically, provisionally adopting the perspective of someone who would identify with them, and in so doing, we would be addressed indirectly by King.

Alternately, the "you" in President Obama's "Remarks on Trayvon Martin" is general and presumptive. It is general because, though Obama addresses "the American public", we know the parenthetical "you know…" that peppers his speech refers to no one in particular. He is not addressing me, Amir. And the "you" is presumptive because it characterizes the "American Public" in such a way that may be inconsistent with any given American. Obama assumes that the American Public is a particular kind of person, namely, one with a racialized identity that corresponds to with a particular set of feelings and beliefs.

Obama's characterization presumes the American Public consists of two distinct personas. At times the "you" addresses a black American reader, who is thought to be critical of George Zimmerman's acquittal. Obama implores this black American "you" to limit her protests to non-violent methods. And other times the "you" addresses a white American reader, who is thought to endorse Zimmerman's acquittal. Obama implores this "you" to consider the historical context of the black American's frustration and anger.

First of all, this "you" is ambiguous. Even if the reader identifies with one persona or the other, the "you" excludes the reader half of the time, functioning in those instances as an implicit

[42] In the opening paragraph King says, "But since I feel that *you* are men of genuine good will and *your* criticisms are sincerely set forth, I would like to answer *your* statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms." My emphasis.

"them". And second, if the reader does not construct her identity necessarily in racial terms, or she does not share the corresponding feelings and beliefs, then Obama does not address her at all.

Calvino's "you," alternately, is specific though not historical. And rather than presuming a characteristic of the reader, it merely presumes an activity. The presumption implied by Calvino's "you" is safe, tautological almost, reflexively indicating the context of its emergence—*itself*: "Italo Calvino's new novel *If on a winter's night a traveler*." The reader who finds herself here, reading this novel, is necessarily addressed. The narrator speaks to me, she says.

Third, the narrator demands that the reader *participate* in the story. The reader must engage in certain actions—relax, concentrate, find a reading position. The narrator does not ask the reader to leave her body behind while she ventures into the space of the story; that would be an unrealistic demand since this narrator recognizes that all readers are embodied, "outside" of the text in some sense. In demanding that the reader participate, the narrator secures the conditions of possibility of the narratorial voice. If the reader does these things, or even thinks about these activities—"am I concentrating enough?" "Am I comfortable?" "Am I relaxed?"—the reader continues to read.

Many texts proceed as if they were indifferent to the reader. Every narrator implicitly makes this same appeal to the reader. Yet very few texts do so explicitly. The readers, as we are wont to do, skip, misread, or cease to read. Many narrators' tones of voice emerge as if they were actual interlocutors, with voices that would continue without the reader. The narrator prattles

pedantically like a condescending conversationalist, mansplaining[43] an idea to an uninformed readership. Texts, however, are not interlocutors; they are articulations of the reader. Whereas the condescending conversationalist may proceed even if the interlocutor does not listen, when the reader stops reading the narrator is silenced. Thus, the explicit demand that the reader should participate, or better, the creation of a structure that facilitates such participation, builds into the text its own conditions of possibility.

Fourth, in the next chapter, titled "If on a winter's night a traveler", the actual reader merges with the narrator, not only as a voice, but also as a character. In this chapter, we note that the "novel," "If on a winter's night a traveler," has been doubled. It now refers both to the story of this *chapter,* which the narrator-character reads, and the book as a whole, within which this chapter occurs, and which, we, the actual readers, read. Retrospectively, the references to *If on a winter's night a traveler* in "Chapter one" become ambiguous. Do those references indicate the chapter or the book? Ultimately it does not matter.

The ambiguity is deliberate and productive. The narrator has become the character in the book who is also a reader of the chapter "If on a winter's night a traveler". But the actual reader also reads the chapter. And in doing so the actual reader is effectively indistinguishable from the narrator-reader-character. Thus, this doubling of "If on a winter's night a traveler" merges the actual reader *with* the narrator *as* a character. The actual reader *becomes* the narrator and a character. This is an identity that occurs in all texts, literary or otherwise, but *If on a winter's night a traveler* renders this tripartite identity of the actual reader—as narrator, character, and, of course, reader—conspicuous.

[43] The term "Man-splaining"—a colloquial neologism conjoining *man* + *explain*—refers the sexist tone that male commenters adopt when they speak over, and occasionally presume to speak for, women. Such "exchanges", rather than remaining a dialogue, devolve into a one-sided, usually uninformed barrage of prejudices.

Fifth, in the chapter, "If on a winter's night a traveler," the actual reader merges with a secondary character, i.e. a character who is not necessarily the narrator. The first paragraph reads:

> The novel begins in a railway station, a locomotive huffs, steam from a piston covers the opening of the chapter, a cloud of smoke hides part of the first paragraph. In the odor of the station there is a passing whiff of station café odor. There is someone looking through the befogged glass, he opens the glass door of the bar, everything is misty, inside, too, as if seen by nearsighted eyes, or eyes irritated by coal dust. The pages of the book are clouded like the windows of an old train, the cloud of smoke rests on sentences.[44]

Just like "Chapter one", we note the self-consciousness of the narration that conflates the reader's voice with the narrator's. The narrator refers to the story as if removed from it; rather than the story illustrating its literary tropes and attributes, the narrator describes them. Unlike "Chapter one," however, we encounter a third voice, viz. the voice of the character "he". For two and a half paragraphs, the narrator-reader follows this character "he" off of the train and into the station café. The experiences of this character are, of course, not experiences that are reflexively guaranteed by the text to be shared by the reader, as was the case for experiences described in "Chapter one." Nevertheless, by the third paragraph "he" naturally and discreetly becomes "I", as we, the reader-narrator, become the character "he", sinking into his world and assuming his perspective. As the narrator-reader observes, "I am the man…Or, rather: the man is called 'I' and you know nothing else about him".[45]

Scrutinizing this transition from "he" to "I", we realize that "he" and "I" were, in fact, identical from the beginning of this chapter. Whereas the opening passage seemed to merely describe the passages literary tropes and techniques, it also illustrated, quite effectively, the initial experience that "he" had while arriving at the station. The reader arrives at the station, just

[44] Calvino, 10
[45] Calvino, 11

as "he" does. And Calvino has chosen his setting wisely. For precisely in the way that the darkness, the steam, and the character's foreignness might obscure the station, so does the self-conscious narratorial voice—telling rather than showing—obscure a clear picture of the setting. By the time "he" explicitly becomes "I" in the third paragraph, we, the readers, grant the identity relatively uncritically.

Sixth, in "Chapter two" Calvino introduces us to the Other reader(s), a companion who has always been beside us, implicitly, but now explicitly and conspicuously accompanies us for remainder of the text. On the one hand, the Other reader(s) is like the narrator. She is both a character and a voice. And via the text, I identify myself with her. Prior to the moment of an actual exchange, I animate and articulate this Other reader. Just as the text presumes a reader, as an actual reader, I presume the Other reader. Yet, unlike the narrator, with whom there is only uni-directional relationship, the Other reader and I stand in a symmetric relationship. We are each other to each other. I am like her narrator as much as she is like mine. We have each presumed each other by virtue of our activity of reading. Thus, we are reminded that to read is to become part of a community of readers, who collectively create the text. As Genette says, "the real author of the narrative is not only he who tells it, but also, and at times even more, he who hears it. And who is not necessarily the one it is addressed to: there are always people *off to the side.*"[46] We are each "off to the side" from the standpoint of some reader.

We could, of course, imagine a text for which there is only a single reader, viz. the "first reader, or the author. And in a strict sense, we would not say that this text has a readership; this text lacks a community of readers. Yet, even the first and, perhaps, the only reader presumes this

[46] Génette, 262; emphasis in original

community. The community is not literally a collection of more than one actual reader. The community is a space that Other readers may occupy and share; and even a single actual reader delineates this space. The first reader, then, is the exemplar, i.e. the particular reader who characterizes the universal reader of a given text.

And finally, seventh, the final two chapters narrate the *end* of the story of reading. The end, as noted above, includes two moments: the moment of community and the moment of reflection. The moment of community characterizes our relationship with the Other reader. In "Chapter eleven" we meet these actual Other readers, and just like other characters in the text, we animate them and merge with them. The Other reader, as we now know, accompanies us from the beginning. Nevertheless, we only meet *these* other readers at the end. We place the moment of community at the end of the story of reading because the Other is not the one who actually reads alongside us. Other readers span space and time. The Other reader, rather, is the one who also *will have read*. Thus while we are actually reading, we are the Other reader to other only provisionally.

Whereas the moment of community is granted, albeit provisionally, at the beginning of the activity of reading, the moment of reflection requires actually having had read. In order to glean the text as a whole one must come to an end, which is not the same as finishing. The end refers to the text, viz. its posterior edge, whereas finishing describes our activity, i.e. the moment when one ceases to read. One may read continuously, reading and rereading, and thus never "finish"—arguably, one should aspire never to finish—even while one "ends" multiple times. In "Chapter eleven" the story ends, but the reader does not finish until "Chapter twelve".

The "Chapter eleven" begins: "Reader, it is time for your tempest tossed vessel to come to port."[47] And in ending, we are presented with a glimpse of the whole—the ten truncated novels take together, revealing a meta-novel. Conjoined to form a single sentence, the titles read:

> If on a winter's night a traveler, outside the town of Malbork, leaning from the steep slope without fear of wind or vertigo, looks down in the gathering shadow in a network of lines that enlace, in a network of lines that intersect, on the carpet of leaves illuminated by the moon around an empty grave—What story down there awaits its end?—he asks, anxious to hear the story.[48]

Unsurprisingly, these titles narrate the story of reading. Except for the final clause, each clause indicates a story that functions as a metaphor for a moment in the activity of reading. The final clause gestures toward a new beginning, an opportunity "to hear the story," which, of course, we have just read; it is an invitation to reread.

Disconnecting the end of the story from the moment when the reader finishes merges the reader with the author. The reader writes the titles and reads them together. In reading them, she writes them down; in writing them, she is able to read them together. By this point, we should recognize that this is not simply a fictional account of a reader. Calvino's project is a phenomenology of reader. Thus, we should see ourselves in this character. And this final claim suggests, as Genette did, that we, the readers, are the authors as well.

Calvino's characterization of the reader in *If on a winter's night a traveler* bears upon the necessary considerations of all texts, whether ostensibly philosophical or literary. First, on the analogy of listening, the reader is a voice *in* the text. Second, by the same mechanism, the voices in the text are drawn outside of it, into the world of the reader. Third, we note, consequently, that reading is not a passive activity; reading entails participating in the text. Fourth and fifth, this

[47] Calvino, 253
[48] Calvino, 258

participation extends to multiple aspects of the text, specifically to the voices of the narrator and the characters. Sixth, as a reader, one becomes part of a community of readers, which does not necessarily consist of more than one reader. And finally, having read a text merges the reader with the first reader, i.e. the author. The reader synthesizes the text in a manner analogous to writing.

All texts are inherently dialogical. The text is *for* the reader; it is written to be read. There are two senses to this. First, the text speaks *to* the reader. Second, the text speaks *as* the reader, i.e. employing her voice and vocabulary, so to speak. Thus, the responsible writer must consider the reader. Concretely, this means that the text must be intelligible and realistic.

In the case of ostensibly literary texts, intelligibility and realism facilitating the suspension of disbelief. The suspension of disbelief is the mechanism by which a reader accepts fictional accounts and/or phenomena as true within the space and conditions of the narrative situation. Whether or not a story claims to be factual, it presumes a reader from the factual world. Thus the factual world is the necessary foil of any text, fictional or otherwise. Human relationships must be "human"; the laws of time and space must be respected in settings; history must maintain its consistency and determinacy. All of these, of course, may be challenged and altered by something that the writer introduces into the narrative situation; but then there must be a traceable progression from what the reader reasonably takes to be "real" to the new literary reality.

Along these lines, consider Sophia McDougall's insightful criticism of various popular literary works in her recent article in the *New Statesmen*. The implied accounts of the risk of

sexual violence in various literary works, in some cases their film adaptions—viz. *Game of Thrones, The Dark Knight, Skyfall, The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*—is unrealistic. Moreover, the implied accounts of the risk of sexual violence (or lack there of) reflects presumptions that contribute to and perpetuate contemporary rape culture.

McDougall argues that contemporary rape culture falsely presumes that the threat of sexual violence is a function of gender. The realistic presumption should express, conversely, that the threat of sexual violence is a function of vulnerability. And, granted, women in a sexist, patriarchal society are more vulnerable than men. Nevertheless, a realist portrayal of anyone in a sufficiently vulnerable situation—woman *or* man—should communicate that the risk of sexual violence is at least a consideration.

Following the false presumption, a few kinds of unrealistic stories are told. There are stories of women who always confront the possibility of rape, even when they are not vulnerable—e.g. Game of Thrones. And there are stories of men who never confront the possibility of rape, even when they are sufficiently vulnerable—e.g. The Dark Night. In order to underline the point, McDougall offers a compelling personal anecdote. McDougall and a friend attended a modern dance piece on political prisoners:

> The prisoner, in this case, was female; her captors were male. Even in a dance piece, from which "realism" might seem to be even more distant than from a fantasy novel, my friend found it jarringly unrealistic that there was no hint of a threat of sexual violence in the depicted torture, to the extent that it left the whole piece feeling superficial and slight to her, too afraid of its own subject matter to engage with it honestly.[49]

The prisoner's vulnerability is evident, and consequently, so are the unrealistic absences of the threat of sexual violence. McDougall contrasts this anecdote with James Bond's most vulnerable

[49] McDougall, Sophia. "The Rape of James Bond"

moment in Skyfall. The villain implicitly threatens to rape bond, a scene for which McDougall lauds the writer's sense of realism.

One might argue that both the dance piece and the scene in Skyfall are unrealistic precisely because the vulnerable characters are a woman and a man respectively. The woman should have feared rape. James Bond should not have, unless the villain (or Bond) was gay.[50] Whereas, the modern dance scene does not resolve the question of why the absence of risk is unrealistic—because the prisoner is a woman or vulnerable?—the scene in Skyfall does resolve the question. Whereas Bond is a man, his risk was realistic. Therefore, the risk is a function of vulnerability. And as we know from the world, men are also victims of sexual violence.

McDougall is careful to note that a rape need not necessarily occur in a realistic account of vulnerability. But lest we perpetuate a false presumption and double standard concerning the risks of sexual violence, a realistic account of vulnerable characters should consider it. Any story that includes vulnerable characters necessarily makes a claim, at least an implicit one, about the nature of vulnerability in the real world. The responsible writer at least is cognizant of the claim.

Returning to the main line of argument, in spite of their fictional content, literary texts must consider the world of the reader as a narrative foil. The reader is ultimately *in* the real world; she populates the narrative situation with her references; and she brings the story back into her world.

In the case of ostensibly non-literary texts, we might characterize this same criterion as an authorial-narratorial voice that is clear and sincere. Claims should be made in a familiar and consistent idiom. The arguments should unfold in a natural order. And, most importantly, the

[50] As McDougall notes, many commenters criticized the scene because they found the implication of homosexuality troubling and, in the case of Bond at least, unrealistic. The fact the implication does not actually follow from the scene, but rather from the prejudices of these critics was overlooked.

narrator should be trustworthy, or at least transparently ironic; in other words, the reader should believe that the narrator believes the claims.

Consider an example from Plato's *Meno.* At one point, Socrates offers Meno a definition of Shape that Meno does not understand. Socrates says, "[S]hape is that which alone of existing things always follows color."[51] Socrates replies dismissively that it is not his fault if Meno does not understand the definition. The definition speaks for itself; it is true regardless of whether it is understood. If the definition does speaks for itself, then anyone, including Meno, should be capable of understanding it. Socrates' poor word choice should not matter. With some effort, Meno should be capable of apprehending the idea directly.

But then what do we make of Socrates' word choice? Does it mediate the idea? Does it obscure it? Should Meno aspire to understand Socrates, or the idea?

The Platonic idea, ultimately, is not a text, since one does not read it. In other words, one does not relate dialogically to it; one apprehends it. Socrates' definition, however, *is* a text. And Socrates' attitude towards his reader, in this case Meno, portends a failure of the text. If Socrates' definition is not *for* the reader, then it is as if he had not spoken at all.

Ultimately, the dramatic context suggests that Socrates' dismissal is ironic. Socrates' definition was not offered in order to define any particular object, but rather to serve as an example of a definition. The entire dialogue presumes that Socrates is invested in the edification and education of his interlocutor, Meno; if we consider Meno as the reader of Socrates' "text", then Socrates keenly attends to his reader in the writing of his text.

[51] Plato, *Meno,* ln.75b-d

1.2.2. ‘Content’ as ‘Medium’ in Melville’s *Moby Dick*

Moby Dick straddles the line between philosophy and literature in a particular manner that is irreducible to either. If we consider *Moby Dick* as a work of literature, primarily—i.e. narrative prose—then we must recognize that its structure is “inside-out,” or “upside-down.” In other words, rather than a narrative—where events describing a conflict are recounted in a sequence that produces a sense of drama— that *contains* information and insights, *Moby Dick* consists largely of encyclopedic entries of whaling references and descriptions of whaling techniques, out of which the narrative emerges. The result is a minimal plot in spite of the text’s length and breadth.

Granted, the whaling techniques are carried out by Captain Ahab’s crew, and the references are those shared by the crew, presumably situating these accounts on the fictional deck of the *Pequod*. Nevertheless, there is very little that is unique about these descriptions and references vis-à-vis the crew. Yet, on the other had, if we consider *Moby Dick* as essentially encyclopedic accounts and historical records, and hence positioned somewhere on the spectrum of knowledge and philosophy (in the reductive sense), we lose sight of these, albeit minimal, literary elements that are particular and integral to *this* story.

As primarily literature, *Moby Dick* simply fails. As primarily philosophy, the text reads like a list of nineteenth century trivia wrapped for the lay reader in a thin package of tragedy. Yet, *Moby Dick* is, of course, much more than a work of either philosophy or literature; it is both. The encyclopedic chapters serve to educate the reader to the standpoint of the whaler. These chapters serve less to inform us about the crew itself, and more to characterize the employ and frame of reference of any whaling crew. This education of the reader is necessary if the reader to

glean the drama and appreciate the story. Thus, there is, in a sense, a story and a pre-story interwoven throughout the text.

Much like *If on a winter's night a traveler,* the problem, or rather the difficulty that Melville confronts with *Moby Dick* is his choice of subject. Melville aspires to tell a whaler's whaling story. As the "Etymology" and Extracts" that precede the *Chapters* indicate, a story about whales and the sea is not a novel choice of subject.[52] What is remarkable, though, is that none of these past whale stories are the whaler's story. Though whales are featured in these stories, the narrators are not whalers themselves.

The advantage and hence the relative ease of telling these kinds of non-whaler's whale stories is that the narrator can presume certain latent knowledge shared by most readers. For example, frequently the reference to whales is as a metaphor for the enormous or the monstrous. Generally, narrators can safely presume the shared experience of human frailty and smallness relative to the world, such that the reader should understand a whale metaphor and share the narrator's awe.

Conversely, the particular and private frame of reference of the whaler renders the whaler's story an "insider's story." Like inside jokes, finding them funny presumes certain prior knowledge. Educating an uninformed listener usually ruins the joke. Usually part of the humor consists in the timing of a punch line; and if one does not have the requisite knowledge to appreciate the timing, the time required to acquire the knowledge inevitably ruins the timing.

[52] As an aside, these two preludes to the story are particular curious. Who presents these to the reader, we may ask. Presumably, we have not yet met Ishmael, our narrator. Yet, the prefatory voice, who mocks the tragic fate of the "Usher to the grammarian" and toasts the thankless labor of the "sub-sub-librarian"—who compiled these references in the days prior to electronic databases and computerized word searches—is the unmistaken voice that we will come to trust, and with which we, the readers, will eventually identify.

Similarly, in order to glean the drama of a whaler's whaling story, the reader must, effectively, be a whaler. Or, the reader must be educated to the standpoint of a whaler.

Of the 137 named chapters of *Moby Dick*, which include the two unnumbered chapters "Etymology" and "Extracts", a conservatively high estimate of one third of the chapters entail what might properly be considered "plot". The plot of *Moby Dick* consists of only a few moments.[53] The remainder of the text consists of accounts of whaling techniques, knowledge, routines, and mythologies. Techniques and knowledge include the economics of whale ships, sailing terminology, extensive whale anatomy, the particular anatomy of the sperm whale, crew roles and ranks, the logistics of capturing a whale, and the logistics of reducing a whale to its salable parts. Routines include the logistics of living aboard a ship—eating, sleeping, and health and hygiene at sea—the responsibilities of crewmembers as sailors, the responsibilities of crewmembers as whalers, best practices and safety concerns of crewmembers, and the politics and etiquette between whaling ships. And mythologies include stories of legendary whales such as Moby Dick, the general character and heritage of whalers and whale communities, and the difference between layman and whaler interpretations of popular accounts whales.

In order to appreciate the importance of the reader's thorough education of the place and perspective of the whaler, consider a paradigmatic scene. In chapter LXXVII, "The Great Heidelburgh Tun", Ishmael informs the reader of the method of extraction of the most salable portion of the sperm whale, the spermaceti, i.e. the pristine oil found in the whale's forehead.

[53] SPOILER: In brief, Ishmael boards the Pequod at Nantucket. Ahab conscripts the crew, save Starbuck, into his obsessive quest to kill the White Whale. The crew begins to despair but then resign themselves to share Ahab's fate, characterized by Queequeg's illness and recovery. The Pequod meets the White Whale. Ishmael alone survives to tell the tale.

Yet, before Ishmael can describe the extraction, he explains, "But to comprehend it aright, [the reader] must know something of the curious internal structure of the thing operated upon."[54]

We then spend a chapter learning about the anatomy of Sperm Whale's forehead. The forehead is the single most concentrated mass of high quality whale fat, or spermaceti, on the Sperm Whale. According to Ishmael, the size of the forehead is comparable to the famous Heidelburgh Tun, one of the largest wine casks ever constructed, built for the cellar of the Heidelburgh Castle.[55] Unlike most of the whale fat, which congeals in the air, the spermaceti remains relatively fluid. Thus, in order to avoid spilling the spermaceti into the sea, a unique method of extraction is required.

Concluding this informative chapter, Ishmael addresses the reader again: "Thus much being said, attend now, I pray you, to that marvelous and—in this particular instance—almost fatal operation whereby the Sperm Whale's great Heidelburgh Tun is tapped."[56] The whale's decapitated head is hoisted out of the water. A single crewman stands on the massive forehead and carefully carves an opening somewhere on the upward flank. The crewman then scoops out the spermaceti one bucket at a time, like water from a narrow well, and passes it to the crewmen on deck.

The description of the extraction itself is not part of the narrative arc of the story. It is, simply, one of the many accounts of whaling practices. Yet, the now informed reader is capable of recognizing the two conflicting interests inherent in the operation. There is, on the one hand, the strong economic interest in the thorough extraction of the valuable spermaceti; on the other hand, there is the danger to the single crewman. The crewman balances alone and without a

[54] Melville, ch.77, p.315
[55] In fact, the wine barrel—with a capacity of ~58,000 gallons—is several orders of magnitude larger than the whales forehead, which, according to Ishmael, has a capacity of ~500 gallons of spermaceti.
[56] Melville, ch.77, p.317

harness astraddle the oil-slick opening of a well of spermaceti, atop the head of the whale weighing several tons—and which, once the fat is removed, will no longer float of its own accord—hoisted abreast a ship in the middle of the ocean.

Ishmael's narration in the following chapter of the worst-case scenario—"Cistern and Buckets"—is almost unnecessary, since all whalers implicitly understand the motive and the danger. Yet, the narration is not entirely redundant: About 80 or 90 buckets into the extraction, somehow Tashtego slips and falls head first through the narrow opening into the cavernous Tun. And as if his fall were a cue, the ropes securing the hoisted head dislodge and snap, causing the head to disconnect from the ship and begin to sink—obviously spilling the remaining, unextracted spermaceti. Tashtego's death seems assured. Yet, taking immediate action, the heroic Queequeg dives into the ocean, intercepts the sinking whale head, remarkably carves his way into the Tun with his harpoon, and extracts Tashtego before he is carried to the deep.

Ultimately, these two chapters serve three ends. First, the most obvious, the reader learns of one of the essential practices of whaling, the extraction of the spermaceti. Second, the reader learns of the mythology and superstition surrounding the extraction of the spermaceti. For the Heidelburgh Tun is, as Ishmael informs us, the "sanctum sanctorum of the whale."[57] Thus, for the whaler, the extraction of the spermaceti is akin to an act of worship. And third, the readers become privy to the incredible account of Queequeg's rescue of Tashtego.

The third end is the only narrative moment, i.e. the story. The first two ends, i.e. the knowledge of the method and importance of the extraction, are part of the presumed frame of reference of the whaler. These first two ends are for the benefit of the lay reader, because the story is only really of interest to the whaler. The story only becomes dramatic for the whaler. It is

[57] Melville, ch.78, p.320

only the whaler who can imagine sufficiently the logistics of the conflict—literally the logistics of how Tashtego might fall into the forehead of the whale. And it is only the whaler who understands why anyone would take such a risk and stand on the whale under these conditions in the first place. Thus sharing the story of Queequeg's rescue with the uninformed reader, i.e. the non-whaler, entails converting the reader, at least in part, into a whaler.

Thus informed, Ishmael offers the reader a lovely metaphor, that prior to this moment she might not have understood. To paraphrase, Ishmael describes deaths of the sort nearly met by Tashtego as bittersweet. Death is always regrettable. But a death in this manner, trapped in the sanctum sanctorum of the Sperm Whale, verges on the divine. A death in this manner is comparable to a death by Plato, where one has "fallen into Plato's honey head, and sweetly perished there".[58] The lay reader, especially if she is a philosopher—and, arguably, the implied reader of *Moby Dick* is a philosopher—can understand the self-effacing allure of the beautiful prose of a profound thinker. Many scholars have dedicated—sacrificed?—their lives to parsing the magnum opus of a past thinker. The feeling submersion associated with this degree of dedication is analogous, Ishmael suggests, to the feelings associated with this kind of death.

The story of *Moby Dick*, as a whole, functions like these two chapters. The "story" of Moby Dick, reduced to its narration, consists, effectively, of the final three chapters—the tragic chase where all but our narrator meet their end. The rest of the text is "pre-story". This is not to suggest that one could simply skip to the end; the pre-story is no less important. If the reader were already a whaler, then yes, she could "cut to the chase." The experience and perspective of the whaler, however, is sufficiently unique that Ishmael can safely presume that most readers—

[58] Melville, ch.78, p.321

all readers?—do not share it. Consequently, recounting the tragic story of Moby Dick to the implied reader necessarily entails the pre-story.

Ishmael is a particularly well-suited narrator for the recounting of the story of Moby Dick. At first blush, the name Ishmael is an allusion to the character of the Abrahamic texts, namely, the first son of Abraham, born to Hagar, his second wife. Hagar had been the servant of Abraham's first wife, Sarah. Abraham married Hagar because he and Sarah were unable to conceive a child. Nevertheless, shortly following the birth of Ishmael, Sarah did become pregnant, and gave birth to Isaac. Following the birth of Isaac, Sarah requested that Abraham dismiss Hagar and Ishmael, a request that Abraham eventually granted, thus disinheriting Ishmael. Thus, the name Ishmael in the Abrahamic sense is an outcast.[59]

Our narrator, however, is not an outcast of the *Pequod*. On the contrary, he is very much a part of the crew. Our narrator is an outcast, though, in a different sense. The outcast is a liminal character. She occupies two spaces, belonging to a community, but living outside of it. The outcast has, arguably, the greatest insight into a community. Being part of a community, she has intimate knowledge; yet, while outside of the community, she has perspective. Similarly, our narrator has the knowledge of a whaler, having lived as a whaler, with the perspective of the lay reader, having only become a whaler aboard the *Pequod*. Ultimately, Ishmael *is* the reader; the education of the Ishmael aboard the *Pequod* parallels the education of the reader. As Ishmael becomes a whaler, the readers acquire the pre-knowledge needed for the "story".

As noted above, Moby Dick is a whaler's whaling story. The one who might *choose* to be among those who met their end, viz. the whaler, feels most acutely the tragic death of an entire

[59] Genesis: 16, 17, 21, 25

crew who followed their mad captain in pursuit of a legendary whale. The whaler says, "*I* would have followed Ahab; *I* could have been among those who died." By contrast, the uninformed reader says, "Why would anyone set foot aboard such a vessel? I would never follow such a lunatic as Ahab." Whereas neither the whaler nor the lay reader understands the other, Ishmael understands the sentiments of both the whaler *and* the lay reader. The whaler and the lay reader characterize the impasse described in Meno's Learner's Paradox. The whaler does not know the extent of what she knows. And the lay reader does not know the extent of what she does not know. Ishmael, uniquely, knows what the whaler knows, and he knows what the lay reader does not know. Thus, only the outcast can tell the whaler's story to the lay reader.

Moby Dick includes numerous overtly literary tropes and explicitly philosophical references. On the literary side, the text aspires to be a work of narrative fiction; a conspicuous narrator addresses the reader. And poetic passages pepper the plot. On the philosophical side, it is evident to any reader that Melville, or at least Ishmael, is extremely well read. References to writers from the literary and philosophical canons form intellectual backdrop of complex and insightful metaphors of whaling life and analyses of the condition of humanity and nature. And the empirical grounding of descriptions and references places *Moby Dick* somewhere on the spectrum of knowledge. And framed as such, the value of *Moby Dick*, as a work of philosophical literature is a function, not so much as a confluence of the philosophical and the literary, but rather as a conjunction of them. The philosophical and the literary coincide accidentally. Yet, insofar as each aspect is valuable independently, the text may be appreciated additively.

Nevertheless, as I have argued in this section, the most important consideration that Melville confronts in *Moby Dick*, a question that is innately both philosophical and literary, is

how to structure an account of this sort. How does one communicate to the public the story of a specialized community? In explicitly philosophical terms, this story consists of the questions, motives, and presumptions of the specialized community.

To say the least—a point consistent with Calvino's argument in *If on a winter's night a traveler*—the role and standpoint of the reader is a primary consideration. Specifically in the case of *Moby Dick,* the responsible author/narrator must consider, one, the epistemological standpoint of the reader. Two, depending on the subject matter, the degree to which the "pre-story" entailed in the "story" will need to be rendered explicit. And three, the ways in which the text facilitates the requisite edification of the reader, which includes the necessary the time and space for the reader to develop.

1.2.3. The Priority of the Particular and the Analogy of Love in Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*

Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (hereafter, the *Recherche*[60]) is the story of how Marcel-the-protagonist, in becoming the writer of his own story, becomes also the narrator.[61] By analogy, since we are each already the protagonists of our own lives, the *Recherche* is also an analysis and illustration of the process by which, in becoming also the writers of our lives, each of us may become philosophers.

The philo-literary import of Marcel's development and maturation undergirds my entire project. As you, the reader, will note, Proust's ideas and words pepper almost every chapter. Rather than attempting to distill the argument of this entire project into a single chapter, here I will highlight one particularly important philosophical contributions of the *Recherche.* After a brief explanation of the structure of this six-volumed, three-thousand-plus-paged, continuous narrative, I will examine the idea of the universal developed in the *Recherche*, particularly as illustrated by Marcel's experiences of, and reflections on, love. In short, the Example serves as the model for the Proustian universal, where, as Proust claims, "the particular and the general lie side by side."[62] I will postpone a thorough explication of the phenomenon of the Example until the next chapter, but here I hope to equip you with examples to carry into later conversations.

The structure of the *Recherche* is almost identical to the structure of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Just as the project of the *Phenomenology* serves to articulate the necessity of

[60] "*Recherche"* is the common shortened version of the French title, *À la recherche du temps perdu*.
[61] As Mary Rawlinson notes, this movement is similar to development of the narrator/protagonist of Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield*, which famously opens with the curious remark from the narrator, "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show." Also, as argued above, there is a parallel movement in Hegels *Phenomenology*, where Natural Spirit and Philosophical Spirit are resolved into Absolute Spirit by final chapter.
[62] Proust, vol.6, 312

Absolute Knowing, the project of the *Recherche* serves to articulate the philosophical necessity of an artistic vocation. Or more broadly, the *Recherche* is the edification of the "philosophical" standpoint of the young Marcel (and Swann), i.e. the merely reflective stance—a stance that we, as readers of the *Recherche*, share with Marcel—to the "artistic" standpoint of Proust, i.e. the standpoint where one may render ones reflections "true". The moment in volume VI when Marcel realizes his vocation—though he has not yet accomplished it, just as in the *Phenomenology*, once we arrive at the end, we should be compelled to re-read—is the end of the project, the result. This is the moment when the narrator realizes that he will become the author of the text with which we, the reader, have been engaged; alternately, this is the moment in the author's life when he became the narrator, the moment after which he would become the artist.

Yet, had it not been for the *lost time*, the experiences could not have been regained, and Marcel would not have discovered the value of the work of art as a means of securing lost time. Framed slightly differently, consider that we, the readers, are also in some capacity the narrator. And if we are to appreciate the value of the work of art, specifically the literary work of art in the case of Proust, we must also be privy to the experience of regaining time; we must experience alongside Marcel the time lost and the time regained. The scale and style of the text facilitates this experience in the reader.

For example, consider the famous scene of the madeleine and tea that summons Marcel's childhood in Combray:

> And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shiver ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin…this new sensation having had the effect, which love has, of filling me with a precious essence [….]

> And suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray […] my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane […]
>
> And as soon as I had recognized the taste…immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set […] and the whole of Combray and its surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, from my cup of tea.[63]

The first time that I read this it felt somewhat empty and contrived. The language, of course, was beautiful, but at this juncture it was little more than metaphor. A generous interpretation might grant that it is the literary formulation of a theory of human psychology—as it is often misappropriated—articulating in a poetic discourse the powerful link between sensations and memories. Yet, *after* the rich account of Combray—consisting of M. Swann's[64] obsession with Odette, and Marcel's childhood infatuation with Gilberte—the re-invocation of the madeleine in volume VI—or the re-return to Combray during a *second* read of the *Recherche*—becomes much more than a metaphor or a theory of mind. It becomes an leitmotif; it re-summons the heartbreak, the suffering, that we, the readers, experienced alongside Swann and Marcel during the time it took for us to wade through those thousands of pages of tortured reflections and feelings. Our labor of reading—which for Marcel is the labor of *living*—is literally re-called. When Marcel tastes the madeleine this "third" time, *I* remember reading of Combray while Marcel remembers living it.

By the end of Volume Six, the reader understands the vocation of the artist because the experience of reading the *Recherche*, of lingering through six volumes of Marcel's despair, is redeemed in the final moments of the narrative with the corporeal intuition of why it was necessary. The time and attention that we have sacrificed to the very activity of reading the text

[63] Proust, vol.1, 60-64

[64] In volume I of the *Recherche*, we do not yet know that Swann is the exemplar of the failed artist, to be contrasted with Marcel, who, upon realizing his vocation in volume VI, succeeds. In this sense, Swann characterizes the point of origin, i.e. the intellectual, the "philosopher".

becomes a premise in the argument. Had we not read, i.e. engaged in the spatio-temporal, material, experience of *seeing*—whether we are seeing through the eyes of Marcel, through the conceptual framework of Natural Spirit, or through our own eyes upon the events of our own lives—the experience could not have been re-called by a subsequent aesthetic experience.

The insights communicated in the *Recherche* are all grounded in concrete experiences like the madeleine, extracted form a series of unrelated examples. The examples are not generalizable. Yet, they *are* universalizable. On the one hand, only Marcel recalls Combray when he tastes the madeleine. The observation is not a general claim about tea and madeleine, nor a claim about Combray or childhood. And this experience is situated amidst a series of other experiences of involuntary memory. Though they are grouped as "involuntary memories," to compare them with each other would be fruitless. Yet, from this series of unrelated singular experiences, Marcel extracts something akin to truth.

Consider another Proustian series: the many accounts of love and heartbreak. The experience of loving another person is singular. In many ways, love is so singular that it is incommunicable. Even if we have loved more than once, every variable changes each time, including us, the lover; we are not the same person today who loved in our teenaged years. At the very least, we have the benefit of hindsight informing a current love, which sometimes changes everything. Proust explains,

> For what we supposed to be our love or our jealousy is never a single, continuous and indivisible passion. It is composed of an infinity of successive loves, of different jealousies, each of which is ephemeral, although by their uninterrupted multiplicity they give us the impression of continuity, the illusion of unity.[65]

[65] Proust, vol.1

The most successful attempts to articulate the illusory unity of love entail 'painting' a picture—in words or otherwise—which is, effectively, little more than pointing. Perhaps this is why the subject of love looms so large in literature; it is a space where we have license to 'paint.'

Yet, in spite of the singularity of our experiences of love, something *is* communicated. While reflecting on Albertine, Proust says, "Love is space and time made perceptible to the heart."[66] Claims like this and anecdotes of love educate and solace us. We recognize love in and for others. Whenever we speak of love, though, it is of particular loves, not love in general. Love has an identity that is distributable, but not a generalizable structure. Love is a universal, but not Concept in the Kantian or Platonic senses. Love is a universal modeled on the Example. In what follows, we will glance at a few examples of loves from the *Recherche*, so that we might acquire a similar vocabulary.

First, in Volume One, *Swann's Way*, Monsieur Swann has become infatuated with Odette, to the edge of obsession. As we know, Swann eventually marries Odette, but at this juncture, it is unclear whether he has crossed the threshold of "love." Besides, in the case of Swann, the difference between love and obsession is difficult to ascertain. At this point in Swann and Odette's affair, Odette, doubting the sincerity and seriousness of Swann's intentions, has made herself less available than in the earlier stages of their relationship. On one particular night, the circumstances of Odette's lack of availability has roused Swann's suspicions, and he has convinced himself that Odette is in the process of cheating on him. He is so overcome by jealousy that he walks to Odette's block in the middle of the Paris night, and horrified and angered to see a light on the window. He skulks up to it and is further disappointed to hear two

[66] Proust, vol.5, 519

voices. He musters the courage to knock on the window and confront them, which is against his better judgment since this incident will surely end his relationship, an eventuality that he would otherwise avoid at all costs. Proust reflects: "How often the prospect of future happiness is thus sacrificed to one's impatient insistence upon an immediate gratification! But [Swann's] desire to know the truth was stronger, and seemed nobler."[67] Swann knocks loudly on the window. His knock is promptly answered, but not by Odette and her supposed, secret love, but by two men who Swann does not know. The window was not Odette's, but the bedroom window of the house next door. His jealousy blinded him to the fact that he was at the wrong address.

Proust continues:

> "[Swann] made what apology he could and hurried home, glad that the satisfaction of his curiosity had preserved their love intact, and that, having feigned for so long a sort of indifference towards Odette, he had not now, by his jealousy, given her proof that he loved too much, which, between a pair of lovers, forever dispenses the recipient from the obligation to love enough."[68]

Out of this account, Proust extracts a theory of jealousy. Jealousy does not undermine love directly. Its secondary effect of providing a kind of measurement of love can produce a power imbalance, like in a game of cards when an opponent has spied one hand.

Second, the adult Marcel reflects on his love for Albertine. The dynamic is painfully similar to the one between Swann and Odette. Marcel questions Albertine about her whereabouts and actions on some occasion, suspecting her of infidelity, but like Swann, without betraying his jealously. Without asking the question he wants directly though, he cannot ensure a direct answer. His imagination torments him in the ambiguity of the subtext:

> "And yet perhaps, had I myself been entirely faithful, I might not have suffered because of infidelities which I would have been incapable of conceiving; whereas

[67] Proust, vol.1, 389
[68] Proust, vol.1, 391

> what it tortured me to imagine in Albertine was my own perpetual desire to find favour with new women, to start new romances, was to suppose her guilty of the glance which I had been unable to resist casting, the other day, even while I was by her side, at the young bicyclists seated at tables in the Bois de Boulogne. As there is no knowledge, one might almost say that there is no jealousy, except of oneself. Observation counts for little. It is only from the pleasure that we ourselves have felt that we can derive knowledge and pain."[69]

Third, young Marcel is in love with Gilberte, Swann and Odette's daughter. The 'affair' is tortured and angst inducing, full of crossed adolescent hormones and miscommunication. At this juncture, Marcel fears that his feelings for Gilberte are unreciprocated. In the hopes of rectifying this asymmetry, either by dampening his own feelings or spurring the growth of Gilberte's, Marcel has voluntarily vowed to deprive himself of thing he desires most, her presence:

> I suddenly had the courage to resolve never to see her again, and without telling her yet since she would not have believed me […]. Alas! I was doomed to failure; to attempt, by ceasing to see her, to reawaken in her that inclination to see me was to lose her for ever; first of all because, when it began to revive, if I wished it to last I must not give way to it at once; besides, the most agonizing hours would then have passed; it was at this very moment that she was indispensible to me, and I should have liked to be able to warn her that what presently she would assuage, by seeing me again, would be a grief so far diminished as to be no longer (as now it would still be), in order to put an end to it, a motive for surrender, reconciliation and further meetings. And later one, when I should at last be able safely to confess to Gilberte (so much would her feeling for me have regained its strength) my feeling for her, the latter, not having been able to resist the strain of so long a separation, would have ceased to exist; I should have become indifferent to Gilberte. I knew this, but I could not explain it to her; she would have assumed that if I was claiming that I would cease to love her if I remained for too long without seeing her, that was solely to persuade her to summon me back to her at once.[70]

[69] Proust, vol.5, 519
[70] Proust, vol.2, 217-225

Fourth, here Marcel visits Balbec for the second time, the first of which occurred during his childhood with his grandmother:

> Upheaval of my entire being. On the first night, as I was suffering from cardiac fatigue, I bent down slowly and cautiously to take off my boots, trying to master my pain. But scarcely had I touched the topmost button than my chest swelled, filled with an unknown, a divine presence, I was shaken with sobs, tears streamed from my eyes. The being who had come to my rescue, saving me from barrenness of spirit, was the same who, years before, in a moment when I had nothing left of myself, had come in and had restored me to myself, for that being was myself and something more than me (the container that is greater than the contained and was bringing it to me). I had just perceived, in my memory, stooping over my fatigue, the tender, preoccupied, disappointed face of my grandmother, as she had been on that first evening of our arrival, the face not of the grandmother whom I had been astonished and remorseful at having so little missed, and who had nothing in common with her save her name, but of my real grandmother, of whom, for the first time since the afternoon of her stroke in the Champs-Elysées, I now recaptured the living reality in a complete and involuntary recollection. This reality does not exist for us so long as it has not been re-created by our thought (otherwise men who have been engaged in a titanic struggle would all of them be great epic poets); and thus, in my wild desire to fling myself into her arms, it was only at that moment—more than a year after her burial, because of the anachronism which so often prevents the calendar of facts from corresponding to the calendar of feelings—that I became conscious that she was dead […]. For with the perturbations of memory are linked the intermittencies of the heart.[71]

The sets of series that Proust produces are Deleuzian repetitions, which "must be distinguished"[72] from generalities. They are a collection of "non-exchangeable and non-substitutable singularities."[73] And it is out of these kinds of series that Proust extracts his insights. As we will see in the next chapter, they function according to the logic of the Example.

[71] Proust, vol.4, 210-11
[72] Deleuze, DR, 1
[73] Deleuze, DR, 1

CHAPTER 2: Beauty and The Exemplary

2.1. Beauty and The Exemplary

The success of this project—of arguing for the necessary convergence of philosophy and literature—demands that we articulate a non-traditional idea of the universal. This new idea of the universal is characterized by the Exemplary and the Beautiful. It stands in direct opposition to the Platonic and Kantian models of the universal, which occur in an abstract space beyond time, place, and perspective. The Exemplary is, as Proust says, "real without being actual, ideal without being abstract".[74] We must conceive of the Beautiful in a relatively novel manner as well. In brief: as a concept, if it is a concept, beauty characterizes the prescriptive force of the Exemplary. Exemplary truths, exemplary ethical activity, exemplary citizens, exemplary artifacts and expressions of culture and experience—these are all beautiful.

The Exemplary

What is an example? First of all, the example occupies a unique philosophical space. Examples are things in the world of appearance that function as the first principles of knowledge. Aristotle notes in the *Ethics*, "An example is in fact a source of something universal".[75] As such, the identification and/or production of examples—whether through reflection or artistic practice—is, arguably, the starting place of all philosophical inquiry.

Structurally, the example straddles the universal and the particular; it is what we might call an aesthetic idea. On the one hand, an example is always singular and concrete; it is,

[74] Proust, vol.6 264
[75] NE1139b28ff

literally, one of a kind, occurring in space and time. Yet, on the other hand, it has the purview of a law; in spite of its particularity, it functions as a rule, a guide, or a model, occurring, in a sense, in all places and at all times.

For example, Toni Morrison's beautiful, tragic novel, *The Bluest Eye*, is but the tale of a particular black girl in the 1940s, moreover a fictional girl. Yet, like all compelling accounts, imagined or historical, we could call this story exemplary because it constructs for its audience a paradigm, i.e. a lens and a vocabulary, through which we may understand human experience in general. For each reader—man, woman, or other; adult or adolescent—the time and place of the story becomes our time and place; and in the case of literature, that I will discuss further below, the reader becomes, in a sense, the narrator, rendering the story, for a moment, *her* story. The particular story of *The Bluest Eye* becomes the story of each of its readers.

The word "example" comes from the Latin *exemplum*, from *exemire*, meaning "to take out", which in English we inherit via the Old French, *essample*, which, in modern parlance ultimately diverges into *example* and *sample*. The distinction is an ethical one; the example is prescriptive, intended to guide, whereas the sample is descriptive, intended merely to inform. At my friend's Gelato shop, I sample the novel flavor cassata (Sicilian cake with candied fruit), before opting conservatively for the stracciatella. The example of stracciatella, however, prescribes the flavor profile; *this* is not simply a suggestion of how stracciatella *may* taste; *this* is how it *should* taste. Nevertheless, as the common etymological root suggests, structurally, they are the same. Therefore, in spite of the modern distinction, we can learn something about the phenomenon of the example from the sense of "sample", since the former—perhaps in our over-zealous, nullifying effort to follow it—frequently gets reduced to, or subsumed under, its formal

qualities. In other words, what gets lost in our conceptualizing of the phenomenon of the example is precisely our experience of it.

A "sample", humbly enough, we may characterize as a taste. It is something concrete, literally placed on our tongue, so that we may briefly glean it in its inarticulable particularity and complexity. The sample communicates something that, arguably, could not have been gleaned otherwise. There is no pretention to theorize the virtues of samples; one says simply, "try it, and you will understand." Similarly, the example is something that we confront, that we *taste* in a broad sense, and then follow. The idiom, *to make an example of*, retains some of the sense. Those for whom it is an example are spared the full experience, the punishment; yet, their escape is at the expense of someone close to them, someone with whom they could identity, so that they may sufficiently imagine themselves punished. It is as if they tasted a sample of the punishment, information that may change their behavior.

The etymology of the ancient Greek word for example, ἐπαγωγή [èpagogé], offers further insight.[76] The Greek term is a conjunction of ἐπί [èpí], the Greek preposition meaning "upon", and ἄγα^γε [ágâge], the aorist tense of the verb ἄγω [ágo̱], meaning "to guide" or "to lead". Like the English "upon", ἐπί may refer to a place or a time, i.e. a "here" or a "now"; it says,

[76] Here, I employ Joe Sachs' translation of ἐπαγωγή as "example" as opposed to "induction", a choice that he defends in a footnote of his translation of Aristotle's *Ethics*: "*Epagogê* [example] is usually translated as "induction," which suggests a generalization from many examples, but Aristotle makes clear in many places (for instance, *Posterior Analytics* 71a 7-9 and *Physics* 24b 5-7) that a single act of being brought face to face with the universal in a particular is sufficient. His meaning requires genuinely getting hold of something, not making a rough formulation that fits a lot of facts."(NE, fn147, p105). In his translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, he explains further in the glossary: "'example' (ἐπαγωγή, èpagogé)—The perceptible particular, in which the intelligible universal is always evident. The word induction, which refers to a generalization from many examples, does not catch Aristotle's meaning, which is a "being brought face-to-face with" the universal present in each single example. A famous simile in the last chapter of the Posterior Analytics (100a 12-13) is often taken to mean that the universal must be built up out of particulars, just as a new position of a routed army is built up when many men have taken a stand, after which every other soldier, down to the original coward, will be identical to him. The rout corresponds to the condition of someone who has not yet experienced some universal in any of its instances. Evidence for this interpretation is found in many places, such as Posterior Analytics 71a7-9 and Physics 247b5-7, in which Aristotle unmistakably says that one particular is sufficient to make the universal known. That in turn is because the same form that is at work holding together the perceived this is also at work on the soul of the perceiver (On the Soul 424a 18-19)" (Sachs, Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, liii)

effectively, *this. This*-ness, as we learn from Hegel, straddles the universal and the particular. On the one hand, *this*-ness is absolutely particular; grounded in the sense perception, it occurs necessarily in space and time, here and now. Yet, on the other hand, all places are in some sense *here*, and all times are at some moment *now*; thus, all things are, in some sense, *this* thing. In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel calls such an object a universal—"A simple thing of this kind which is through negation neither This nor That, a not-This, and is with equal indifference This as well as That".[77] Thus, ἐπί suggests that, whereas the example is grounded in sense perception, the particularity of its emergence does not limit its scope.

Second, the verb ἄγα^γε consists of two essential elements: the verb choice and the tense. The aorist tense, strictly speaking, does not exist in English as a distinctly conjugated form of verbs. Nevertheless, English conveys the sense of the aorist easily enough. The sense of the aorist indicates an action simply. The linguistic and conceptual space of the aorist, like the banks of a river, is delineated on one side with the present tense, and on the other by the infinitive. Unlike the aorist, the present tense indicates time of the action, namely *now*, i.e. at the moment of speaking; or rather, the present tense at least indicates whether the action has been completed or continues. Unlike the infinitive—"to guide"—which also indicates an action simply, the aorist is with reference to a subject, an actor; moreover, the sense is that the action is almost a property of the actor rather than, like most verbal expression, simply an activity. Balanced between the infinitive and the present, one could parse the aorist, perhaps, as the infinitive imbued with presence, or alternately, the abstract present.

Consider an illustrative sentence from the Bible: "The grass withers, / And its flower falls away, / But the word of the Lord endures forever."[78] In English, all three verbs are, of course, in

[77] Hegel, PoS ¶96, p60
[78] 1 Peter 1:24 NKJV

the present tense. Yet, in the Greek, "withers" and "falls" are expressed in the aorist tense, while "endures" is expressed in the present.[79] Nevertheless, in English, the temporal sense of "withers" and "falls" is obviously different from that of "endures". "Withers" and "falls" are atemporal. In spite of the episodic nature of the actions of *withering* and *falling*, there is no indication of when these actions occurred. Moreover, we do not know whether the grass has withered or is still withering, and similarly whether the flower has fallen or is still falling. Consequently, these phrases read like maxims, suggesting something like a law of nature. Conversely, the temporal sense of "endures" suggests that the action is ongoing, occurring right now. Ironically, the temporality conveyed by the aorist sense of "withers" and "falls" seems to convey the desired temporality of the word of God better than "endure" in the present tense, even if God "endures *forever*".

The aorist tense of ἄγα^γε almost renders ἐπί redundant. The present tense resonates in the aorist; ἐπί, for the reasons discussed above, amplifies and underlines this resonance, rendering it explicit. Yet, more importantly, if the phenomenon of the example is to occupy the space of aorist, without resolving into the infinitive, it requires a subject; the *this-ness* of ἐπί serves as this necessary subject. Thus, the example, qua ἐπαγωγή, reads "this-ness guides".

The choice of verb—"to guide"—is also important. As we know, all particulars are not examples; not all particulars guide. Particulars that do not guide are "instances" or "exceptions". The example is, precisely, *the particular that guides*. Insofar as it guides, the example defines a class of sort, but class of which it is, paradoxically, also a member.

This relationship of the example to the idea of a class is paradoxical because strictly speaking, it does not create a class. An implied Platonism is inherent in the traditional notion of

[79] "ἐξηράνθη ὁ χόρτος, καὶ τὸ ἄνθος ἐξέπεσεν: τὸ δὲ ῥῆμα κυρίου μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα."

the class; a class is like a Platonic Form. The Platonic Forms exist prior to, and in a separate realm from their corresponding manifestations in the world of appearance. Since only things in the realm of appearance *appear,* the Forms *are* Forms precisely insofar as they do not appear. To confuse the Form with the appearance is to confuse the real with the merely Apparent, or even the False. The distinction of the Form is that it consists across all of the appearances that "partake" of it. We associate the appearances with each other because they each fall under the penumbra of the Form, exhibiting its abstract qualities, i.e. satisfying the Form's *criteria*. Moreover, the differences between the appearances are resolved—or ignored—in the Form.

Thus, classes are criteria, which are abstract; they are precisely *not* the things to which they apply. In other words, classes are *particular* things only insofar as they are *not* classes. For example, one cannot sit literally on the Platonic Chair; the class of all pieces of furniture that are properly called "chairs" is not itself a chair. The class is a criteria that defines chair-ness: (1) a seat for (2) one person, (3) typically with a back. To confuse a member of a class with the class itself traditionally verges on a category mistake. Famously, Russell's Paradox is premised upon the conflation of classes and their members. The paradox reads: it is indeterminable whether the "set of all sets that are not members of themselves" is a member of itself or not. If it *is* a member of itself, then it is not; yet if it is *not* then it *is*.[80] The kinds of particulars that adhere to this logic of classes are *instances.*[81] Instances are members of a class; in the Platonic lexicon, they are appearances.

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[80] Russell, The Principles of Mathematics (1903)

[81] There is another particular that functions within this logic of classes: the exception. The *exception* is an excluded member, which is not the same as a non-member. It occupies a liminal space, threatening to destroy or corruct the univocity of the class. The exception is the monstrous, and the abject. The distinction of the exception is that it merely validates an existing criterion, as opposed to creating one itself. It is, effectively, the contrary of the instance—as distinct from the contradictory. A given particular cannot be both an instance and an exception, yet it could be neither—it could be, as we will see, an example. Like the instance, in order for there to be an exception, a rule must already exist; there must be a guiding principle (i.e. a criteria) whereby one may judge particulars to be non-members. Thus, exceptions validate by marking the boundaries of a class. As Agamben notes, "what is

The example, conversely, is anti-Platonic. First of all, the example is a model rather than criterion. And second, its modeling qualities do not precede its appearance; its "criteria" and its appearance are simultaneous. The "criterion" of the example is exhibited or shown. It points rather than explains; it guides by saying, "like *this*". The example is, as Agamben notes, "truly a paradigm in the etymological sense: it is what is 'shown beside'."[82] Or more precisely, it is a *dia-digm*: that which is "shown through or throughout"[83]. The example is the particular that exhibits itself. Thus, there is no Platonic Form that corresponds to the exemplary particular; or rather, there is no difference between the Form and the particular.

We could imagine a class following in the wake of an example—as in the case of printed replicas of Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' *Comtesse d'Haussonville*, sold in the gift shop of the Frick for an insignificant sum when compared with the price of the original hanging on the museum's wall. Replicas, however, do not function in the same way as the original works of art, in spite of the fact that they are both images. When one considers the ways in which the materiality of a painting contributes to how a painting *works*—"function" actually being too limited of a term with regard to aesthetic experience—the replica merely alludes to the paintings. Absent in the replica are, among other qualities, the tactility of the paint, the scale of the image, the unmediated color and contrast, and the context of its presentation.[84]

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excluded in the exception maintains itself in relation to the rule in the form of the rule's suspension."(Agamben, HS, 18-9) The old adage, "the exception that proves the rule" conveys something of the sense, whereby one important consequence of defining a class is the ability to exclude. Nevertheless, the exception does not guide because, first of all, insofar as it "guides", it does so only by negation; and second, the exception is merely a function of a class, a component of its sequelae so to speak.

[82] Agamben, HS, 22. Also, in *The Coming Community*, Agamben explains: "In any context where it exerts its force, the example is characterized by the fact that it holds for all cases of the same type, and, at the same time, it is included among these. It is one singularity among others, which, however, stands for each of them and serves for all. On one hand, every example is treated in effect as a real particular case; but on the other, it remains understood that it cannot serve in its particularity. Neither [merely] particular nor [merely] universal, the example is a singular object that presents itself as such, that *shows* its singularity."(8-9)

[83] I am indebted to Brian Irwin for this elegant coinage.

[84] I am reminded of Howard Behrens' pallete knife rendition of Étretat, hanging amidst the private collection of a family member. The image is rendered in thick splotches of oil paint, protruding off of canvas, whereas the replica is

There is an important difference, however, between an example, and a particular that is simultaneous with its criterion. This difference enables us to distinguish between three kinds of particulars that seem to guide. If the particular and the criterion are *simultaneous,* then they are distinguishable in principle, though the former may necessarily mediate the latter. Let us call these kinds of particulars *prototypes*. Their purview is the ever-receding domain of the New. The precedent erected by a prototype is one that does not *yet* exist abstractly. The given particular becomes, thus, the first and only member of its class. Since, as yet, there are no differences between multiple instances to reconcile in the abstract Form, the particular is simultaneous with the criterion. We may equally, without loss, provide an abstract criterion or we may point to the particular thing. Prototypes are contingent examples, since they will ultimately recede behind the abstract criterion, and become merely an instance.

For example, new technologies exist in their nascent state simply as a kind of "need". Properly speaking, it is not quite a need, since it is desire for something that we do not yet know that we lack; or rather, we do not even lack it yet. The lack is produced alongside the emergent technology. Consider: at what point in the last decade did the cellphone, or even the smartphone for some, begin to occupy a space in our lives and routines such that it now fulfills a need? When a new object of this kind emerges, it transitions into a new ontological space—from a hypothetical tool to an essential one; moving us from an imagined alternate world of speculative fiction into a concretely reconfigured set of relations; from an imaginatively undetermined space

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flattened and the colors become airy like water-color on paper. With the painting we see the stroke of the painting utensil in three dimensions; a ridge of paint creates at least two lines: its peak and its shadow. The original work is large enough to fill my field of vision like an IMAX[84], whereas while viewing the replica I must actively exclude the para-erga. And finally, it matters where I view the work. Is the work viewed in the complicated overdetermined space of a museum, where one goes to "view art"? Is it hanging on the warm familiar walls of one's home, where it might greet me like a family with whom I live? Or is the work an installation, literally continuous with its venue? These material variations constitute the work almost as much as the image, yet they are lost in a replica sold in a gift shop.

to an overdetermined 'natural' milieu. A particular thing, however, occasions the initial moment of intelligibility, the first expression of this new place.

Alternately, the example—which for the sake of distinction we might call a particular that is *synonymous* with its criterion—is something that cannot be abstracted. It is concrete and singular, always appearing as if for the first time. Examples appear in two ways. First, it is mediated by the body. Tastes and scents are of this kind. The "formal criterion" of the scent of chocolate chip cookies—or something more complex: the alchemic experience on one's tongue of a bite of a triple-crème Brie followed by a sip of a Bordeaux—verges on the ineffable, intelligible only either in the experience of it—"Haven't you tasted it yet?"—as a metaphor—"sweet tamarinds on a gentle trade-wind breeze"—or with reference to past experiences—quite different than the magical synergy of a swig of the hoppy Heady Topper beer after a bite of New York cheese pizza. In these cases, there are no words or images that suffice; they merely refer to our bodies. Thus examples are the only "criteria"; "Taste this!" the chef qua philosopher demands. For the sake of distinction, let us call these kinds of examples *samples*.

And finally, and most importantly for this project, an example emerges when a particular refers to our body, but is not reducible to it. These include ways of doing things: various kinesthetic *techne,* ways of seeing, ethical activity, habits, and beliefs, which, in the pragmatist sense, must be held. These techne may include something as 'simple' as riding a bike, throwing a spiral football, or Salsa dancing. They also include any of the vocational activities for which training involves an apprenticeship, which amounts to, basically, exposure to good examples—consider the residency period of medical practice or carpentry apprenticeships. For someone who has a sufficient reservoir of relevant experiences to which she may refer, a description of a "new" techne may suffice; thus a skateboarder or surfer may learn to snowboard with minimal

practice after receiving a description of the mechanics. Nevertheless, the model for these activities cannot be abstracted because at least some aspect of the action must be learned and remembered by the body—often even requiring the development of certain muscles—in relation to an object: a scalpel, a hammer, a ball, ice-skates, a sparring partner, etc.

Ways of seeing characterize artistic practices, where "seeing" is not necessarily limited to the visual realm. Painters as well as poets, composers as well as chefs, flautists, photographers, and fashion designers, not to mention the kind of artist for which I am partial, the novelist—they all ask us to "see" in a particular way. We might distinguish *seeing* from the explicitly visual activity of *looking* as a world structuring, where the former entails a degree of reflection. As we learn from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Paul Cézanne laboriously sought to paint what he saw, as opposed to what he imagined, which, in the 19th century, was itself a novel way of conceiving of the "visual" arts. Cézanne "saw" not simply the object as apprehended by the eyes, but rather something more synesthetic. Merleau-Ponty says,

> It is only as a result of a science of the human body that we finally learn to distinguish between our senses. The lived object is not rediscovered or constructed on the basis of the contributions of the senses; rather, it presents itself to us from the start as the center from which these contributions radiate. We *see* the depth, the smoothness, the softness, the hardness of objects; Cézanne claimed that we see their odor. If the painter is to express the world, the arrangement of his colors must bear with this indivisible whole, or else his painting will only hint at things and will not give them in the imperious unity, the presence, the insurpassable plenitude which is for us the definition of the real.[85]

There is, arguably, a philosophical anthropology implicit in any artist's way of seeing, certainly at least in Cézanne's. According to Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne's way of seeing suggests that a human way of perceiving entails experiencing our senses more holistically. Nevertheless, the

[85] Mearleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt", *M-P Aesthetics Reader*, 65

particular manner of seeing requires examples because it is born out of the relationship between our bodies and the world.

The primary challenge associated with the production of these kinds of examples—techne and ways of seeing—is that the model is not of an object that appears *per se*, but rather for the para-phenomena. A demonstration of a perfect golf swing, for example, for the person merely watching, is but an image; moreover, it is an image that, though it guides, does not exhibit all of its elements. Consider: with what part of the body does the golfer "swing"—the arms like a baseball batter, the back and hips like tennis swing, the wrist as in table tennis? The baseball batter, the tennis player, and the golfer engage all of these body parts, but they do not all "swing", so to speak, with all of them. Though the swings look different, differences in how they are produced are not seen. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that we do not see ourselves as we swing, which means that we do not necessarily know when it does not "look right". Only after we have tried the action ourselves, and done it correctly, can we attempt to replicate what it *feels* like to swing correctly.

Similarly, concerning ethical activity, an example of a courageous woman is but an image of a person engaged in an activity—we see her confront a bully. Yet, what we do not see—cannot see—are her balanced feelings of fear and confidence. Nor do we see her (proto)judgment, her unarticulated motivating insight that tells her that this is the right thing to do, that the moment in which she must act is now. Perhaps we can intuit her feelings and her judgment enough to glean that her actions are an example of courage, but if we have never been brave ourselves, we do not know why her actions are exemplary.[86]

[86] I am reminded of a scene from some years ago: I'm on the uptown 1-train heading home. It's rush hour, pulling into Columbus Circle. Leaning against the doors on the local side, I'm trying to disappear into the pages of my book. As the doors open, some passengers alight, but more people board, including a tall-ish, middle-aged, copper-toned man and his tween-aged daughter. Those already on board claim the vacated seats, so all the new passengers find

Also, the works of visual artists viewed as simply objects are reduced to their representational content—little more than the records of places, possessions, or experiments in color; records for which other media may have served better. Yet, as examples these works serve as ways of seeing that are not exhausted by the content. Elaine Scarry gives an elegant account of learning to see palm trees differently, in large part due to Matisse's Nice paintings. Henri Matisse's depiction of palm trees throughout these works are not simply representations; if the image as such were the salient feature of Matisse's portrayal, in the context of this analysis we would characterize them as *instances* of the image of the abstract form of Palm Tree, like the image of *arecaceae cocos nucifera*, coconut palm, that one may find in a botany text book.

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themselves standing. After a second thought, a teenage boy offers his spot to a gray-haired Latina who graciously accepts. Right before the doors close, a passenger frantically vacates her seat and exits the train car. The seat remains empty as the train begins to move. The father nods at his daughter to claim it, but no sooner has she turned her head to notice where, than an Asian man plops down, slouching as he releases a heavy sigh. The father turns on him with an intensity that surprises all who can hear him, and particularly those nearby who also saw the seat, and are thus privy to the circumstances. The father begins levying insults and epithets upon the sitting man. The daughter squeaks that it's ok, but she is quickly silenced by the quality of a pause in her father's speech, a catch in his breath, a barely audible, abrupt inhalation that we realize, should she continue her plea, would render her the next target. By 68st street, the colorful insults have ceased to concern simply the sitting man's purported character—lazy, selfish, rude, friendless—and become racial in nature—his apparent "ugliness", the "strange" arrangement of his face, the quality of his hair, his motives behind his attire, speculations about his ability to speak or understand English. The man has not said a word, doing his best to ignore him, avoiding eye contact even. We are all doing our best to ignore him—another crazy New Yorker on the subway, best not to engage—but by 72nd street, the father is shouting, and I begin to question our apparent indifference. For though I have continuously held my book open and up toward my face, I have not read a single word since the incident began. The father seems on the verge of wresting the man from his spot, leaning over him now, braced against the pole above, emboldened by our silence perhaps. The sitting man now holds his bag to his chest, feet tucked under the seat, cowering it seems. A small space around them has cleared in spite of the crowd. As the train slows into 79th street, a wide-hipped woman, much shorter, though perhaps the same age, stands from her seat nearby with an erect back and tight lips. She steps into the clearing, turns toward the daughter, and with a measured sweetness, speaks to her. The action visibly surprises a few spectators—eyes widen, jaws slacken—along with the father. The subsequent pause in his vitriol, like a hiccup, allows the woman's words to sound loudly. "I'm sorry for you and your mother. Is this the way he speaks to you as well?" The father's eyes grow wide, surprise and perhaps shame fomenting his anger into rage. "Who told you that you could speak to my daughter?" The woman squares her shoulders toward the man, hands on her waist defiantly. The father raises his bent, right arm, and then draws his closed fist back like an arrow. Five men move simultaneously; three stand from their seats, one behind him, two in front; two more already standing take an approaching step, parting the crowd with the force of their obvious intent. Seeing this, he slowly lowers his fist, and timidly looks around, for the first time since boarding the train, perhaps, *seeing* the scornful gazes around him. He and his daughter alight at 96th street.

Matisse's palm trees, conversely, are not palms, but rather allusion to the love of light and the play of shadow. Scarry recalls that whereas she had held that palms were devoid of beauty, through the eyes of Matisse:

> Suddenly I am on a balcony and [a palm's] huge swaying leaves are before me at eye level, arcing, arching, waving, cresting and breaking the soft air, throwing the yellow sunlight up over itself and catching it on the other side, running its fingers down its own piano keys, then running them back up again, shuffling and dealing glittering decks of aqua, green, yellow, and white. It is everything I have always loved, fernlike, featherlike, fanlike, open—lustrously in love with air and light.[87]

With thirteen Matisse prints before her, Scarry sees through the palm motif in each piece to Matisse's request directed at the viewer: Pay attention to the light, its serenity and playfulness, its reminder of youth. Briefly, we should note: Scarry is not *perceiving* the palm motif. Perception remains on the surface. Perception does not necessary shape the world; it receives it. By contrast, seeing is a sensation; it is tactile, and synesthetic. It sculpts and has texture.

In the case of the instance, the object itself is reproduced; its criterion of determination appears and thus the object is sufficient. Conversely, the exemplary object is *repeated*, in the Deleuzian sense. That is to say, the object is *not* reproduced. Each example, as a precedent itself, is singular and unprecedented. Whereas instances are in principle numerous, and thus always countable—e.g. International Paper produced one billion plastic forks in 2012—an example is the first, the only, and the last. As such, it defies numeration. Even the ordering terms 'first', 'last', etc, are misleading, since they too quantify. Jean-Claude Milner, in his 1988 essay "L'Exemple," explains:

> We know from fiction, that that which is singularly identified cannot be counted. Phèdre dies every night, and, without being reborn, follows every night the same fatal destiny, surprising no one, because Phèdre, qua fiction, cannot be counted with herself…. [O]n the stage, we must believe this night that, for the twenty-

[87] Scarry, 16

> second time, Lohengrin leaves his mistress for the last time…. [I]n the same way, in linguistics, that which when proposed for the Nth time, is for the first and the last time, such a sentence is an example.[88]

The singularity of the example does not imply that it only occurs once. As a universal, it "recurs" in multiple times and places, but every recurrence is, thus, the same occurence. Deleuze explains: "This is the apparent paradox of festivals: they repeat an 'unrepeatable'. They do not add a second and a third time to the first, but carry the first time to the 'nth' power."[89] Examples occur in multiple places and times because they accompany us, insofar as they guide.

Nevertheless, each of the recurrences is unique, and thus irreducible to any other one. Whereas each of Matisse's palm trees is distinct as an image or motif, as part of the series of palm trees, they are the same example. Two occurrences of the same examples may be similar; in principle, they could be effectively identical.[90] Yet, the faithful reproduction of them, as objects, unlike the instance, is not an aspect of their capacity to guide. What is reproduced in the example is a *way* as opposed to an end.

Kant makes the point nicely with regard to the cultivation of tastes and artistic genius, which for the moment we may characterize as artistic "vision":

> So in fine art there is only *manner* (*modus*) [[fn which is free]], not *method* (*methodus*) [[fn. which is constraint]]: the master must show by his example [*vormachen*] what the student is to produce, and how… and he must provide sharp criticism. For only in this way can the master keep the student from immediately treating the examples offered him as if they were archetypes, modes

[88] Milner, "L'Exemple" 179-80; my translation. The last sentence reads: "…c'est pour la n ième fois que l'on propose, pour la première et la dernière fois, telle phrase en exemple."
[89] Deleuze, DR, 1
[90] There are two possibilities here. Two objects, if they are not both merely instances, may be identical for two reasons. Either, one, they are the unlikeliest of coincidences, where two ways of seeing, for instance happen upon the same vocabulary and manner of expression. It would be like two artists, unknown to each other, both painting the same *Starry Night*, or both drafting the same *Count of Monte Cristo*—not impossible, but nevertheless unlikely enough. Or two, they are not, ultimately, examples of the same thing. One of the objects is an example of a way of seeing, and the other is an example of a way of seeing the example. Consider a copy that attains to the level of a work of art itself.

> that he should imitate as if they were not subject to a still higher standard and to his own judgment.[91]

Granted, it is through method that one frequently develops manner, but what the artist aspires to attain is not technical skill *per se*, i.e. "method" or a means of reproducing existing examples. Technique is not an end in itself. Good technique is like a large vocabulary—the purpose is to say something, to express oneself clearly, persuasively, and eloquently, *not* simply to know many words. Furthermore, if a speaker repeats the words of others, it is not clear whether the speaker knows what she is saying. Similarly, if the artist imitates the works of others, it is not clear whether she *sees* anything herself, not even what those masters saw.

The artist—and the philosopher, as I contend—aspires to identify or produce examples. The project consists in 'seeing' something new. This can be parsed two ways: seeing something new in an old way, or seeing something old in a new way. Both 'ways' confront the domains of the as-yet-unexpressed: infinity and chaos. The artist works against the backdrop of the history of her practice, which both enables and restricts her. Deleuze explains,

> It is a mistake to think that the painter works on a white surface…The painter has many things in his head, or around him, or in his studio…They are all present in the canvas as so many images, actual or virtual, so that the painter does not have to cover a blank surface but rather would have to empty it out, clear it, clean it.[92]

The same burden weighs on the philosopher before the blank page. The finished 'canvases' of all those who have preceded us, already overdetermine our projects; every mark, word, style of punctuation, alludes to the canonized oeuvre of someone (long dead) who now haunts even our aspiration to express. The exemplary expressions are the works of art that expand our field of vision, flattening the globe so that the horizon extends beyond the previous point of the Earth's curvature.

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[91] Kant, CoJ, §60, 230-1
[92] Deleuze, Gilles. *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2004. p. 71

Frequently these two ways are one and the same; seeing a new object usually entails seeing differently. Nevertheless, these two 'ways' are not entirely reducible to each other, since we may conceive of infinity in a number ways as well. The infinitely large: the artist must express the novel amidst the itemized clutter of the statements that have preceded her. And analogously, the infinitely small: this is the infinite in shade or quality—the infinite between the space of zero and one, or the boundlessness of further distinction. It is like what the electron microscope does for the cell[93].

Or distinct from either of these, we may characterize the infinity of the as-yet-unexpressed as the inherent incompleteness of any purported whole.[94] As Proust notes:

> The only true voyage of discovery, the only fountain of Eternal Youth, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is; and this we can contrive with an Elstir, with a Vinteuil; with men like these we do really fly from star to star.[95]

Thus, the artist—and the philosopher—strive to express the truth of the everyday, to articulate the as-yet-unexpressed that we share and recognize, that which, once expressed, we will realize we have always already known.

As a guide, examples are prescriptive. This sense of 'prescription', however, is not deontological. Rather, it describes the attractiveness of our beliefs and values. To say that the exemplary is prescriptive is to say, simply, that it is compelling; it exhorts us to believe or act in ways that are consonant with it. Thus, to say that the exemplary is prescriptive is to say simply that it is beautiful.

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[93] An optical microscope literally cannot "see" objects smaller than ~200nm, since it depends on the wavelength of photons, or visible light. An electron microscope, however, takes advantage of the much shorter wavelength of electrons to capture an image, enabling resolution of as much as 50pm.
[94] Cf. Gödel's incompleteness theorem.
[95] Proust, vol.V, 343

Beauty, thus, is an inherent quality of the example. The example is the beautiful particular—the particular that attracts, that moves us, that guides us. Beauty describes the example's capacity to guide; or complementarily, it describes our inclination to follow it. Beauty and the Example are co-constitutive. Beauty is aesthetic because the *examples* occur in space and time, apprehended by sense perception. Beauty does not merely wash over our passive minds and bodies, arresting and dislodging us from our daily routines, no more than the example is something that we stumble over in the course of the blind trudge of habit. Since examples are not found-objects—they are actively identified or created—beauty is not something to behold, i.e. the found-object of a disinterested judgment. It is also an activity, as Toni Morrison notes, something one can *do*.

In the Afterword to *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison recounts her first experience:

> We had just started elementary school. She said she wanted blue eyes. I looked around to picture her with them and was violently repelled by what I imagined she would look like if she had her wish. The sorrow in her voice seemed to call for sympathy, and I faked it for her, but, astonished by the desecration she proposed, I 'got mad' at her instead.
>
> Until that moment I had seen the pretty, the lovely, the nice, the ugly, and although I had certainly used the world 'beautiful,' I had never experienced its shock—the force of which was equaled by the knowledge that no one else recognized it, not even, or especially, the one who possessed it.
>
> It must have been more than the face I was examining: the silence of the street in the early afternoon, the light, the atmosphere of confession. In any case it was the first time I knew beautiful. Had imagined it for myself. Beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something one could *do*.[96]

Pretty, nice, lovely, ugly—these are qualities of objects, judged disinterestedly. Beauty is an activity; it is the mechanism by which we imbue particulars with the practical allure that renders them examples. Morrison's elementary school classmate employed the mechanism of beautiful so forcefully—a strength born of racial self-loathing—that she strove to create *against nature*,

[96] Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, "Afterword", 209

hence the shock, which Morrison recalls harmed her own concept of the beautiful. Up until that moment, Morrison, we can imagine, must have created examples in her image. But after acquiring 'other eyes,' however momentarily, she is compelled to 'leave' her beautiful home and inhabit a hostile world where examples do not guide her.

The notion of precedent in law serves as an illuminating foil. A legal precedent is a previous judgment that serves as a guide for similar cases.[97] Precedents are, effectively, legal examples. Like examples, precedents are not determined *a priori*. Courts must wait for an appropriate case to be presented. Also, like examples, precedents guide. In legal terms they are vested with the authority of *stare decicis*, literally, "to stand by decisions".[98] Just as the example is, literally, the beautiful particular, the particular that compels or guides, the precedent is a particular decision by which we stand.

Precedents also provide the court a practical measure of efficiency. It spares the court from needing to try similar cases as if each were unique; like tracks in the snow that spare the lost skier the effort of evaluating the safety of every trough and tree of the unknown terrain, precedents spare the court the time and effort of judgment when the relevant details recur.

Yet, this is also a point of distinction. Concerning the example, the question always remains—upheld by the antinomy of taste, which we will discuss below—is this an example, an instance, or an exception? In other words, one always must judge for oneself whether these tracks in the snow, for example, should be followed. Conversely, concerning the precedent, there is rarely such a moment of evaluation; the court will always stand by the precedent. The court

[97] cf. *Black's Law Dictionary*. Precedents are "the decisions of a court that are thought worthy enough to be used as models for future cases."

[98] In its entirety, the principle reads: "*stare decicis et non quieta movere"*, meaning "to stand by decisions and not disturb the undisturbed". cf. Adeleye, Gabriel G. *World Dictionary of Foreign Expressions: a Resource for Readers and Writers*. Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 1999. P.371

does not make a habit of asking whether a given case serves as a better precedent, a "similar case" to which the precedent will apply, or a challenge to the precedent.[99]

Also, precedents provide a judiciary system with synthesis, continuity, and a mechanism by which the system may presumably improve. The idea is that, in the absence of a meaningful, non-aesthetic principle of justice, the entire history of law informs the present and future. Present and future judgments will be at least as good as past ones. In this way, we appeal to a collective sense of judgment, providing the legal system with a methodologically grounded quasi-objectivity regarding what is ultimately an aesthetic endeavor.

This, too, is a point of distinction. Whereas, examples, as we will see below, presume by a concept of the good, precedents, in spite of the pretension to justice, ultimately concern legality. Legality is exclusively actionable claims. In legal court, a plaintiff brings a specific case against a defendant, claiming that the defendant violated a specific law. The language of legal claims is extremely precise. "Stealing", for example, is not a crime, but "theft" is, which is different from the crime of "larceny" or "burglary". Similarly, "killing" is not a crime, but "murder" is, which is different from "manslaughter".

[99] My aunt, who is a lawyer, recalls a scene during her days as a legal clerk. She is observing the case of the State of New Jersey vs. "Billy South Philly". Billy South Philly is being charged with the orchestrating an assassination attempt of a district attorney in Atlantic City. The particular hearing concerns whether Billy should be granted bail. The prosecution argues that Billy is a flight risk, and his release would put the Atlantic City district attorney in renewed danger. The defense attorney stands abruptly, and in an outraged tone denies the claims, "My client is *not* dangerous!" Meanwhile, Billy, scowling at the prosecution, is slamming his fist repeatedly and rhythmically on the desk. My aunt turns to her neighbor in the audience—a muscular man with close-cropped hair, tattoos on his forearms peaking out from under rolled up shirt sleeves, wearing slacks and dress shoes but no socks—and asks, "do you think Billy really isn't dangerous?" The man replies flatly in an Italian, south Philly accent, "I don't like the way you guys are talkin' about Billy." Realizing her error, my aunt cautiously returns her gaze to the proceedings. The defense has drawn a thick legal brief from his case and drops it on the desk with almost as much force as Billy's fist. "According to the case of *someone* vs. *someone*, denying my client the right to bail violates his constitutional rights!" The judge curtly replies that there is a precedent for such denials, the case of *someone else* vs. *someone else*, after which the matter is closed: no bail. As an aside, the defense attorney had no illusions about the likelihood of his client being granted bail. In spite of his actions, he knew it was out of the question. Nevertheless, he was a defense attorney for a mobster, whose underlings were in the audience watching everything closely through a retributive lens, and he had to put on a show. The underlings will leave believing that the lawyer was sincerely and sufficiently outraged on Billy's behalf, but was thwarted by a corrupt legal system and a callous judge.

Consider an anecdote: a cooperating group of fishing boats corrals an area with its nets. Yet, before they can pull in the fish, a single unaffiliated boat passes a net along the entire interior circumference of the group, thereby capturing all of the group's corralled fish. The group brings a case against the unaffiliated boat, charging them then theft. The defendant is acquitted on the grounds that the fish did not yet belong to the group of boats. The group should have attempted to charge the unaffiliated boat with "trespassing", assuming that they could claim that the corralled space belonged, at least temporarily, to the group.

Ideally, precedents would function as the clearest expression of justice. A trial, one might argue, would not be concerned with a specific charge per se, but an evaluation of the defendant's relation to others in the world. Questions may include whether the defendant has profited through vice? Is the defendant taking moral credit—or bearing a moral burden—for circumstances that are primarily a matter of chance? A case tried in this manner, where a defendant is evaluated as opposed to charged, would be more akin to the exemplary; it would be a dia-digm—demonstrating, and while doing so, determining—principles of justice.[100]

Yet, in practice, precedents are merely the mechanism by which definitions are fixed for the extremely precise legal lexicon. Insofar as there is an ethical mooring to legality, it precedes the particular "landmark case", which merely serves as the occasion for a revision, rather than the cause. Thus, whereas an example ceases to be beautiful when it is shown to *mis*guide, courts cease to stand by precedents, not when they betray an injustice—otherwise we should never need to concern ourselves with the enforcement of unjust laws—but rather when a definition needs to be revised.[101]

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[100] This difference reflects the difference between "legality" and "equity". For more see,

[101] At the turn of the 20th century, there was a landmark case concerning the concept of legal *consideration*, i.e. value with regard to contracts. The case, let's call it "Little James" v. James, came before the New York Court of Appeals. Little James claimed that when he was a teenager, James, his uncle, told Little James that if he did not drink, do

There are two moments to the mechanism of the beautiful, framed perhaps by the antimony of taste. Briefly, the antimony of taste traditionally refers to the tension between the apparently subjective and objective qualities of beauty. On the one hand, beauty is individuating, personal, subjective: *de gustibus non disputandum est*, or as the old adage reads, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Designations of beauty are as arbitrary, presumably, and incontestable as pleasure. Yet, on the other hand, a claim that something is beautiful *is* contestable. As Elaine Scarry notes, concerning the beautiful, one frequently experiences error.

The first moment is practical. Does the example guide? The things that remain examples, and thus become beautiful, reflect the world within which we wish to live—viz. a good world. The second moment is somewhat subjective. Do I follow the example? Following an example distributes and "reproduces" it. As Scarry observes, beauty prompts a copy of itself. In following an example, we re-articulate its beauty. Beauty, like Aristotelian virtue, is, thus, an active condition. Joe Sachs says in the introduction of his translation of the *Ethics*, "the beautiful in the *Ethics* is not an object of contemplation simply, but the source of action."[102]

Regarding the first moment, the merely decorative passage does not fail due to structural elements; it fails because it does not guide. Perhaps it does not offer a view of the world that is

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drugs, or get into trouble, when Little James turns 21 years old, James would give him $5,000. Little James is now 21 years old, and James refuses to pay, hence the case. Little James claims that James has breached their contract, whereas James says that there was no contract. The court ruled in favor of Little James. Up until that point, consideration referred to exchange between items or services that had a monetary value, i.e. something for which anyone *might* pay. James claimed that Little James' abstention had moral value, but no monetary value, thus there was no consideration. The Court of Appeals, on this case, revised the concept of consideration, arguing that the exchange need not be between good of monetary value; it is enough that the two parties value the good, as was the case with Little James' abstention. Considering the historical context, this new precedent coincided with the expansion of the emergent and largely unregulated stock market. Whereas un-liquidated stock does not have a precise monetary value, functioning effectively like a bet, and thus enforcement pertaining to stock agreements was not strictly speaking actionable; by redefining consideration in these new terms, these kinds of agreements now fell under contract law.

[102] Sachs, NE, xxv

sufficient different from our own to compel us to turn our heads toward it, away from other examples. Or, perhaps its view of the world is such that we are repulsed, guided away from it. In short, the merely pretty passage lacks in-sight. Edith Wharton explains in *The Writing of Fiction*: "[T]here must be something that *makes* [the literary text] crucial, some recognizable relation to a familiar social or moral standard, some explicit awareness of the eternal struggle between man's contending impulses, if the tales embodying them are to fix the attention and hold the memory."[103] Fixing the attention and holding the memory are the symptoms of beauty. This may entail providing the inexperienced and wayward with something to emulate. Or maybe the work must provide a context of reflection for concerns relevant to a community of readers. Or perhaps it must show us an image of ourselves, whether that image is of us at our worst or at our best. Either way, just as the cadre of judicial precedents ideally delineates the orientation of an improving system, the beautiful text inclines us to move *from* our worst *to* our best.

Toni Morrison, in *What Moves at the Margins*, conceives of her literary practice as inherently political, its success hinging upon its ethical comportment[104]:

> If anything I do, in the way of writing novels (or whatever I write) isn't about the village or the community or about you, then it is not about anything. I am not interested in indulging myself in some private, closed exercise of my imagination that fulfills only the obligations of personal dreams—which is to say yes, the work must be political. It must have that as its thrust. That's a pejorative term in critical circles now: if a work of art has any political influence in it, somehow it's tainted. My feeling is just the opposite: if it has none, it is tainted.
> "The problem comes when you find harangue passing off as art. It seems to me that the best art is political and you ought to be able to make it unquestionably political and irrevocably beautiful at the same time.[105]

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[103] Wharton, 14
[104] Following Aristotle, I deliberately conflate the ethical and political, assuming that virtue is an ethical concern, and justice the primary political concern. Aristotle insightfully, and rightly, explains: "In what respect virtue and this sort of justice differ, is clear from the things that have been said, since they are the same thing, but what it is to be each of them is not the same; insofar as it is related to someone else, it is justice, but insofar as it is simply a certain kind of active condition of the soul, it is virtue."(1130a10ff)
[105] Morrison, *What Moves*, 64

The pretty text may read well. The words may dance on the page with grammatical precision, a fanciful illusion consisting of musical sentences; but the question will remain, not simply What does it say, but What does the speaker *see*?

Characters may be rendered in more detail than one could want, like some tediously long composite of known human attributes—like the computer rendition of the "average" human face[106]—but they lack the dimensions that I find in the face of my beloved. These pretty characters are not "human", lacking virtues and vices, and points of view. They are cardboard cutouts—context-less slices of time and space—that one could not imagine meeting in the world. The pretty plot is merely a series of events, as opposed to a *story*. Pretty place imagery may be clear and distinct, but is not of a real place, not to be confused with a "true" one. Even in the most fanciful of worlds there remains a kernel of the real, a piece of the reader, through which she may read herself into it. Vampires, for example, have functioned as successful literary tropes, not because they exist in the world, but rather because of what they suggest about us, the non-vampiric, i.e. the human. Though the materiality of the book—the page, the type, the binding, the reader—almost entirely recedes, erecting a plane of glass through which we can clearly see the world of the writer's ideas, the question always remains, does the account indicate a *way* of seeing, where seeing is already with reference to a certain kind of body.

Reducing the beautiful to the pretty reifies the distinction between appearance and being with which this project ultimately takes issue. The pretty passage remains on the surface precisely because it does not ask anything of its readers; it is not 'about the village'. Our eyes skip over it like a smooth flat stone hurled at a low angle from the shore. Beauty, conversely, is literally profound, operating on the surface as well, but also beneath it like a current, embroiling

[106] Perrett, D. I., May, K. A. & Yoshikawa, S. (1994). Facial shape and judgments of female attractiveness. Nature, 368: 239–242.

us in a struggle to stay afloat or to swim ashore, demanding our attention, literally compelling us to move towards it.

As Proust's Marcel observes of Bergotte's speech patterns, "there is nothing that so alters the material quality of the voice as the presence of thought behind what is being said: the resonance of the diphthongs, the energy of the labials are profoundly affected—as is the diction".[107] Does this say anything more than that Marcel found Bergotte's language compelling? It might seem that there is a circularity here. Marcel was already interested in Bergotte's language via his books. He listened to Bergotte attentively, presuming that his words were thoughtful.

This brings us to the second moment of the mechanism of beauty. We must care for the beautiful, which is to say, we should be mindful of the examples that we follow. In listening closely one weighs the diphthongs and measures the energy of the labials. One's attention renders the particular beautiful, because the attention of a particular reader or viewer singles it out; it becomes literally singular. Attention requires an action, an actual turning towards something. Thus with our attention we articulate the example; we put it to work. We try on the way of seeing, and linger long enough to inhabit it.

Susan Sontag famously concludes her essay, "Against Interpretation," arguing that the responsibility of the critic, i.e. the reflective reader, is not merely to criticize—i.e. to throw stones, so to speak—but to draw the attention of other readers to that which is compelling about a work. Sontag says:

> [I]t is in the light of the condition of our senses…that the task of the critic must be assessed…The aim of all commentary on art now should be to make works of art—and, by analogy, our own experience—more, rather than less, real to us. The

[107] Proust, vol.II (WBG)

> function of criticism should be to show how it is what it is, even that it is what it is, rather than to show what it means.
>
> "In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.[108]

In short, the role of the critic, almost as much as the artist, is to engage in the activity of beauty, attending to our attention.

Consider the beautiful opening sentence of David Foster Wallace's unfinished, final novel, *The Pale King*:

> Past the flannel plains and blacktop graphs and skylines of canted rust, and past the tobacco-brown river overhung with weeping trees and coins of sunlight through them on the water downriver, to the place beyond the windbreak where untilled fields simmer shrilly in the A.M. heat: shattercane, lamb's quarter, cutgrass, sawbrier, nutgrass, jimsonweed, wild mint, dandelion, foxtail, muscadine, spine-cabbage, goldenrod, creeping charlie, butter-print, nightshade, ragweed, wild oat, vetch, butcher grass, invaginate volunteer beans, all heads gently nodding in a morning breeze like a mother's soft hand on your cheek.[109]

The attention *I* have paid to this passage is, of course, *my* attention. In that sense it is subjective, personal even, informed by the unique elements of my haecceity, or 'this-ness'. My haecceity consists of the particular combination of my habits, feelings, and history, producing a synthesis that is incommunicable. In the case of Wallace's sentence, my habits include the limits of my vocabulary in conjunction with my tendency to read unfamiliar words aloud, so as to feel their shape as they waft out of my throat and across my tongue. My feelings include my particular sensitivities and thresholds to the pleasures and pains of reading an 89-word sentence. And my history is relevant insofar as past experiences attenuate or heighten my sensitivities—for example, the experience of having walked through a weedy field that 'simmers shrilly in the A.M. heat,' or the experience of having read other literary works, such as Proust's *Recherche,* which famously includes a 958-word sentence (847 words long in the original French). Thus, my

[108] Sontag, 14
[109] Wallace, 5

haecceity yields a personal pleasure that is the basis upon which I would be inclined to claim that Wallace's opening sentence is at least "interesting".

Nevertheless, I call it 'beautiful'. In terms of the first moment, this is a real place, again, not to be confused with a "true" one—it is, as Proust says, "real without being actual"[110]. The weeping trees with "coins of sunlight through them" are as loving and playful as Matisse's palms. And we ask of this parade of weeds—what *I* have called "weeds" in my myopia—through what kind of eyes does one gaze so lovingly on the world in order to see such diversity in what otherwise might be considered, pejoratively, a field? Not only does Wallace see the differences therein; he calls them by name, like friends. This is a world within which one wishes to live, a world where one is seen, known, and loved.

And consider this new and paradoxical juxtaposition of words: "…untilled fields *simmer shrilly*…." As we know, shrillness is not a quality that we might ascribe to simmering, and simmering is not one of the possible activities of fields. Nevertheless, in Wallace's world it is beautifully intelligible. In this place, "beyond the windbreak," this paradoxical juxtaposition becomes metaphor. We see it: the heat rising in the fields distorts the spectacle of the diversity of grasses, causing them to move, not only waving in the breeze, but also rising and disjointing, popping at the top, like a stream of small bubbles in almost boiling water. And we can hear it: the heat that we see presses on our ears like a sharp sound. Like Cézanne's peaches that we can almost smell, ripening on the canvas, the synesthetic experience of Wallace's place is summoned by these words.

Consider another paradoxical phrase that functions entirely differently, Chomsky's celebrated, "colorless green ideas sleep furiously." This sentence, by contrast, is "pretty". It is

[110] Proust vol.6, p264

grammatically correct. It even betrays some poetic qualities; the alliteration of the E's—gr*ee*n id*ea*s sl*ee*p—and L's—co*l*or*l*ess…s*l*eep furious*l*y—allows the sentence to read quite well, to roll off the tongue as if it might have been spoken confidently and meaningfully. Nevertheless it says nothing; it is all on the surface, mere sounds and no more, almost like someone with a good ear parroting a language that she does not speak. And that, ultimately, is Chomsky point. Here is an example of a sentence that functions syntactically, but fails semantically.

It is interesting that Chomsky's sentence should be exemplary of nonsense since it is a function of taking it as an example in this way that has rendered it nonsensical. As an example, it certainly displays its nonsensicality. Construed as such, it is, indeed, a dia-digm, beautifully so. And like any work of art, it betrays a way of seeing; in its particularity the reader gleans the perspective endemic to a philosophical disposition that tends toward abstraction. In this world, even examples, which are concrete by definition, are—paradoxically—abstract. The analytic practice of the thought experiment—not to be confused with the comparative practice of judgment—deprives the example of reality.[111] The difference between Wallace and Chomsky's sentences consists in the displacement of Chomky's example. Chomsky's is a metaphor without context; thus its lack of sense is a condition of its preclusive framing, not a distinction between syntax and semantics. We could re-emplace Chomsky's sentence and fill it with meaning.[112]

[111] We could catalog here the classic abstracted—and in that sense displaced—examples of the Analytic philosophical tradition. E.g. Mind/body problem: the brain in a vat; utilitarianism: trolly-ology; analytic/a priori truth: "all bachelors are unmarried"; etc.

[112] You have just awoken from a sound sleep. You had a vivid, active dream, but as the contours of your bedroom come into focus, the details fall away beyond your field of vision. The faint idea of an effulgent arborescent presence is the last shape to slip below the surface of your waking state. Yet, before it too disappears, and with it, your entire dream, you snatch it as a momento. You describe it aloud, so that your ears might remember what your mind has lost to your subconscious: "Colorless green ideas sleep furiously". Huh? You were too slow to capture the quality of the effulgence—was it a tree? Were the leaves red or green? Was it in the Fall or Spring, that might offer a clue? It is the Spring now, so green perhaps? The color of the un-colored, or non-colored, or the colored as such, is all that remains. "Colorless green idea" catches the sense. The presence, an iceberg, rests, "sleeps" uneasily below the surface of your consciousness, frustratingly suspended on the edge of sleep, too big to pull up, too dear to let go. The tension churns in your breast ejecting you from the bed while the "idea sleeps furiously".

In terms of the second ethical moment, consider for a moment the four preceding paragraphs, which you have just read. It is insufficient to beauty that it should exist like an object in the world, a window for us to accidentally stroll by, and deign to glance in its direction; we, as readers, must articulate its beauty—in both senses articulate: to speak and to activate—by peering through it.

By way of a conclusion, consider a brief illustration. While backcountry skiing in Vermont's Green Mountains, the one who leads serves as a guide. She indicates a safe route, evidenced by her safe passage. And if we, the guid*ed*, wish to assure safe passage for ourselves, then we may follow her. We could, of course, make our own path, but safety would not be assured. Her tracks, we might say, are beautiful; they guide because they are more than the arbitrary evidence of another skier's presence. They are, to the concerned skier, a model of safety. On the one hand, safety seems to be a straightforward criterion: to be "safe", you must arrive at the "bottom"—i.e. a designated spot where I might meet my party—without injury, without too much time having passed, with all of my equipment intact, and under a sufficient amount of control that luck is not too much of a factor. Yet, *while skiing*, my abstract criterion, framed only in terms of ends, is of little use. While skiing, "safety" is an aesthetic idea, meaning that it depends on contingencies that cannot be entirely anticipated. The "safe" route becomes something difficult to gauge, requiring experience and good judgment.[113]

[113] Imagine for a moment that you are the guide. Or worse, you are lost and must make your way down on your own. Let's say you're a snowboarder, in fact. It is the end of a long day of riding and as the sun sets, the mountain is closing. Between the thin light reducing the contrast on the snow, and your exhausted thighs, you feel slightly unsteady on your feet. You are relieved that your route back to the lodge where you've parked is, though long and winding, at least a well-groomed, easy green. You know that there is one fork in the trail of which you need to be wary, lest you arrive at an entirely different part of the mountain. Nevertheless, while you take in the beautiful scenery, you miss it. Rather than climb back up the trail in your unwieldy boots, you turn into the trees hoping to cut the corner and pick up the other fork of the trail. Unfortunately, though, you underestimate the difficulty of this alternative route. At first, the unskiied powder is soft and forgiving under your tired legs. But the grade is steeper

CHAPTER 3: The Philo-Literary Text: the necessary convergence

3.1. The Philosophical Place of Literature?

What is the place and importance of literature vis-à-vis philosophy? We may characterize the various ways that this question has been answered by the choice of connecting words used by scholars to describe the field of inquiry: philosophy *of* literature, philosophy *in* literature, or philosophy *and* literature.

In this chapter, I will argue that all three of these connecting words are unduly limiting, mischaracterizing both philosophy and literature. These connecting words uncritically frame philosophy as primarily—if not purely—an abstract enterprise, while relegating literature to the margins, as either purely aesthetic—in the cases of *of* and *in*—or limited in "philosophical" scope and rigor—as in the case of *and.*

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than the trail, and you begin to gain speed. This worries you, not so much because of the trees, since they're relatively sparse, but, in spite of your progress, you don't see the trail. You pause to assess your bearings and immediately sink about 18 inches below the surface. You confidently choose a direction, but you struggle to restart, since pinning you to the spot is roughly 60lbs of snow *on top* of your board. If you remove your board from your feet, you'll likely need to walk out, an unrealistic option in four and a half feet of powder and without snowshoes. Eventually, you pull yourself out—with the help of a low hanging branch—and continue, but the snow is no longer as even. It appears to fight you, requiring more agility and responsiveness to stay upright and under control. In your mild exhaustion you eventually fall. This happens a few times—each time fighting your way to your feet and then falling again. What seemed like an easy shortcut back to the trail suddenly confronts you as unsafe. You consider that entering the words was poor judgment, and in an effort to compensate, you pay more attention to your surroundings. You see an apparent trough in the distance; is it merely a depression in the ground, over which you could easily ride, or is it evidence of a stream, into which, on this warm winter day, you might fall? Is the terrain—of which you are unfamiliar—such that, should you go right, down the steeper grade, you will be still able to traverse back left to the "bottom" and meet the trail, or will you descend into the adjacent valley? Or if you go left, will the grade be steep enough to maintain sufficient speed to keep you afloat? After a few more turns, however, you encounter some tracks. As noted above, these tracks are more to you than simply evidence of another human, more than simply a "sample" route. For you, "lost" in the snowy, darkening woods, these tracks are exemplary; they suggest that someone has gone this way before you, and if you trust its precedent—the fact that only their tracks remain, i.e. you have not encountered them on the mountain, suggesting that they arrived at the "bottom"—you might relax your judgment and take some comfort in following them. We could say that these assuaging track, which you decide to follow, are beautiful.

The prepositions *of* and *in* employ a spatial metaphor that entails an implicit hierarchy. "*Of*" relegates literature to a subject of philosophical scrutiny; through a philosophical lens, one looks *at* or *upon* literature, like a slide under a microscope. In this field, literature is framed as art, narrowly conceived as an aesthetic object. The preposition "*in*" renders literature a medium, a vehicle of philosophical content; insofar as they coincide, literature *bears* philosophy. In this field, literature is framed as rhetoric, also conceived narrowly as techniques and tools, in and of themselves lacking purpose or content.

Though the conjunction "*and*" is the most conciliatory, going the farthest towards considering philosophy and literature as comparable in some sense, it too renders a dis-service. "*And*" effects a misleading mathematical metaphor. Both philosophy and literature contribute to the sum total of human knowledge, but their respective contributions are discrete and mutually exclusive. Literature remains distinct from philosophy, comprised of a different set of practices and purposes. They converge independently on a few kinds of questions—ethics, politics, and aesthetics—but their approaches to these questions should not be confused or conflated.[114]

In brief, I will contest the exclusion of the philosophical from the aesthetic, and vice versa. The philosophy *of* literature takes this exclusion for granted, not even deigning to entertain the possibility of its error. On the surface, the philosophy *in* literature would appear to serve as corrective, conceding the coincidence of philosophy and literature in certain works. Nevertheless, philosophy *in* literature presumes that the coincidence in a given text is just that, coincidental, not an essential quality of the text. The philosophy *and* literature manages to serve

[114] On the surface, this project is also subject to this criticism, since the "question of form", at least according to the title, is framed as an inquiry into the relationship *between* philosophy *and* literature. I have two replies. First, I concede that there are traditionally considered philosophical elements of this dissertation that, were time not an issue, I would reevaluate in the light of my conclusions. Yet, second, not all aspects of this dissertation are philosophical in the narrow sense indicated by the bifurcating "*and*". The "*and*" in my title does not delimit the field of inquiry; rather, it determines the subject of my criticism, namely the presumed distinction.

as a modest corrective to methods and perspectives of *of* and *in*, but ultimately falls short of its own aspirations; though literature contributes to certain philosophical questions, those contributions, strangely, do not interact or challenge the "philosophical" contributions.

Ultimately, I will defend the connecting word *as*: philosophy *as* literature, and vice-versa. As I will argue below, art, rhetoric, and "literature" are never only these things, and neither is philosophy ever only ideas and arguments. As Proust says, "everything is fertile, everything is dangerous, and we can make discoveries no less precious than in Pascal's *Pensées* in an advertisement for soap."[115] Rhetorical, artistic, and stylistic choices convey philosophical commitments that do not merely contribute to the purported "content". These choices constitute the content as well, functioning as additional premises, if not entire arguments unto themselves. The "non-philosophical" content of a text interacts with the "philosophical" content, modifying, amplifying, and occasionally negating it.

[115] Proust, vol.V, 732

3.1.1. Philosophy *of* / *in* Literature: Art and/or Rhetoric

The philosophy *of* and the philosophy *in* literature begin with the question, "What is literature?" The quintessential approach to this question is characterized by a "philosophical" method used to scrutinize the object "literature." In *The Philosophy of Literature,* Peter Lamarque appropriately holds up Aristotle's treatment of this question in the *Poetics* as exemplary. The opening paragraph of the *Poetics* sets the tone:

> About the poetic art itself and the forms of it, what specific capacity each has, and how one ought to put together stories if the making of them is going to hold together beautifully, and also how many and what sort of parts stories are made of, and likewise about as many other things as belong to the inquiry into poetic art, let us speak once we have first started, in accord with nature, from the things that come first.[116]

The tone is taxonomical and detached. Most importantly, that which is being done—philosophy—and that which is being investigated—"poetry"[117]—are discrete practices. The *Poetics*, as a text, would not fall under any of the forms of the 'poetic art' that Aristotle subsequently lists. Lamarque explains further:

> Aristotle's *Poetics*...is not just written by a philosopher but exhibits a quintessential philosophical methodology: a careful delineation of the subject matter—the nature of poetry in general, its modes, aims, and objects—then a detailed analysis of one literary genre, tragedy, outlining concepts its constituent parts (plot, character, action, thought, diction) and the key concepts for describing its aims and effects, concluding finally with remarks about and comparisons with another genre of poetry, the epic.[118]

Lamarque continues:

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[116] Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. Joe Sachs, 1447a1-12

[117] Aristotle's definition of poetry was quite different from our contemporary idea. Poetry in the *Poetics* includes the Epic and Tragedy, both of which exhibit qualities that suggest that Aristole's conclusions are also relevant to our contemporary novels, short stories, films, plays, etc.

[118] Lamarque, *Philosophy of Literature*, p.1

> As Aristotle showed, this is a foundational inquiry into the very nature of the literary, classifying the subject matter, delineating aspects, anaylising concepts, exploring norms and values, locating the whole practice of writing and reading literary works in its proper place among related but distinct practices.[119]

In the *Poetics*—and in *The Philosophy of Literature*—we note, most saliently—aside from the actual conclusions—this characteristic "analytic" manner of inquiry. There are few advantages to this method. First, clarity and comprehensiveness are considered virtues, which the *Poetics* and *The Philosophy of Literature* both exhibit. And second, the inquirers—who include, of course, Aristotle and Lamarque—generally harbor an appreciation for literature, which contributes to a generous treatment of the subject-matter.

Nevertheless, beginning uncritically with the question, "[W]hat is literature?"[120], engenders a persistent blind spot in the philosophy *of* literature; it overlooks the question of method. Both Aristotle and Lamarque's projects include descriptions of their methods, but scant justifications. Consider: in the *Poetics*, why does the "natural order" entail beginning with "primary facts"? What count as "facts", much less *primary* ones? Or, by what criterion will Aristotle "number" the "constituent parts of a poem"? There are, of course, reasons, but it remains an open question whether they are sufficient to the project. And whether or not there are adequate justifications for Aristotle's methodological choices and presumptions, these justifications are not provided.[121]

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[119] The first line of the Preface to *The Philosophy of Literature* reads, "What exactly is it to view literature as *art*?"(vii). Chapter One begins, "This is a book about literature written by a philosopher from a philosophical point of view."(1) Setting the tone, really, for the entire text, Lamarque presumes even more than I am criticizing him for. For not only is literature not-philosophy, it is "art", which is *obviously* not philosophy.

[120] Lamarque

[121] In some ways, this is a caricature of Aristotle. If we consider Aristotle's entire corpus, we find some justifications of his method in the *Poetics* in other places. The *Rhetoric*, for example, Aristotle weighs some of the stylistic considerations demanded of persuasion. Persuasiveness, arguably, is a consideration of every text, philosophical or otherwise. The *Rhetoric*, then, becomes interestingly reflexive, serving as both explication and example. In the spirit of the rhetoric, Aristotle's tone in many of his works is rather conversational, proceeding as if in dialogue with an anonymous public who must be persuaded; he begins with public opinions and only aspires to a level of precision appropriate to the topic.

Similarly, in *The Philosophy of Literature,* Lamarque explains his preference for a "philosophical" method, as opposed to the methods of literary critics or artists:

> The philosophical investigation of literature is a probing into practices and procedures but it does not offer a history of those practices or a sociological analysis of them. It looks at the underlying conventions and assumptions that give the practices what distinctive identity they have and seeks to find a coherent perspective that makes sense of them.[122]

The questions remains: Why is this method "philosophical"? Even if this method *is* "philosophical", will it be an adequate lens through which to focus the answer to the question "what is literature?" Is the exclusion of history and sociology a sufficiently trivial choice for a "philosophical" project? Some might argue that the best way to "make sense" of a practice is to engage in it. In order to understand painters, one must paint; in order to understand novelists, one must try to write a novel.

By contrast, Martha Nussbaum opens her philosophical analysis of literature, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, with an entirely different question: "How should one write, what words should one select, what forms and structures and organization, if one is pursuing understanding? (Which is to say, if one is, in that sense, a philosopher?) Sometimes this is taken to be a trivial and uninteresting question. I shall claim that it is not."[123] We will return to Nussbaum's contributions in the next section—"3.1.2. Philosophy *and* Literature"—but briefly, Nussbaum's choice of connecting word—*and*—reflects a different methodological approach to, and a different assessment of the status and contributions of, literature vis-à-vis philosophy. In other words, though we may characterize Nussbaum's method also as 'analytic', the opening question of *Love's Knowledge* indicates that her choice of method is part of the argument; the philosophy *of* literature takes for granted—or even ignores—the

[122][122] Lamarque, vii
[123] Nussbaum, 3

contribution of style and method to the argument of the text. Consequently, the arguments entailed by the methodological choice of philosophy *of* literature—explicitly made or otherwise—occupy a blind spot in the philosophy *of* literature. This section aspires to register that blind spot, and criticize that choice.

Philosophical inquiry does not always need to begin with the question of method. If the method and the object are in fact distinct; or if we may take for granted that the "object" *is* an object; or if for the sake of a given inquiry, we agree, provisionally, to *take* the "object" *as* an object—it is frequently useful to simplify an object in order to examine it—then the question of method may be trivial. For example, the philosophy of mind and the philosophy of mathematics presume a distinction between the philosophical method and the object of inquiry without significant consequence. We may take for granted that the "mind" is a "thing"—whether or not it is real—and that "mathematics" is a discrete enough tool that the nature of either need not necessary bear upon our method of inquiry.

Other areas of philosophy, however, do not lend themselves to such uncritical assumptions. For example, epistemology and the philosophy of science each consist of questions regarding the criteria of truth and falsity. What faculties of persons are important for assessing truthfulness? What methods are best for acquiring and communicating knowledge? If philosophy aspires to make claims—presumably *true* ones—about science or knowledge, then Nussbaum's question will be of utmost importance. Reflexively, the nature of the objects of inquiry will bear upon the nature of the method of inquiry. A similar reflexivity inheres in the question, "What is literature?" If philosophy is a form of literature—and we will consider reasons to believe that it is—or the converse, literature is a form of philosophy, the nature of literature will bear upon the nature of philosophy.

Beginning with the question "What is literature" rather than the question, "How should we inquire about literature," prefigures the answer to the primary question. "Philosophy" *begins* as an abstract enterprise, and literature *begins* as *not*-philosophy, specifically, as purely aesthetic object, which manifests as either art or rhetoric.

For both the philosophy *of* and *in*, literature becomes philosophically relevant only insofar as aspects of literature are of explicit philosophical concern. Literature serves as an example of persuasive techniques, or of the uses of language, or of loci of pleasure, or of "beauty"; in each case, literature remains an object in front of the philosophical gaze, rather than a method of inquiry itself. Thus, literature does not independently contribute to the project of philosophy, as philosophy.

In the remainder of this section, I will examine the two ways that literature *is* in fact aesthetic, and consider whether it remains "philosophical" nonetheless.

First literature is aesthetic because it is art. Art in general, and literature is grounded essentially in experience, which means that it is limited in three important ways. It is situated *here*, *now*, and it is produced and engaged from a particular *perspective*. That *perspective* of the audience of art is housed within a body, which further limits art. Each body responds in ways that are unique in some sense. When considering the body, the presumption is that art is reducible to our experiences of the work, literally the sensations the work incites. We could characterize these sensations crudely in terms of pleasure or pain, as opposed to thoughts and ideas.

By way of an illustration, consider the popular claim that literature is merely an escape. In literature, we are relieved of the burden of philosophy, which includes the activity of critical

thinking. Stories function as retreats into alternate realities, places of amusement or titillation, safely removed from the difficulties of our own lives. Or if the stories are disturbing, they remind us of our relative comfort and privilege; hardship exists in *that* world, we say with relief. Summer blockbuster movies, for example—with their thin plots with happy endings, predictable archetypal—stereotypical?—characters, and industry worn tropes of violence and nudity—promise little more than 180 minutes of air-conditioned repose.[124] Consider also the "philosophical" attitude of the reader of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*, Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight*, or for the decidedly adult reader, the multi-faceted, character-strewn, violent and sexually charged network of *Game of Thrones*. The lay reader of these popular narratives does not believe that these will change her life or cultivate her virtues. This reader presumably reads to have her life choices, tastes, and aspirations reflected and validated.

But can art and literature merely entertain? First of all, "mere entertainment" is a more challenging aspiration than the proponents of this view are willing to concede. Any standup comedian knows this difficulty, where the challenging goal is *merely* to entertain, i.e. to make the audience laugh by any means possible. Laughter, perhaps the most telling symptom of having been entertained, is one of the most characteristically human of behaviors, as symptomatic of humanity as language and reason. To make someone laugh, deliberately, requires unusual insight concerning human nature; in other words, one must have a robust philosophical anthropology. Thus, whereas proponents of this view may contend that we watch comedy in order to be amused, i.e. to laugh and relax, we are also, unwittingly or not, engaging in a philosophical exercise; the comedian facilitates an experience of self-reflection.

[124] Films, plays, television dramas, and other narrative forms, I include under the penumbra of "literature".

In *Stranger in a Strange Land,* Robert A. Heinlein's protagonist Valentine Michael Smith stumbles upon the insight that laughter is a function of tragedy. We laugh because of our human capacity to suffer and not die, to bear tragedies without perishing from the heartbreak, to *live* on the brink of despair. Laughter is the release, the cathartic moment of understanding tragedy, and in that sense, of overcoming it. Thus, the funnier the comedian, i.e. the harder we laugh, the more reflective the surface she holds before us, and the more clearly we perceive the tragedy of the existential condition wherein we find ourselves.

Second, who is this "lay reader"? Ultimately, the phenomenon of the lay reader is a fiction. An acquaintance, a pathologist, says to me that he doesn't have the emotional energy to read philosophy. He reads *only* to escape. After spending all day dissecting extracted masses of human flesh and bestowing terminal diagnoses upon the patients from whom they were extracted, he can only go to a place where nothing is at stake. The unreflective reader, however, wants to be informed or titillated, but not challenged, as if being informed or titillated did not always entail the danger of being challenged. The *lay reader* is a caricature of the "normal" person produced by this model of art and literature as non-philosophical. The lay reader consumes literature for pleasure.

We insist that the expert adds something that is not in the text. The philosopher imbues literature with content, but the content is laid on top of the text. We expect the expert—i.e. the "philosopher," and the "critic"—to be capable of reading *something* into almost anything, refracting the world through the prism of her scholarship and training. This "expert" perspective entails an extra effort to layer meaning upon an otherwise neutral, aesthetic phenomenon. Since the lay reader, by contrast, does not make this effort, she engages literature as it is naturally. She

is the passive recipient of an aesthetic experience. The lay reader engages literature as it is in truth, dis-interested, and unadulterated by "bright ideas."[125]

The integrity of the idea of the lay reader requires overlooking the choices *are* make. At the very least, she chooses *how* to be entertained. On a sunny day, we choose between an afternoon in Central Park's "Sheep's Meadow" and the IMAX 3D showing of *The Hobbit;* we choose either to spend the evening reading some of Chimamanda Adiche's new novel, *Americanah*, or to absorb four more episodes of *True Blood.* We weigh spending time with friends face to face against relating to them via the asychronicity of SMS[126], social media, or email. Now more than ever, regardless of the community within which we live, we are able to "read" only for "pleasure", which is to say, selectively, excluding those voices that do not *please* us.[127]

The lay reader, however, is only naively unreflective, believing falsely that a choice made by our "body", as opposed to our "mind", does not count as "reflection." Moreover, the idea of an "escape" is itself value laden. An "escape" implies both differentiation and evaluation; it entails movement *to* a "there" of solace, *from* a stressful "here". The fact that the "there" is ostensibly fictional does not matter; it is nonetheless in relation to the real place of the reader.[128]

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[125] Hegel warns in the *Phenomenology*, "we do not need to import criteria, or to make use of our own bright ideas and thoughts during the course of the inquiry; it is precisely when we leave these aside that we succeed in contemplating the matter in hand as it is *in and for itself*."(¶84)

[126] Short Message Service is the standard communication protocol of most text messages.

[127] Frank Bruni writes in his *New York Times* op-ed, "Traveling Without Seeing," striking a chord I believe, that in this day and age we have an "unprecedented ability to tote around and dwell in a snugly tailored reality of our own creation, a monochromatic gallery of our own curation…. In theory the internet, along with its kindred advances, should expand our horizons, speeding us to aesthetic and intellectual territories we haven't charted before. Often it does. // But at our instigation and with our assent, it also herds us into tribes of common thought and shared temperament, amplifying the timeless human tropism toward cliques."

[128] Christopher Nolan's 2010 movie *Inception* explores the age-old question of the blurry line between dream space and "reality". With the aid of technology, vivid, shared dream spaces are easily accessible. This new dream space is free of the hardships of the world, yet without sacrificing the community of the world. Furthermore, the affordances of dream time, equivalent to about 10 times "real" time, and exponentially long at each layer of dream (dreams within dreams), one could conceivably live multiple lifetimes complete with all of the vicissitudes of life—children,

The structure of literary art facilitates this personal evaluation. The choice to escape to one place rather than another is not only a choice for a particular indulgence, but an endorsement or criticism of a certain picture of the world, which is itself a philosophical attitude.

Even the moderately reflective reader might recognize the philosophical perspective entailed in even the most escapist of texts. We might ask: What does inhabiting this fictional world ask me to believe or take for granted? With what metaphysical, ethico-political, and epistemological conditions does this world stitch together its fabric of reality? What is the reader expected to already know and contribute? Some escapes, when scrutinized will reveal insightful, though frequently controversial, positions.

Harry Potter, for example, erects a world where good and evil are stark and distinct, and occur on a grand scale. Rowlings' choice to convey the antithesis of good as a positive construction in the character of Voldomort, as opposed to simply an absence, is an allusion to the Christian ontology where God and the Devil characterize the range of possible ethical comportments. A series where evil is an absence—as opposed to a negative presence—would frame Harry's maturation in the style of a Bildungsroman. In spite of the fact that the six books span Harry's adolescence, he is the same person in book six as he was in book one; though angrier and more despairing, it is not evident that any of the characters mature. The series, as it was written, is Harry's journey to understand the person that he *is*, through the unveiling of his past; it is a story of Harry's *education*. In this kind of story, the antagonist is an anti-hero, functioning as an opponent, an obstacle in the hero's acquisition of *knowledge*. Alternately, as a Bildungsroman, the series would have chronicled Harry's journey to *become* his mature self, a person as whom he does not begin the story; the series would have been the story of Harry's

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lovers, wars, power, death, etc—within the space of a night. One could live lifetimes every night (and day). For many, as one of the characters notes, the ostensibly "un-real" dream space becomes more "real" than "reality".

edification. In this kind of story, the villains are foils rather than fully formed anti-heroes; and the true antagonist is the naïve protagonist, who stands in the way of the acquisition of good *judgment*.

Escapes as seemingly innocuous and entertaining as animated Disney tales acculturate children to patriarchal—sexist?—moors.[129] Consider also Bella and Edward's relationship in Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight,* which follows—albeit in an alternate idiom—the struggles and vicissitudes of a young woman committed to a fundamentalist Christian ethic. Her greatest challenge is to negotiate the dangers of unchecked desire and sexual intimacy. In this world, one of the leading presumptions is that our physical desires must be distrusted and suppressed. In spite of Bella and Edward's attraction, sexual contact in particular is dangerous. Marriage eventually grants them the license to risk the dangers, but when they are intimate on their wedding night, the effects on Bella's body are compared to a battered woman. When the resultant pregnancy threatens Bella's life, *nature* precludes terminating the pregnancy; in an act of self-preservation, the half-vampire fetus transforms Bella's uterus into an impenetrable chamber for the remainder of his gestation. Bella's resultant "death" from the ill-fated birth, requiring Edward to turn her into a vampire, ensures her isolation from her family; yet, having "endured" secures her marriage to Edward.

We might contrast the place of desire in *Twilight* with the expression of desire in accounts of vampires by other writers, such as Octavia Butler, Charlaine Harris, or Anne Rice, for all of whom physical intimacy is essential and sustaining, rather than simply a consequence of desires that must be monitored and controlled. In Butler's *Fledgling,* intimacy catalyzes the

[129] Girls are taught, insidiously, that their greatest, perhaps even only, virtue is their physical beauty; and their highest aspiration in life is to be rescued by, and marry, a prince. And boys, learning the complementary lesson, are taught 1) that their value consists in the Aristotelian virtues—most notably, courage and kindness (obscured to entail strength and power), and generosity (which presumes wealth)—and 2) they are entitled to a princess whose primary virtue is her pleasant appearance (and of course, her fertility).

symbiotic dependency that sustains the vampire's familial commune. In Harris' *True Blood*—the television adaptation of *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*—intimacy is a function of the most natural of motives, desire; in Harris' world, not only should one trust one's desires, one should indulge in them. In Anne Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, physical and emotional intimacy is the distinctly human inclination that the undead must continually cultivate if they are to retain the stamina for immortality.

Though the choice to be entertained in one way or another implies a philosophical perspective, there is also an explicitly philosophical significance to pleasure. *Being pleased*, or displeased, is itself a manner of reflecting, inquiring, and evaluating. And conversely, thinking, believing, and evaluating are ways of perceiving, feeling, and enjoying.

There are, of course, some pleasures for which we are hardwired biologically: the satiation of hunger and thirst, and of course, sexual pleasure. These sensations are determined, at least in part, by our neurological configuration; were it not for eyes that respond to light is a particular manner, we could not appreciate color at all, much less find the Fall complement of cerulean and pumpkin-orange beautiful.

Nevertheless, the fact of perceiving is insufficient to determine our *tastes*. Food, drink, and sex never occur purely, which is to say, abstractly. Barring the extreme circumstances of starvation and dehydration, we satisfy these needs/ desires in particular ways; there are particular manners of nourishment and hydration that are displeasing. In other words, it is not *nourishment* that is pleasurable, but *food*, e.g. a toasted, cinnamon-raisin bagel with scallion cream cheese, not hydration per se, but *drink*, e.g. the chilled, salty-sweet water of a young coconut.

We cultivate our tastes. We habituate ourselves to find certain things pleasing. Granted, we cannot cultivate tastes for which we do not have a capacity—the ultraviolet spectrum is literally outside of our scope—nevertheless, as Aristotle notes, habituation makes "all the difference."[130] Though we all have eyes, and thus perceive, we are habituated to *see*. Much of what we allegedly perceive, we do not *see*. Learning to speak a language, for example, is less about vocabulary and more about selectively hearing. What sounds constitute a single polysyllabic word, rather than three distinct words? What variations distinguish distinct words rather than accents or inflections? When speaking a language, we hear the meaning, not simply the sound. Even the "noise" and "silence" are with reference to the network of meaning, delimiting it. In this sense, our bodies construct "concepts" as much as our "mind".

Consider our experiences of color: If we do not artificially bracket color as a phenomenon, or rather as a quality ascribed to phenomena, the variations under the penumbra of the idea of any particular color—red, for instance—opens the door to a nexus of cultural referents: the orangey, reflective stop sign red; the matte, inky, LCD-intensity of Netflix red; the movie-like, faux-blood quality of American Flag red; the brown opacity of actual blood red; the purpling pink red of sun-burnt white skin; the iterations of lipstick red—cherry, scarlet, ruby, wine, vermillion, crimson, maroon—each inflected by the curved, fleshy surface of their application, and the particular complexion of the skin against which they are juxtaposed; or in the words—through the eyes—of Merleau-Ponty, "[…] the tiles of roof tops, the flags of gatekeepers and of the [French] Revolution, certain terrains near Aix or in Madagascar,[…] the dresses of women, robes of professors, bishops, and advocate generals, and also in the field of adornments and that of uniforms."[131] If we are not attuned to the differences, or if we merely

[130] NE 1103b25
[131] Mearleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*, "The chiasm"

glance, we subsume the actual color under the single idea—*Red*—which is itself not singular, but a constellation of experiences, "a fossil drawn up from the depths of imaginary worlds."[132]

There is a scientific story that we can tell about color. White and black, for example, mark the range of possible human experiences of light. White indicates the absolute presence of light, whereas black indicates its absence.[133] Pure black and pure white, however, are not actually perceptible—unlike the primary colors: red, yellow, and blue. Absolute light (white) and absolute darkness (black) are both blinding; the eye needs light *and* shadow in order to see. White is too much light, and black is not enough.[134] Consequently, all of our experiences of "white" or "black" are technically experiences of *off*-whites and *off*-blacks. The "off" refers to the relative presence of darkness or luminesce. A hint of any color may be added to black or white, without "changing" the color. This imbues the black or white with just enough character to be seen.[135] We do not experience the scientific idea of "black" or "white". Rather, we experience any number of culturally specific associations with light and darkness. We see the idea, which is to say we think it with our eyes. Consider a few of the names for white and black—the "whites": ivory, vanilla, cream, milk, Navajo, cloud, eggshell, chalk, dove, acacia, cotton ball, ballet, lily, papier-mâché, ghost, snow, seashell, old lace, linen, champagne, bone;

[132] Mearleau-Ponty, *Visible and Invisible*, "The chiasm"

[133] There is an interesting inversion, however, in the experience of light and darkness, and their depiction in art. White pigment is the absence of "color", whereas black pigment is the presence of all colors. One mixes to produce darker colors; one bleaches, or removes color, to get white.

[134] I'm reminded of a few lines from a poet friend who wrote something to the effect of: "…I don't know whether I'm falling through clouds or drowning in snow, staring into the starless night sky or buried in a drawer of black silk panties…"

[135] For this reason, one could argue that there are more versions of black or white than any other color on the color wheel. Anyone who as tried to paint the walls of a room knows this perplexing difficulty. In principle, there are an infinite number of variations of every color; thus to compare the number of blues with reds is unproductive, like comparing the number of odd and even integers. Unlike white and black, other colors cannot vary *as* infinitely. One cannot add complementary colors to each other if either is to remain the "same" color; adding red to green, for instance, becomes neither red nor green very quickly. But one can add any color to black or white (except perhaps black or white, which makes gray) without "changing" the color.

the "blacks": charcoal, ebony, licorice, onyx, jet, taupe, outer space, café noir, black bean, black olive, black leather, phthalo green, Charleston green, midnight blue.

Literature is aesthetic because it is rhetoric. As rhetoric, literature is rendered a tool of persuasion. The presumption is that literature is precluded from the philosophical because there is a meaningful distinction between the form and content of the text, between the medium and the message, between how one speaks and what one says. Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion."[136] Rhetoric is not a subject itself, in the sense of a discipline or area of knowledge, but a technique that is relevant to all subjects. Aristotle says, "in its technical character, [rhetoric] is not concerned with any special or definite class of subjects."[137] We say that one is persuaded *of* something *by* certain rhetorical means. Literature reduced to rhetoric suggests that ideas are presented *in* or *by means of* literature. We say that literature makes a difficult idea "accessible"; it adorns the idea in literary garb, disguising it, like food seasoned beyond recognition, or like a colorful fly on a sharp hook. Or we might say that literature "translates" the idea into the context and idiom of a particular reader.

The possible means of persuasion, according to Aristotle, are *ethos*—i.e. "the speaker's personal character"—*pathos*—i.e. the ways in which a speech stirs the hearer's emotions—and *logos*—i.e. the words themselves, the naked truth. Since the purpose of rhetoric is to persuade the reader to believe an idea—i.e. of the truth of the words themselves—the idea is characterized by logos, independent of the contingencies of a given speaker or hearer.

[136] *Rhetoric* 1355b26
[137] Rhetoric, 1355b33

For the "expert" reader, the unadorned idea should be sufficient to properly orient one towards knowledge, truth, and goodness. Strictly speaking, we would not call the orienting of the expert toward the truth of an idea "persuasion"; this is simply the dynamic of instruction or education, consisting of presentation and understanding. The lay reader, however, for various reasons may not be able see or understand an idea, and consequently may not believe the idea, i.e. come to accept it as true. As Aristotle says, "there are some people whom one cannot instruct."[138]

Framed in this way, rhetoric turns out to be a subtle form of coercion. The lay reader must be led, manipulated, and cajoled, by means other than the "truth", since the ideas alone are insufficient. These alternate means include pathos, i.e. manipulating the reader's emotions, and ethos, i.e. encouraging the reader to trust the speaker regardless of what the speaker might say. The emotions, according to Aristotle, are "those feelings that so change men [sic] as to affect their judgments, and are attended by pain or pleasure."[139] The emotion of "anger," for example, is the feeling of the desire for revenge for a past slight; a slight is the unjust pain caused by an equal. Similarly, the emotion of "fear" is the feeling of apprehension associated with anticipated pain. And the trustworthy speaker, according to Aristotle, is one who can persuade the reader that she has "good sense, good moral character, and goodwill."[140] In other words, the trustworthy speaker reasons well, has the "correct" inclinations, and cares about the well-being of audience.

Ethos and pathos are both aesthetic features of rhetoric. Whether or not—and how—ethos and pathos persuade depend on the contingencies of the speaker and the listener. Logos, by contrast, depends only on the words of the argument. Thus, ethos and pathos characterize the contributions of the literary form, whereas logos characterizes the contributions of philosophy.

[138] Rhetoric 1355a26
[139] Rhetoric 1378a20
[140] Rhetoric 1378a9

The "accessible" text circumvents or supplements the appeal of the idea by stirring the reader's emotions through dramatic portrayals, and/or relaxing the reader's skepticism by associating the idea with appealing—or appalling, depending on whether one is arguing for or against an idea—characters. The most effective text will include a protagonist or supporting character with whom the reader easily or eagerly identifies.

Aristotle's account of rhetoric, and the analogous idea of accessible literature, mischaracterizes literature and the presentation of ideas. The choice to employ one method of persuasion or another is not simply a question of which words and means should one use to persuasively communicate a given idea. The eloquent speaker does not simply layer a large vocabulary and a fluent poetic sense on a neutral idea. This model of the eloquent speaker presumes a false distinction between the idea and its manner of expression. All ideas, insofar as they are understood, are already expressed, necessarily, in certain terms; moreover, their manner of expression constitutes them. Rather than dressing up or disguising an unappealing idea, the eloquent speaker actually creates the idea with her phraseology; if the phrase is a novel formulation of an "old" idea, then she changes the idea itself. Properly speaking, the new phrase is not a re-formulation of the old idea; it is *another* idea, which supplants the old one. The new idea supplants, not by a process of evolution or re-dressing, but by occupying the same space as the old one in a network of words and meanings.

For example, the phrases "pro-choice" and "pro-life" are two distinct ideas. They are not simply two expressions referring to the same neutral phenomenon. Each frames the medical procedure that terminates pregnancy, not only in a moral context, but also in a particular metaphysical context. Each makes a claim regarding how one should *feel* about the procedure—

feelings associated with whether it is right or wrong—and a claim about the nature of the procedure itself—the *being* of the medical procedure that terminates pregnancy.

As the phrases suggest, on the one hand, the procedure, as a phenomenon, is a function of *choices*, whereas on the other hand it is a function of *life*. Things that are chosen are of a different category than are things like life. Things chosen are elective, contingent, and refer to our personal tastes and judgments. We choose ice-cream flavors; we choose for whom to vote; we choose our friends; we choose right ethical behavior. By contrast, we do not choose life; we do not choose our family, in the strict biological sense; we do not choose to breathe. Things of this second sort are necessary; they are conditions of nature. Conditions of nature are either understood or respected. On the one hand, choice implies that neither outcome is necessary—otherwise it would not be a choice—hence the *right* to terminate a pregnancy; on the other hand, life is not chosen. In both cases, the alternate ontological framing of abortion appears as a category mistake, confusing a necessary with a contingent and vice versa.

Framed in this way, it is no surprise that the religious community would tend to be more pro-life, where life is not chosen by humans, but rather bestowed upon the world by a deity. And similarly, it is no surprise that the religiously agnostic community would tend to be more pro-choice, believing that the willing, choosing agent/citizen characterizes the units of the human community. In a way, the impasse in this debate follows from this metaphysical difference; the two camps are not even discussing the same thing. They meet coincidentally when these ideas must inform legislation.[141]

[141] Similarly, consider the metaphysical differences between the following pairs of ideas: freedom fighter/ terrorist; global warming/ climate change; death penalty/ capital punishment; drugs/ pharmaceuticals; immigrant/ refugee/ expatriate—the differences between these pairs is not "rhetorical" in the reductive sense. Each difference hinges upon a conceptual framing that precludes the alternative.

Returning to literature, literature *is* aesthetic; it is, indeed, rhetoric and art. Such a charge, however, does not distinguish it from "philosophy". Accounts of vampires, for example, extend beyond varying narratives of a mythological, literary archetype. Each account is a philosophical anthropology; they are arguments for a particular idea of what it means to be human. The vampire is an image of the anti-human, thus any picture of the vampire is an implicit image of the human. For example, in some accounts the vampire is immortal, parasitic on humanity, and deathly allergic to sunlight; this throws into relief the observations and claims that humans do not live forever, our ideal relationships are mutually symbiotic, and we *require* sunlight for our health[142]. These arguments can be criticized, evaluated, and subjected to traditional philosophical criteria of rigor and soundness.

Furthermore, in spite of itself, "philosophy" is *also* aesthetic. Questioning, believing, and being persuaded—activities otherwise associated with the mind—characterize more than mere mental states; they are practices, bodily comportments, and feelings. John Dewey, in *Art as Experience*, makes a similar point, challenging the traditional distinction between the aesthetic and the intellectual:

> Hence *an* experience of thinking has its own esthetic quality. It differs from those experiences that are acknowledged to be esthetic, but only in its materials. The material of the fine arts consists of qualities; that of experience having intellectual conclusion are signs or symbols having no intrinsic quality of their own, but standing for things that may in another experience be qualitatively experienced. The difference is enormous. It is one reason why the strictly intellectual art will never be popular as music is popular. Nevertheless, the experience itself has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement. This artistic structure may be immediately felt. In so far, it is esthetic. What is even more important is that not only is this quality a significant motive in undertaking intellectual inquiry and in keeping it honest, but that no intellectual activity is an integral even (is *an* experience), unless it is rounded out with this

[142] Vitamin D, though not strictly a "vitamin", is an essential compound for the health of humans, the synthesis of which is activated in our bodies by adequate exposure to sunlight.

> quality. Without it, thinking is inconclusive. In short, esthetic cannot be sharply marked of from intellectual experience since the latter must bear an esthetic stamp to be itself complete.[143]

In considering the 'materials of the fine arts,' we find an implicit spectrum of proximity to intellectual experiences, with the 'qualities' of music differing the most from the signs and symbols of thought. Nonetheless, the *experience* of thinking and the *experience* of listening to music are qualitatively similar. Both thinking and listening to music 'possess internal integration and fulfillment through ordered and organized movement.' In other words, insofar as they have an identity, they are particular in a literary sense: they have a time, a place, and a perspective. They have a narrative—a beginning, middle, and end—and a narrator, i.e. the thinker or listener.

In many ways, the language and characterizations of various kinds of intellectual activities are metaphors for bodily comportments. Questioning is a way of facing, literally turning towards and bringing something within one's field of vision. In short, to question is to look at. Similarly, to believe is very much a practical endeavor. From the pragmatist tradition, C. S. Peirce reminds us, "we think each one our beliefs to be true, and, indeed, it is mere tautology to say so."[144] Beliefs are, simply, those ideas that we hold to be true.[145] And truths, William James argues, "have practical consequences."[146] Thus, to believe one thing rather than another consists of being in the world in one manner rather than another. Believing entails acting in a particular way. Believing is the feeling of knowing, and hence, taking for granted a set of presumptions. Believing is the habit of glancing rather than always looking; it is, precisely, *not* to

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[143] Dewey, 39-40
[144] Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief", 100
[145] Also, in "The Fixation of Belief," Peirce states in an illuminating footnote: "For truth is neither more nor less than that character of a proposition which consists in this, that belief in the proposition would, with sufficient experience and reflection, lead to such conduct as would tend to satisfy the desires we would then have. To say that truth means more than this is to say that it has no meaning at all."(100) And in "How to Make our Ideas Clear
[146] James, William. *The Meaning of Truth*, ch.3 "Humanism and Truth"

question. Persuasion, then, consists in changing belief. Thus being persuaded entails hesitancy and doubt, momentarily not acting freely, scrutinizing rather than glancing.[147]

Moreover, just as there is judgment—perhaps even reason—in the pleasure of the literary text, reflection is a corporeal experience. The activity of reasoning abstractly entails, precisely, the *feeling* of ignoring the body, a corporeal bracketing that is with reference to, and mediated by, the body. When reasoning abstractly, we pass through the concrete door of our body—drinking coffee in order to ward of tiredness (and its guileful cousin, laziness), arranging adequate light, securing headphones and recordings of white noise (I prefer thunderstorms and whale sounds) to protect ourselves against distracting ambient noise, preemptively quelling routine bodily concerns like hunger and thirst, anticipating ways to negotiate the temperature ranges of a public study space. Only then may we "think" in this way, a way analogous to "thinking" through the hand and the eye, since sustaining "abstract thought" for extended periods of time requires *physical* stamina—the sustained effort to hold oneself relatively still so as not to become distracted by even the effort to breath. We think abstractly because of our bodies, not in spite of them. We will return to this below.

[147] Having *been* persuaded is, of course, no different than believing. *Being* persuaded, however, involves considering the possibility of doubt.

3.1.2. Philosophy *and* Literature: Moral and Political Supplement

Philosophy *and* literature begins with the question, What is the philosophical value of literature? In many ways, this starting place functions as a corrective to the problems of the "of" and "in". This question concedes that though literature may be inherently aesthetic, it has value *to philosophy.* Whereas, the "of" and "in" delineate the ways in which literature is of philosophical *interest*, the "and" proposes a space where literature attains some parity with philosophy as a lens and a practice; moreover, through literature's contributions in that space, it may improve philosophy. There is, or course, disagreement concerning the nature of literature's value, and thus, also disagreement concerning the manner and importance of philosophy's improvement as a result of literature; but all of the inquirers whose approach falls under the penumbra of "philosophy *and* literature" begin with this question, at least considering the possibility of philosophical value in literature.

Nevertheless, in spite of this relative concession, the "and" still renders a dis-service to both philosophy and literature. Even in the most generous cases, the initial question—What is the philosophical value of literature?—is still *not* the question of method, merely the question value. The question of method—How can/ should we inquire about literature?—is actually a question concerning the nature of philosophy. The question reads, alternately: What *is* philosophy such that we may investigate literature? Or, is philosophy such a practice that we are *able* to investigate literature? If literature *may* be considered philosophy, or vice versa, this question of method is the necessary starting place, since to examine "literature" *is* to examine philosophy,

though under the pretense of examining something else.[148] As indicated above, this pretense creates a structural blind spot; philosophy overlooks the limitations, or at least the difficulty, entailed in the reflexivity of such a project.

The question of value asks: What philosophical projects does literature contribute to? By way of a response we may ask, if literature contributes to philosophical projects, does that make it "philosophy"? If yes, then the question of value is the wrong question, and we are returned to the question of method. If not, however, a follow-up question is warranted: how does literature contribute to philosophy as literature, but not as philosophy? In other words, what is literature such that it functions only quasi-philosophically? Or, other than philosophy itself, what things contribute to philosophical projects, and how?

There are number of ways that these latter questions are answered. To varying degrees and in different ways, Elaine Scarry and Martha Nussbaum champion the two most compelling responses, which I will examine in this section. One, literature provides unique kinds of knowledge; the aesthetic qualities of literature are uniquely suited to the 'articulation' of aesthetic truth. And two, literature provides a space that facilitates the cultivation of virtues. On the one hand, beauty is a heuristic and an analog for truth and justice. And on the other hand, some works of literature effectively supplement the projects of the Aristotelian ethical view. There is, also, a third response, the skeptical stance, which stands against these two responses: literature has *no* "philosophical" value, at least not as literature, since literature does not *reliably* contribute to philosophy in these ways. Even if literature were philosophical in these ways occasionally, it is accidentally philosophical, and not a consequence of its literariness.

[148] As an aside, this question is complicated further by Freud's suggestion that self-analysis in impossible. Along the same lines, the difficulties of circularity that follow from the hermeneutical dimensions of this question gesture towards the grave consequences of overlooking the seriousness of this starting place.

I will argue that each of these responses begins from the wrong place. Even the first two, which are relatively generous to literature, make the same un-interrogated assumption, namely that literature qua literature is not critical.[149] In weighing the philosophical value of a text, the relevant questions are not, "is it true?" or "does it make us better people?" These are not the primarily questions that we ask of "philosophical" texts, and holding literature to this alternate criterion of philosophical value erects an unproductive double standard. For reasons inherent to philosophy, we do not hold speculative projects to strict standards of truth. And it is a fallacy of paternalism to suggest that knowledge per se is value laden.[150]

We must ask, rather, are the claims and arguments *persuasive*? Does the picture of the world compel the reader? Is there an 'unforced force' that *moves* us? The philosophical value of traditional philosophical texts does not hinge upon their truthfulness per se, i.e. the degree to which they accurately correspond to the world. Nor is their value a function of their edifying impact. Consider almost any text in the traditional philosophical canon. We ask of the Kantian *Critiques*, for example, whether the system is internally consistent, whether the subject of inquiry

[149] Against Nussbaum and Scarry, Mary Rawlinson argues in "Liminal Agencies": "[L]iterature, rather than merely supplementing the concept and project of moral philosophy, actually calls it into question. Rather than merely inducing feelings that are effective in turning the mind toward philosophy's ideas of the moral good and justice, literature produces significant conceptual effects that challenge those very ideas. If, as Nussbaum enjoined, we pay attention to the truth of what is really going on, we discover ourselves educated by literature about agency in ways that demand a critique of fraternity as a regulative ideal and rational deliberation as a description of moral experience."(131)

[150] Socrates argues famously in the *Republic* that the wise will be just, because they recognize that just persons are happiest. There is also a contemporary view that is consistent with Socrates': in brief, prejudice is the result of ignorance. The idea that is those who know and have frequent meaningful interactions with people from non-dominant groups are less prejudiced, because they "know" that these people exceed or even contradict prejudicial picture. However, well-intentioned, there are number of problems with this view. First, it is empirically false. The persistence and pervasiveness of sexism is the easiest empirical case. We all have mothers and grandmothers, and many of us have sisters, aunts, daughters, and women as romantic partners; and in spite of meaningful interactions with these women, sexism persists. Second, linking knowledge to goodness too tightly absolves the wrongdoer of responsibility. The presumption is that one would only do wrong out of ignorance. While we are praised for our virtues, we cannot be blamed for our vices, since, born of ignorance, we did not *choose* to do them, strictly speaking. Under this model, we cannot make sense of evil, i.e. the unfortunately common case of knowingly doing something wrong. Moreover, this idea presumes that actions are always either right or wrong, and the ethical labor consists primarily discovering the difference.

is engaged with the appropriate degree and kind of precision, and whether the *model* of the world that the text presents is compelling.

Philosophical texts do not merely describe the world; their philosophical value consists in the degree to which they make claims about how readers should see the world. The philosopher—and it is no secret at this juncture that I include the artist in this category—offers us a lens and a budget of ideas with which we might understand ourselves as beings in the world. As readers, we try on a particular philosophical garb, inhabit it for a few turns of the page; and if it fits us we may continue to wear it in our lives.[151] If we recognize the ways in which literature is critical in these ways as well, then we will need to concede that literature is engaging in philosophical inquiry *as* literature—i.e. making judgments, predictions, suggestions, *pertinent* observations, compelling us to see differently—and whether or not literature also functions in quasi-philosophical ways will become a secondary question.

Let us examine the three responses more closely.

First, literature is quasi-philosophical insofar as it provides a unique contribution to the philosophical concerns of epistemology. It enables access to certain kinds of knowledge that would otherwise be un-sharable and thus unknowable to anyone other than the self. Specifically, literature can present knowledge that is aesthetic, i.e. knowledge of experiences and phenomena for which reference to our bodies is necessary, or the thing being described is grounded essentially in something singular—an *I*, a *here*, or a *now*.

Such knowledge includes 1) sensations, which are almost unintelligible if one has not (yet) 'been there'; consider, for example, the smell of baking bread, the taste of a tree-ripened

[151] Like a blazer: Does the sleeve length and width match my arm? Where does the cuff end? Are the vents—if there are vents—pulled or do they fall? Do my shoulders fill to the seam? How readily does the lapel break?

mango, the dizziness of drunkenness (and the particular pain of a hangover), the nauseating (or exhilarating) G-forces of a rollercoaster. 2) Knowledge of various kinds of embodied experience is aesthetic, since it seems to be inaccessible to others, categorically; consider quadra-/bipedality[152], right/left-handedness, male/female bodily experience[153], able-bodied-ness, toddler/adult embodiment[154], (non)human embodiment[155]. 3) Naïveté is a function of aesthetic knowledge, or lack thereof. Naiveté is the condition of ignorance that is only recognized *as* ignorance in hindsight; it consists of *believing* that we understand the standpoint of the experienced *until* we actually have the experience. Consider, for example, certain kinds of relationships and their commonly associated feelings—lover/ beloved; (grand)parent/ (grand)child. 4) Knowledge of our emotions is aesthetic, since they emerge as a consequence of particular situations, and, like sensations, are experienced with our bodies.

Words tend to crudely flatten the specificity and complexity of aesthetic knowledge into the general categories of our vocabulary. By themselves, words like 'mango,' 'female,' 'grandfather,' 'angry,' do not communicate the variations *or* the similarities within the range of experiences that may fall under the penumbra of each word. Yet, where words themselves fail to

[152] Or more radically, winged-embodiment, or the experience of having gills.
[153] Cf. Iris Marion Young's insightful collection of essays, *On Female Bodily Experience: Throwing Like a Girl*, as the title suggests, explores many of the questions of female bodily experience. Also, a lot of the work on trans-gender experiences calls into question the presumed epistemic barrier. Most pervasively, however, populating a narrative work with believable characters frequently entails examining *and* understanding, to a certain degree, the bodily experiences of various kinds of bodies.
[154] Since we were all children at one point, we all understand the characteristic epistemic limitations of children. As a child, we do not yet understand how *small* we are, perhaps not even *that* we are small; rather the child feels *vulnerable* in a large world. By contrast, an "adult" perspective entails an understanding of "both sides", so to speak.
[155] Cf. Nagel, "What It's Like to Be a Bat", where we are asked to speculate about the experience of being a flying mammal that "sees" by echolocation; cf. Octavia Butler, *Lilith's Brood*, where throughout this trilogy, the narrator helps us to experience the world through the bodies of various non-homo-sapiens species. There are even more radically different bodies that are, otherwise, quite mundane; consider tree embodiment, or insect embodiment; or consider the multi-organismal embodied experience of a hive. The differences usually hinge on different perceptual apparatuses—such as seeing in alternate light spectra, hearing different wavelengths, or more radically, perceiving from multiple perspcectives simultaneously, or sensitivity to other communicative mediums and sources of phenomena. Also, most obviously, the differences usually hinge on different bodily capabilities; the spectrum of superhero narratives explores this line of speculation.

articulate the truths about various aspects of our experience, failing to faithfully represent the phenomena, "like drawings with a hard outline and no perspective,"[156] in a painterly manner literature manages to *show* us *through* words. As Henry James observes in his preface to *The Golden Bowl*, the literary artist's "immense array of terms, perceptional and expressional, that, after the fashion I have indicated, in sentence, passage and page, simply looked over the heads of the standing terms—or perhaps rather, like alert winged creatures, perched on those diminished summits and aspired to a clearer air."[157] And as Proust's Marcel realizes during his childhood at Combray, submerged in the time and space of a book, "The novelist's happy discovery was to think of substituting for those opaque sections, impenetrable to the human soul, their equivalent in immaterial sections, things, that is, which one's soul can assimilate."[158] Between the words that would otherwise be too general, literature facilitates an experience in the text, something the reader can feel and thus 'assimilate', that approximates a "real" experience from outside the text.

Nevertheless, as powerful and as moving as some literary accounts can be, the natural question that follows is also a question upon which literature frequently stumbles in its quest for philosophical relevance: is literature *true*? Do these nuggets of aesthetic knowledge serve as information, corresponding reliably to something in the world? Does reading literature actually supplement our experiences of the world? Or does the activity merely provide us with experiences of literature?

Unfortunately, the answers to these questions do not support the claim that literature has philosophical value. Literature is not empirical like science or history; it is, after all, fiction. Even the most beautifully written text, ostensibly full of aesthetic insights, may be misread or remain altogether unintelligible due to a given reader's inability to *see* those 'immaterial

[156] Proust, vol.6 303
[157] James, *The Art of the Novel*, 339; via Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge*, 4.
[158] Proust, vol.1, 117

sections' attributed to the text's literariness, those 'alert winged creatures' perched amidst the words. In his challenge to Nussbaum, "Against Ethical Criticism," Richard Posner makes precisely this point:

> It does not follow that because some people use literature as a source of insight into human nature and social interactions, other people, for example judges who are not already lovers of literature, should be encouraged to do so. There is neither evidence nor a theoretical reason for a belief that literature provides a straighter path to knowledge about man and society than other sources of such knowledge, including writings in other fields, such as history and science, and interactions with real people. Some people *prefer* to get their knowledge of human nature from novels, but it doesn't follow that novels are a superior source of such knowledge to life and to the various genres of nonfiction.[159]

Even if literature does provide knowledge, it cannot be argued that it serves as the best, much less the only, source of certain kinds of knowledge. Frequently literature is obviously *not* "true", and unlike science and history, there are no consistent protocols for determining truth or validity. Posner goes on to argue that though literature is valuable as art, its epistemic unreliability does not make it valuable as knowledge. We can reliably infer from these claims, though Posner does not make this inference explicit, that literature, thus, is not valuable as philosophy either.

Literature stumbles on this question concerning its truthfulness because the question makes an assumption that literature does not share. In short, the question, "Is literature true?" is a loaded question; as indicated above, the critics *and the advocates* of a kind truth in art—truth as correspondence with the aesthetic—generally begin from the wrong place. The philosophical value of literature is not its contributions to aesthetic knowledge. Literature is not primarily information that expands the experiences of the reader. Literature is not data from otherwise

[159] Posner, Richard A. "Against Ethical Criticism." *Philosophy and Literature* 21.1 (1997): 1–27. *Project MUSE*. Web. 9 Dec. 2013. pp.8-9

opaque "other minds" and bodies rendered accessible in a downloadable format, serving perhaps as anecdotes to complicate or support generalizations.

Literature may be true in these senses sometimes. Nevertheless, literature is, like philosophy, primarily argument. Literature *and* philosophy aspire to be persuasive, not necessarily true. As E. M. Forster explains in his witty and insightful series of lectures, *Aspects of the Novel*, literary characters, for example, "are real not because they are like ourselves (though they may be like us) but because they are convincing."[160] The beautiful literary text is *believable*, not empirically accurate. Like philosophy, good literature is comprehensive and consistent, not necessarily accurate or true. Forster explains:

> For human intercourse, as soon as we look at it for its own sake and not as a social adjunct, is seen to be haunted by a spectre. We cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only a makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion. But in the novel we can know people perfectly, and, apart from the general pleasure of reading, we can find here a compensation for their dimness in life. In this direction fiction is truer than history, because it goes beyond evidence, and each of us knows fro his own experience that there is something beyond the evidence, and even if the novelist has not got it correctly, well—he has tried....[Characters in novels] are people whose secret lives are visible or might be visible: we are people whose secret lives are invisible.
>
> "And that is why novels, even when they are about wicked people, can solace us; they suggest a more comprehensible and thus a more manageable human race, they give us the illusion of perspicacity and of power.[161]

The story is consistent because the entire world of the narrator coheres. The story is comprehensive because the narrator, in principle, knows everything about the characters and the world of the story, even if some details are actually withheld from the reader. The philosophical text functions in the same way. The good argument is comprehensive because, in principle, the philosopher—qua narrator—has considered all of the consequence of her claims, even if they are

[160] Forster, 62
[161] Forster, 63-4

not all made explicit. And the good argument is consistent because all of the claims cohere within the parameters of the argument. In both philosophy and literature, reporting and cataloguing truths is a secondary consideration. The primary goal is insight, 'perspicacity,' a compelling and edifying picture of the world, or a call to arms—these goals require a perspective that we lack in the 'real world', one that, in a delineated capacity, enabled by the text, pretends to a quasi-omniscience.

In many ways, literature—and philosophy—cannot be true in a manner that would satisfy critics of the 'truth in Art.' As Forster explains of difference between *homo fictus*—who inhabits the world of the novel—and *homo sapiens*—who inhabits the world of the actual reader—"The barrier of art divides them from us."[162] Art in this sense includes philosophy, since the actual barrier is, rather, the *text*.

On the surface, we recognize that most literary texts are explicitly fictional, frequently fantastical, deliberately flouting "reality". There are two kinds of literary writers, Forster observes: "…novelists say 'Here is something that might occur in your lives,' the fantasist says 'Here is something that could not occur…'"[163] Both kinds presume the world of the reader. The novelist manipulates the image of the world; the fantasist discards the image and constructs a new one. Similarly, most philosophical projects explicitly distinguish between descriptive and prescriptive aspects, even though descriptive projects are frequently implicitly prescriptive.[164] The point of contention emerges when we realize that literature is held to a double standard, discounted philosophically for its prescriptive, speculative qualities, which it shares with philosophy.

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[162] Forster, 62
[163] Forster, 108
[164] The necessary endeavor to define basic terms of a philosophical project in ways that are rhetorically useful is a prescriptive philosophical practice that frequently masquerades as a descriptive one.

More concretely, consider what Forster identifies as the five "facts in human life…birth, food, sleep, love, and death."[165] Since we have discussed love above in the illuminating context of Proust, we will note here, with Forster, only that love looms disproportionately large in novels. Love is prominent due to its central place in philosophy. If literature is philosophy, then it is no surprise that love is frequently its principle subject.

Concerning birth and death, in life we know nothing of our own experiences of these moments. In stories, by contrast, the narrator can know many things about both. The famous opening chapter of *David Copperfield,* "I Am Born," persuasively flaunts this epistemic barrier. The opening account is initially plausible because it appears to concede the limited possibilities of knowing about our own births. The narrator speaks in the past tense, and the details are provided as if they were not experienced directly, but recounted second-hand like the way that many of us are told about experiences that we might have been too young to remember.

This 'natural' epistemic distance, however, is short-lived. By the second page we read, "I was present myself, and remember to have felt quite uncomfortable and confused…"[166] "David *remembered*?" the reader might ask. Moreover, he remembered something that could not have been known by others: discomfort and confusion. This comment, though, does not break the spell—like a syllogism employing an elementary logical fallacy in its early premises—since the reader is already immersed in David's richly textured world, a world too textured to be a second-hand account. The claim to have *remembered* the day is not a premise, upon which David's fateful beginning is built. Were comment the initial premise, it might still be plausible enough, but less so, since most of us generally understand the unreliability of memory. The claim to have remembered, rather, is a conclusion: I remember *because* of my fateful beginning, as opposed to

[165] Forster, 47
[166] Dickens, 4

I remember my fateful beginning. If we believe that his beginning was fateful, then it follows that he would remember.

Similarly, in Toni Morrison's *Sula*, when the eponymous character dies, Sula continues to narrate the scene:

> The effort to recall was too great; it loosened a knot in her chest that turned her thought again to the pain.
>
> "While in the state of weary anticipation, she noticed that she was not breathing, that her heart had stopped completely. A crease of fear touched her breast, for any second there was sure to be a violent explosion in her brain, a gasping for breath. Then she realized, or rather she sensed, that there was not going to be any pain. She was not breathing because she didn't have to. Her body did not need oxygen. She was dead.
>
> Sula felt her face smiling. 'Well, I'll be damned,' she thought, 'it didn't even hurt. Wait'll I tell Nel.'[167]

The transition across the threshold of death is seamless. Again, it is not a premise—Sula's characteristically busy mind flutters on, indifferent to the beating of her heart and the burden of her breath. This scene ultimately prepares the reader for the final scenes, the conclusion of one of the larger arguments of the text, where we encounter the compelling and intuitive claim that the dead continue to live among us and through us.

Returning to Forster, another difference between *homo sapiens* and *homo fictus* concerns the needs for sleep and food. Sleep occupies almost a third of our lives, a function of natural cycles of mental and physical exhaustion. By contrast, characters in novels do not become tired. Their repose is part of the story. They sleep, not because they are sleepy, but to mark the end of a day, or to provide an opportunity to dream. Moreover, characters do not dream because they sleep, as we might. Rather, they sleep in order to dream. Dreams may or may not mean anything in life. In stories, however, dreams serve many purposes; among others uses, they enable the narrator to probe a character's subconscious.

[167] Morrison, *Sula*

Similarly, in life, food is a function of hunger, nourishment, and occasional enjoyment. In stories, conversely, characters do not eat as part of the perfunctory march of survival. Like tiredness, hunger is only ever a concern if hunger is the subject of the story or scene. For example, in the short story "An Ex-Mas Feast", Uwem Akpan's illuminating meditation on poverty during childhood, Food—and the need for it—is framed most palpably, not as a knot in the stomach or a corporeal weakening, since those physical discomforts are sometimes indistinguishable from the natural pains of growing; rather, Food is an absent, beloved family member for whom one always waits and fears may never return. When Maisha, the oldest child in the household, finally returns home with food—but with plans to depart again, this time for good—the family members gorge themselves on the "feast":

> She placed [the bags of food] on the ground and tore into them, filling the morning with hope, beckoning all of us on. Baba bit a chicken wing. Mama took a leg. The rest of us dug into the sour rice, mashed potatoes, salad, hamburgers, pizza, spaghetti, and sausages. We drank dead Coke and melted ice-cream all mixed up. With her teeth, Naema opened bottles of Tusker and Castle beer. At first, we feasted in silence, on our knees, looking up frequently, like squirrels, to monitor one another's intake. None of us thought to inflate the balloons or pen the cards that Maisha had brought.
>
> Then the twins fell over on their backs, laughing and vomiting. As soon as they were done, they went straight back to eating, their mouths pink and white and green from ice cream and beer. We could not get them to keep quiet. A taxi pulled up and Maisha came out of the shack, dragging her trunk behind her. Our parents paused as the driver helped her put it into the car. My mother began to cry. Baba shouted at the streets.
>
> I sneaked inside and poured myself some fresh *kabire*[168] and sniffed [...][169]

Characters eat if the *story*, or the *argument*—rather than the body—demands it. We might ask: is this an accurate account of hunger? Would anyone *really* eat to point of throwing up, and then continue without missing a beat? Would anyone drink melted ice cream and Coke? In short: are

[168] *Kabire* is shoe glue, which creates a brief high when sniffed and has the useful side effect—useful for the impoverished—of suppressing hunger.
[169] Akpan, *Say You're One of Them*, 34

these details *true*? These questions are interesting in one sense—if this account is corresponds to the experiences of the impoverished in Nairobi, we have glimpsed the desperation that hunger produces. These questions, however, are only indirectly philosophical. Moreover, they do not highlight the explicitly philosophical aspects of the story as a whole. These questions speculate on a few choice "facts" that constitute the story. As philosophy, we should note that Akpan makes a compelling argument from analogy, comparing the place of family and Food for a child; in short, family is *like* food. When the narrator, Jigana, sniffs the *kabire* following Maisha's departure, suppressing his hunger, it is as if he says, without Maisha he does not want Food since it as if he has been starved.

The novelist, of course, does not *need* to address these five "basic facts in human life" in her story. Many beautiful and believable novels include characters that do not eat or sleep for hundreds of pages that span years of the world of the story. Focusing on these facts in human life serves two purposes. First, the differences between *homo fictus* and *homo sapiens* stand out. When the novelist *does* discuss these facts of human life, the reader has her own life as a point of reference, against which she may intuitively evaluate the novelist's construction and treatment of them. Concerning these subjects, the reader can intuitively assess the argument the writer is making.

Second, Forster has attuned us to the realization that, though there is very little that is true in the world of the narrator, i.e. in the sense of empirical correspondence, this 'fictional' content is not a philosophical failing of literature; it is, rather, a function of the text's philosophical qualities. If philosophy, as Deleuze says, is the creation of concepts, then philosophy is as fictional as literature. Though correspondence with the world is not the primary goal of the literary text, the world of the reader—where standards of empirical accuracy *are* applicable—is,

of course, frequently an important consideration in 'telling a good story'. If characters can fly in the world of the literary work, then the believable story will entail an 'argument' that explains the difference between the physical laws in the story and those same properties in the world of the reader. The same consideration is relevant when making a good argument. If the premises of a syllogism are obviously false, then the argument, even if it is valid, will not be persuasive.

Let us consider the second response: Literature is quasi-philosophical because it creates a space that cultivates philosophical virtues. This second manner in which literature is considered quasi-philosophical functions in many ways as an amendment to the shortfalls of the first response. This response concedes that we value art—and literature—because it is beautiful rather than true or good; art does not provide us with knowledge directly, nor does it signal the presence of goodness. Nevertheless, art opens the door to philosophy. First, beauty cultivates "the longing for truth", as Elaine Scarry observes, serving as the "starting place of education."[170] Second, beauty "prepares us for justice"[171], since the phenomenon of beauty shares structural qualities with the political virtues of respect and fairness. And third, given that any form of discourse makes a statement, literature is a necessary supplement for the of project of virtue ethics, since it is the only form of discourse whose statement is consistent with that project.

Beauty cultivates the longing for truth because a judgment of beauty and an assertion of truth are similar kinds of claims. Though the former is subjective, they both bear the force of a universal. The universality of truth claims is evident; if something is *T*rue, it is true for all. Concerning beauty, however, following Kant we intuit that "even though in fact the judgment [of the beautiful] is only aesthetic…the judgment does resemble a logical judgment inasmuch as we

[170] Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 31;
[171] Scarry, 78

may presume it to be valid for everyone."[172] In other words, when we say something is beautiful, we are claiming that, not only do I like the thing or person in question, but everyone should like it also.

The universality of claims to truth or beauty entails the possibility of error. Concerning truth, one could assert a falsehood. Concerning beauty, one could make a judgment of beauty that is *not* valid for everyone; one could confuse the merely agreeable with the beautiful, or one could claim that the value of objective ideas—Truth or Goodness—necessary consists in aesthetic value.[173] In each case, the one who asserts or judges would be wrong about the truth or beauty of the thing or person in question. In each case, there are two ways that we could be in error. We could assert a falsehood as true, or we could mistakenly repudiate a true claim. Similarly, concerning beauty, we could judge something to be beautiful that is not beautiful in any number of ways—the thing or person could be merely agreeable, i.e. only the one who judges likes it, or it could be "ugly", in whatever manner we wish to parse this aesthetic anti-thesis—or we could withhold the attribution of beauty from something that "deserved all along to be so denominated."[174]

Our awareness of our errors vis-à-vis truth or beauty varies in an important way. Identifying errors in assertions of truth is a routine part of education. Only an omniscient being might be expected to be entirely error free with regard to truth. Recognizing errors in judgment

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[172] Kant, CoJ, §6, p.54

[173] This latter "erroneous" claim, that Truth and Goodness are necessarily beautiful is an interesting and complicated position. It presumes that objective ideas exist in the first place, occupying a "space" distinct from the realm of the aesthetic. Along these lines, Kant distinguishes, in the *Critique of Judgment*, the Good from the Beautiful. The former we "like through its mere concept"(§4) whereas the latter has no concept. The former is "connected with an interest"(§4), whereas the latter is the object of a disinterested judgment. Nevertheless, given the arguments of Chapter Two of this project, On the Exemplary and the Beautiful, conflating the Good and the Beautiful would not be an "error" of judgment or reason. Defending this position, however, is not integral to the argument of this section that philosophy and literature are the same. The argument of this section claims that, for the same reasons, neither philosophy nor literature is necessarily "true" or "good".

[174] Scarry, 14

of beauty produces an epistemic crisis. Since the moment of judgment is subjective, we do not expect to ever be in error. Beauty appears to each of us clearly and distinctly; we are each competent judges, because we feel the beauty of the thing in our soul. Consequently, recognizing an error in judgment literally arrests us. With the first kind of error, we may laugh at our naïveté, our undeveloped tastes that have overcredited a simple thing. Yet, the second kind of error does violence to beauty. As Scarry asks, we wonder, "How many other errors lie like broken plates or flowers on the floor of my mind?"[175] Like the question of Descartes' *Meditations,* if I could be wrong with such conviction about something that seemed so 'clear and distinct,' how could I claim to *know* anything?

Beauty always occurs in something particular. Thus, we encounter beauty in our daily lives. As our judgments of a particular beautiful thing or person inevitably fluctuates between "[h]ymn and palinode"[176] we confront a species of truth in our lives under the guise of a question concerning beauty. In effect we ask: is it *true* that this thing or person is *beautiful*? While beauty and truth are not identical, truth is an extricable quality of beauty, since beauty should be *truly* beautiful. Beauty, thus, instigates in each of us the desire to know, making the quest for truth personal.

Beauty prepares us for justice because our comportment toward beauty is like our comportment should be toward fellow members of the moral community. We attribute an inherent value to beauty that is analogous to the inherent value of those who are of moral concern. Concisely summarizing Scarry's points, Mary Rawlinson says,

> [Scarry] cites the 'distributional' character of beauty, thus relying on Plato's analysis of the capacity of beautiful ideas and, ultimately, the moral good. Citing John Rawls' definition of fairness as a 'symmetry of everyone's relation to one another', Scarry defines beauty as a 'contract' between the viewer and the

[175] Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 17
[176] Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just*, 31

> beautiful object in which the 'symmetry' of the beautiful object 'leads us to' the symmetry that defines justice or 'fraternity'.[177]

Ideally, we care for beauty as we might care for a family member or close friend. Thus, those who appreciate beauty understand the value of the community, and aspire to preserve and protect it. Also, beautiful things and spaces serve as concrete symbols of abstract, liberal, political ideals. Symmetry represents equality; harmony represents cooperation; balance represents fairness.

And finally, Nussbaum's position—which is perhaps the most compelling permutation of the second response—is that given that any form of discourse makes a statement, literature is a necessary supplement for the of project of virtue ethics, at least, since it is the only form of discourse whose statement is consistent with that project. In *Love's Knowledge*, Nussbaum explains:

> My first claim insists that any style makes, itself, a statement: that an abstract theoretical style makes, like any other style, a statement about what is important and what is not, about what faculties of the reader are important for knowing and what are not. There may then be certain plausible views about the nature of the relevant portions of human life that cannot be housed within that form without generating a peculiar implicit contradiction. The second claim is, then, that for an interesting family of such views, a literary narrative of a certain sort is the only type of text that can state them fully and fittingly, without contradiction.[178]

Nussbaum's first claim is consonant with the project of this dissertation; the choice to write in one style rather than another is a philosophical concern, since that choice contributes to *what* one says, not only *how* one speaks.

The choice to write a novel, for example, entails "[a] commitments to the ethical significance of uncontrolled events, [b] to the epistemological value of the emotions, [c] to the

[177] Rawlinson, "Liminal Agencies", p. 130
[178] Nussbaum, 7

variety and non-commensurability of the important things."[179] In other words, a) the contingencies of the world, which cannot be systematically accounted for, are relevant considerations for determining goodness. b) Reasoning, judging, and knowing consist of faculties beyond the purely rational part of our soul. Employing the Aristotelian lexicon, the novel presumes that understanding employs *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. And c) there are some important things in each of our lives that are valuable beyond measure. These things are 'beyond measure' not because they are infinitely valuable; rather, they cannot be adequately compared to anything else, thus they are outside of measurement. For example, the value the loves of our lives—children, partners, parents, friends, etc.—is immeasurable. Each is uniquely and irreplaceably valuable *for us*. None of them could be substituted for another who is "similar".

The Aristotelian ethical view of the world shares these commitments. For Aristotle, though virtue is something for which we are each responsible, the contingencies of our life and the effectiveness of our training must be weighed when determining our *happiness*, in the ancient Greek sense. Additionally, in order to be virtuous, it is not enough to simply do the right thing; one must also feel the right way about one's actions, and be the sort of person who is likely to do the right thing in the future. And finally, virtuous action depends essentially on context, the vagaries of a *here*, and *now*, and a perspective; thus, Aristotelian ethical ideals are always particular and singular—exemplary. Consequently, Aristotelian ethical ideals are concrete, but incommensurable.

By contrast, the choice to write in an abstract theoretical style generally entails a) a commitment to the priority of reason over the other faculties of the soul; b) a systematic bracketing of the contingencies, relegating them to the margins of ethical inquiry, namely to

[179] Nussbaum, 26

applied ethics; and b) the installation of an abstract standard of measurement. In other words, reason is sufficient for understanding; character and emotions are useful for rhetoric, but ultimately they muddy the philosophical waters; and ideal are stable and consistent. Deontological and Utilitarian ethical views of the world generally share these commitments.

Nussbaum's second claim follows from a narrow interpretation of the first claim. If the form of discourse makes an implicit statement, then in order to speak consistently, one must employ a form that does not contradict or undermine the explicit content. The form and content could function adversely in two ways. The form could make a statement that, if made explicit, literally contradicts the content.

Consider two examples: an argument written in an abstract theoretical style employs and explicitly appeals to the emotions or refers to the character traits of an interlocutor. Since the form 'states' that reason is sufficient for understanding, appealing to other parts of the soul constitutes a kind of violation of 'reason', namely a logical fallacy. Similarly, consider an argument written in a literary style that explicitly dismisses the role of the emotions or the importance of context. Since the form 'states' that the emotions and the context are important for understanding the argument, criticizing these commitments constitutes a violation, namely a performative contradiction.

The consonance of the form and content of a text carries practical implications. Since every discourse consists of both form and content, the question of how to write is always a concern. Moreover, the form of discourse is an action in which both the writer and the reader engage. On the side of the writer, to be consistent the form should exemplify the content. At the very least, texts written in the appropriate form should supplement and serve as correctives for content articulated in less than ideal forms; hence Nussbaum's claim that James' novels

supplement Aristotle's ethical account. From the side of the reader, the reader cannot help but engage the form, to 'hear' the statement of the form; thus, to read a text is to articulate the form, i.e. to practice the statement of its form. To read certain works of literature is to practice the Aristotelian ethical view of the world. In short, to read certain works of literature is to cultivate the Aristotelian virtues.

The criticisms of this second set of responses generally fall along empirical lines. In a recent installment of the *New York Times* column, *The Stone*, Gregory Currie throws down a gauntlet to literature. Concerning literature's purported claim to philosophical relevance—specifically, its *moral* philosophical relevance—Currie demand evidence. In his words: "If there's no evidence—even indirect evidence—for the civilizing value of literary fiction, we ought not to assume that it does civilize."[180] In the face of troubling anecdotes of well read Nazi's and one literary yet pro-war American president[181], even if there were evidence that might pass scientific scrutiny—and there seem to be misguided attempts in the neuro-scientific community to produce such a thing[182]—skepticism should remain. It is, however, precisely the lack of skepticism among a certain cadre of society that troubles Currie. He says:

> There is a puzzling mismatch between the strength of opinion on this topic and the state of the evidence. In fact I suspect it is worse than that; advocates of the view that literature educates and civilizes don't overrate the evidence — they don't even think that evidence comes into it. While the value of literature ought not to be a matter of faith, it looks as if, for many of us, that is exactly what it is.[183]

[180] Currie, Gregory. "Does Great Literature Make Us Better?" *The New York Times* 1 June 2013. Web. 5 June 2013.
[181] For an examination of the seeming disconnect between Obama's literary tendencies and his willingness to use drone strikes see Cole, Teju. "A Reader's War." *The New Yorker* 11 Feb. 2013.
[182] Paul, Annie Murphy. "The Neuroscience of Your Brain on Fiction." *The New York Times* 17 Mar. 2012.
[183] Currie, op. cit.

The motivating concern of this line of inquiry—giving Currie the benefit of the doubt—seems noble. Too frequently we attribute the moral failings of those with whom we disagree to ignorance. The racist, homophobe, or xenophobe, we say, is not necessarily responsible for his troubling beliefs; he is the victim of a poor education, where "poor" implies an insufficient exposure to diverse perspectives and experiences. If only the pro-lifer understood science! If only the suicide bomber understood economics! In other words, the morally suspect are actually just narrow-minded. If the white supremacist, for example, actually knew a black person, or knew the history of American slavery, then he could not sincerely believe himself to be superior, at least not as a function of his whiteness.

In short, beauty does not cultivate the longing for truth, because an appreciation for art does not correlate with a decreased proclivity to make errors. Nor does it correlate with the desire to make fewer errors. In fact, the converse, unfortunately, seems to be frequently the case; the more 'refined' our tastes, the more self-assured we are, and thus less likely to admit the possibility of making errors. Beauty does not prepare us for justice, because an appreciation for art and an exposure to "great literature" does not correlate with moral excellence. Furthermore, we could add that the symbols of our political institutions are arbitrary. The attempt to draw an analogy between seemingly generalizable qualities of beautiful objects and our modern, American political ideals appears simply *ad hoc*. Our standards of beauty change over time; and the ideal principles of our political institutions also change.[184]

Thus, we might ask of the advocates—and Posner and Nussbaum pose this question to the other—is the belief in the value of literature anything other than the expression of a certain

[184] Scarry's analogy is only *ad hoc* given her framing of the question, and the terms of the debate. In the Chapter Two, I argue that our all of our ideals are beautiful, since they are exemplary, and beauty is an inherent quality of the example. Thus, symmetry is not necessarily beautiful; but we find symmetry beautiful in certain contexts *because* we value equality and balance in those contexts.

cultural affiliation? Do we value literature as such, or merely a particular cannon under the guise of "great literature"? Are the virtues of Dostoevsky and Dickens simply the lip service that grants entry into the influential clique of the Western literati? Or does exposure to these "great" works of literature actually have "cash value"? Could Kafka's *The Trial* turn the mindless bureaucrat into a reflective public official? Could Richard Wright's *Native Son* serve as the banner around which the legacy of American slavery resolves therapeutically into the post-racial? Maybe these are not the exact texts. But if such texts exist, with "so much trouble in the world,"[185] as Bob Marley laments, let us produce the syllabus, and spread it widely. Yet, if such texts do not exist, let us abandon the illusion, not only that literature civilizes, but also that the humanities humanize.

Literature stumbles on this question of its moral and political value for the same reasons that literature stumbles on the question concerning its truthfulness—the question makes an assumption that literature does not share. The question, "does literature make us better people?" is a loaded question. The philosophical value of literature does not consist in its capacity for ethical trueing. We do not hold philosophy to this standard, and, as noted above, excluding literature from the philosophical for failing to meet this alternate criterion erects an unproductive double standard. Does "great moral philosophy" make us better people? Does familiarity with Kant's *Groundwork*, Mill's *Utilitarianism*, or Aristotle's *Ethics* make us more discerning, or compel us to live more ethical lives? As anyone who has attempted to teach moral philosophy knows, the answer is, lamentably, "no."

[185] Bob Marley. "So Much Trouble In the World". *Survival*. Island/Tuff Gong Records, 1979. Audio

Literature *may* edify; it frequently does. Nevertheless, literature is, like philosophy, primarily argument. Literature *and* philosophy aspire to be persuasive, not necessarily edifying.[186] The advocates *and the critics* of the view that literature edifies presume that the statement of form, the literariness of the text, functions 'para-philosophically',[187] articulating its commitments alongside the content. Relegated to this place at the border of inquiry, literature is deprived of any critical potential. In short: though literature might speak, it does not criticize.

Rawlinson challenges Nussbaum and Scarry on precisely this point:

> [L]iterature, rather than merely supplementing the concept and project of moral philosophy, actually calls it into question. Rather than merely inducing feelings that are effective in turning the mind toward philosophy's ideas of the moral good and justice, literature produces significant conceptual effects that challenge those very ideas. If, as Nussbaum enjoined, we pay attention to the truth of what is really going on, we discover ourselves educated by literature about agency in ways that demand a critique of fraternity as a regulative ideal and rational deliberation as a description of moral experience.[188]

Rawlinson goes on to demonstrate persuasively the ways in which mystery and detective fiction make philosophical arguments, contributing productively and incisively to "concepts of agency, judgment, and sociality that more adequately address our genuine experiences of ethical urgency than do those of moral philosophy."[189]

In Rawlinson's explication of the arguments of Chester Himes' novels—Rawlinson's leading literary example—we note that the argument is not reducible simply to the choice to write a detective story. The argument also consists, naturally, in Himes having created characters of a particular sort, and who confront certain kinds of obstacles. Mystery and detective surely enable certain kinds of arguments; built into structure of the genre is the deliberate withholding

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[186] Granted, aspirationally, one persuades in order to edify; nevertheless, they are not synonymous. A sufficiently native interlocutor could be persuaded to hold a less eddying position.
[187] Thanks to Brian Irwin for suggesting this term at this juncture.
[188] Rawlinson, "Liminal Agencies", 131
[189] Rawlinson, op. cit.

of information from the reader. It is as if the genre as a whole asks: what if you do not know (or cannot know) a seemingly crucial piece of the puzzle? How does this lack of knowledge affect judgments? As Nussbaum explains above, the literary form in general enables certain kinds of arguments, ones that admit ambiguity, even contradiction. Nevertheless, the form of discourse does not wholly determine the arguments that will be made, no more than the abstract theoretical style of discourse determines the arguments in philosophy.

These kinds of philosophical contributions from literature are not limited to moral philosophy. Literature as such makes philosophical arguments concerning the full range of philosophical question—epistemology, metaphysics, ontology, and also moral and political philosophy. In both cases, the form and content are integrated to make a complete statement. Disjointed statements, when they are deliberate, we might attribute to irony; when they are accidental, they are simply poorer statements. But attributing an inherent disjointedness to literature, as a function of its literariness, is a disingenuous cordoning off of literature. The relegation of literature to the margins of philosophy as mere supplement, or pejoratively as 'art', impoverishes philosophy, since it silences dissenters and interlocutors.

We find the feints and hints of this bold claim throughout Nussbaum's writings. But there is a curious—and disappointing—deflation that occurs, at least in *Love's Knowledge*, between the promise of her leading questions and the explicit delimitations of her thesis and arguments. In the opening lines we find the compelling assertion that "[l]iterary form is not separable from philosophical content, but is, itself, a part of content—an integral part, then, of the search for and the statement of truth."[190] Elsewhere Nussbaum recounts her early literary and philosophical development, when, like David Copperfield, she poured over novels, "reading as if for life." She

[190] Nussbaum, 3

tells us of her experiences on the road to academia, armed with her literary/philosophical touchstones, and encountering a surprising resistance:

> In graduate school…I encountered, in my effort to pursue this complex philosophical/literary interest, a threefold resistance: from the conceptions of philosophy and moral philosophy then dominant in the Anglo-American tradition; from the dominant conception of what ancient Greek philosophy included and what methods its study out to use; and finally, from the dominant conception of literary study, both within Classics and outside it.[191]

On the philosophical front, at least, Nussbaum notes that the distinction she encountered between philosophy and literature was foreign to the ancient Greeks even, to whom the origins of the distinction is frequently attributed. The 'ancient quarrel', Nussbaum explains, "could be called a quarrel only because it was about a single subject. The subject was human life and how to live it."[192] The poets and philosophers were part of the same community engaging in the same conversation. Their differing styles reflected their differing positions. And elsewhere in Nussbaum's works, the contributions of literary texts feature prominently.

In a text that begins like this, written by a person with Nussbaum's intellectual background and proclivity, we might expect to find a defense of bolder claims, such as, like in ancient Greece, literature and philosophy are synonymous. Nussbaum's theses and arguments, however, are much more conservative. At the crest of her introductory wave, she says:

> Nothing could be further from my intentions that to suggest that we *substitute* the study of novels for the study of the recognized great works of the various philosophical traditions in ethics. Although this may disappoint some who find moderate positions boring, I have no interest in dismissive assaults on systematic ethical theory, or on 'Western rationality,' or even on Kantianism or Utilitarianism, to which the novels, to be sure, display their own opposition.[193]

[191] Nussbaum, 12
[192] Nussbaum, 15
[193] Nussbaum, 27

Against the obvious retort, that any claim negates its contrary, Nussbaum appeals to an Aristotelian inclusiveness and respectfulness of differences. This anti-dogmatism also reflects an appropriately literary inclusiveness, since some literary texts can accommodate some kinds of inconsistencies.

Two final thoughts:

First, our disappointment with Nussbaum's conservativeness is much deeper than 'boredom.' In her efforts not to dismiss any of the traditional philosophical views, she not only impoverishes her own position, she also does a grave disservice to literature. Her preemptive apology to philosophy says, effectively, that though many literary texts are deeply critical of many traditional philosophical ideas, philosophy does not need to take those criticisms seriously. In Nussbaum's response to Posner's article, "Against Ethical Criticism"—where Posner basically make an empirical argument against Nussbaum's suggestion that literature edifies—she says, in short, that her conclusions are not generalizable:

> In neither [*Love's Knowledge* nor *Poetic Justice*] do I make any general claims about "literature" as such; indeed, I explicitly eschew such claims in both works, and I insist that my argument is confined to a narrow group of pre-selected works, all of them novels, and some of which (the novels of James and Proust, for example) are frankly very critical of their predecessors and contemporaries in the genre. I also make it very clear that even in terms of the general line of inquiry I map out, I have chosen to focus rather narrowly on certain questions about how to live, and to leave other equally interesting questions to one side. Thus no claim I make could be refuted by pointing out that novel A or B does not fit my description, since I all along insist only that my claims are applicable to certain writers discussed by me, and others who resemble them in relevant respects.[194]

In effect, not only are the claims of literature *not* generalizable, but Nussbaum's claims about literature are not generalizable either. Philosophy is left in the indefinite middle space of being

[194] Nussbaum, Martha Craven. "Exactly and Responsibly: A Defense of Ethical Criticism." *Philosophy and Literature* 22.2 (1998): 343–365.

asked to listen to literature, to include at least some literature among its ranks, but not to respond to it since its claims do not actually bear on philosophy.

Second, Nussbaum's strictly ethical framing of the starting place of philosophy and literature unjustly narrows the field of literary inquiry. The question, "how one should live," particularly in the ancient Greek context, certainly bears upon the fields of ethics and aesthetics; yet, it also bears upon metaphysics, epistemology, and politics. In Plato's *Republic* the entire range of philosophical questions are engaged, all derived from the prompt, "Is the just (wo)man happy?" In Aristotle's *Ethics*, the opening anthropological arguments are metaphysical concerns; the cultivation of the intellectual virtues—which is necessary in order to be able to determine virtuous actions—is an epistemological concern; and the synonymy of complete virtue and justice is an explicit political concern. In the contemporary context, one of the advantages of philosophical arguments made by literature is that the views do not artificially compartmentalize the branches of philosophy. Though the leading questions may be distinct, literary arguments transition fluidly between them as they implicate each other.

Like many of the questions in this section, the question concerning the place of literature in philosophy is the wrong question. It begins with the faulty assumption that "philosophy", traditionally conceived, is the broader category within which literature may find a place. If literature and philosophy are not synonymous then it is because we conceive of a so-called practice and project of "philosophy" too narrowly. Thus, literature as philosophy exceeds "philosophy" as philosophy. There is a sense in which certain styles of "philosophy", like the other "disciplines," have begun to take their methodology for granted, which is to say, they cease

to ask the question of form.[195] Whereas philosophy is the practice that always questions its methodology—as Nussbaum notes, the question *how* to write is fundamental—there is a sense in which "philosophy" assumes that it knows what activities count as "philosophical". Literature, conversely, with its innate attentiveness to its aesthetic qualities, retains the tools to ask the question of form, i.e. to question the methodology of "philosophy" *and* literature. Thus, "philosophy" becoming more like literature is actually a return to itself.

[195] The academic disciplines are defined by their methodology. For example, science is defined by the scientific method; law by the protocols of courts; economics by practices of trade and industry; history by a hermeneutic relationship with artifacts; agriculture by the care and production of food; cuisine by confluence of chemistry, nourishment, and taste. Before these branches of knowledge became disciplines—i.e. ways of doing things—they were philosophy, i.e. questions about how to do things. Philosophy is the arche-discipline.

3.2. Saying vs. Doing: (Not) Making the Multiple in *A Thousand Plateaus*

This question of the form of discourse[196] presents a methodological dilemma. On the one hand, if we critique the question of form with the form of discourse, we risk begging the question; in order for such a text to function as a critique, we must presume that the form itself is already significant, regardless of the conclusion. Yet, on the other hand, if we critique the question only with the content, we risk precluding the question; in order for such a text to function as critique, we must presume that the form is a secondary consideration, if considered at all, regardless of the conclusion. In order to examine the various elements of this dilemma, I will analyze Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, which is an exemplary attempt to negotiate this question of form. Though Deleuze and Guattari's efforts are ultimately unsuccessful, their failure is instructive for reason that I will discuss below.

As readers of Gilles Deleuze, one of the safest general characterizations of *A Thousand Plateaus* (hereafter: ATP) is that it aspires to be "rhizomatic" as opposed to "arborescent", or rather it aspires to "attain the multiple".[197] Briefly, arborescent structures include narrative, figuration, representation, subjectification, signification, stratification, and organization. Consequently, the rhizomatic thus appears to be relegated to aesthetic structures, i.e. art and rhetoric. To make an argument in these structures is the radical aspiration of ATP—to say something by doing it, and in doing so, to subvert the discursive prejudice that excludes aesthetic structures from the realms of 'meaning' and 'content'.

[196] i.e. the question with which Nussbaum begins *Love's Knowledge.*
[197] ATP 22

In the service of this aspiration, we find in ATP a non-linear structure, clever neologisms, interdisciplinary analytic tools and models, and even joint authorship. This aspiration, however, is not merely for its own sake, i.e. *simply to be* rhizomatic. It is, moreover, a prescription to write philosophy rhizomatically, and an argument that the proper literary structure of philosophical discourse is the rhizome.

Nonetheless, the success of ATP remains in question. I will argue that ATP, on its own terms, is ultimately unsuccessful. The success of ATP depends upon reading it alongside a few of Deleuze's other works, specifically *Difference and Repetition* (hereafter: D&R), *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (hereafter: FB), and *What Is Philosophy?* (hereafter: WIP). This point, however, concerning the relative success of ATP, is neither critical nor novel; the authors themselves concede it. In the introductory chapter, they lament that, "we only know of rare successes in this. We ourselves were unable to do it."[198]

Yet, the failure of ATP is ultimately instructive; it suggests that what is at stake is more than simply the integrity of a concept, e.g. the concepts of the rhizome or the Multiple. Consider, for example: why would Deleuze engage in such a stylistically radical, collaborative project like ATP only to effectively repeat the statement of D&R?[199] I will argue that Deleuze's primary concerns in ATP are with philosophical style and practice, which are ultimately bound up with the purpose of philosophy. ATP emerges out of an awareness—following D&R—of the importance of considering the aesthetic aspects of the philosopher's project and practice. The aspiration conveyed in ATP suggests that style, affectiveness, and beauty are at least as philosophically important as rigor, clarity, and soundness.

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[198] ATP 22

[199] Though the proper defense of this confluence or repetition between ATP and D&R is beyond the scope of this paper, we may briefly consider that the concept of the "Multiple" is an alternate formulation of "difference in itself".

First, I will explicate Deleuze and Guattari's theme of the "rhizome" as contrasted with the "arborescent". Then, I will delineate the ways in which the subject-matter of ATP—viz. the Multiple—presents a unique challenge for its successful execution. Following this, I will evaluate ATP in terms of its stated task. And finally, I will conclude briefly by considering the productive implications of ATP's particular manner of failure.

The Rhizomatic Book:

Deleuze and Guattari tell us that there are two kinds of books, each modeled on kinds of root systems: the arborescent book and the rhizomatic book. Deleuze and Guattari call the arborescent book "the classical book".[200] Following the botanical metaphor, it is like a taproot system, with a single and central organizing structure. The root belongs to one plant. If the root were to die, then the plant would die. Analogously, the book has a single and central object and subject; it has an author and a subject-matter; it is *about something* and pretends—in the intransitive sense—to convey meaning.

The pretension to meaning renders the arborescent book primarily conceptual rather than aesthetic, which is to say that its content takes priority over its form. This priority distinguishes the arborescent book from the work of art. The work of art is characterized, fundamentally, by a medium. Even if the work is representational, its medium conveys an expressiveness or affectivity that, prior to a secondary interpretive gesture, is non-conceptual.

[200] ATP 5

The arboresecent book's 'medium', however, viz. words, presumably comprises the pure form of thought, viz. concepts, and thus imparts pure content without interpretation. Moreover, even if we insist that words are, at least, also material and aesthetic, and thus, like art, are also affective, expressive, and in need of interpretation, the arborescent book presumes an aesthetic hierarchy. In other words, of all the 'arts', words require the least amount of interpretation, as the 'medium' that conveys concepts the most directly.

The other kind of book is the rhizomatic. Again, following the botanical metaphor, the rhizome describes a group of plants connected by a root system. No plant or portion of the root system is central or necessary. Unlike the taproot, if a plant or its root dies, the system of roots and the other plants connected to it will persist. Since this root structure is primarily a means of reproduction, the rhizome is characterized not by the integrity of any one plant, but by the proliferation of many plants.

Analogously, the rhizomatic book does not have a single determinate subject-matter. It is an aggregate or a collection, cohering without a determinate order or a concept that may be 'factorized'. Or rather, if there is an organizing concept, it is proliferation and differentiation. Unlike the arborescent book, there is no pretension to convey any particular meaning. Yet, it is not meaning*less*. Rather, there is a proliferation of meanings, none of which are essential, or reducible to the others.

Insofar as the meanings cohere, they are characterized by a *repetition*, which Deleuze defines as "difference without a concept."[201] In D&R, Deleuze contrasts repetition, with

[201] D&R 23. Ultimately, the qualifier, 'without a concept,' is redundant, or rather misleading, since it nonetheless inscribes repetition within the logic of the concept, i.e. "projecting repetition as a correlative difference, but without a concept and explained negatively or by default."(D&R 288) In other words, repetition is not even 'without a concept'; the concept does not function as a point of reference. We may usefully compare Deleuze's 'difference' with Derrida's remarkably contemporaneous insight in his 1968 address, "Différance", to La société française de

"generality"[202] or "bare repetition".[203] The principles of generality are equivalence and substitution, whereas the principles of repetition are singularity and irreducibility. Generality is characterized by death and stasis, whereas repetition is characterized by the natal and movement. Generality proliferates—or rather instantiates—via law, whereas repetition emerges via miracle.

In one sense, this distinction between the rhizomatic and the arborescent is a false dichotomy. Even the most "arborescent" book is somewhat rhizomatic, and only purely arborescent naïvely; and every rhizomatic book entails arborescent elements. Consider that each arborescent plant has some method of reproduction and proliferation, and each plant in the rhizomatic network can be framed as an arborescent microstructure. Similarly, the arborescent book occasionally inspires a body of rich secondary literature that has a 'life of its own', and the rhizomatic book frequently includes some arborescent conceptual structures.

Nonetheless, the distinction hinges upon two stylistic and dispositional points of discernment. The first point of discernment—alluded to above—concerns the aesthetic status of words, following a presumption regarding the constitution of thought and the nature of understanding. In the arborescent book, thought consists primarily—if not exclusively—of concepts, which are *conveyed* in words; thus understanding is an intellectual endeavor.

Conversely, in the rhizomatic book thought consists of Ideas, which is a broader designation consisting of percepts, affects, functives, prospects, *and* concepts.[204] In WIP, Deleuze and Guattari explain: "What defines thought in its three great forms—art, science, and

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philosophie. Derrida writes, "*différance* is literally neither a word nor concept…it is read, or it is written, but it cannot be heard. It cannot be apprehended in speech".

[202] D&R 1

[203] D&R 24

[204] cf. WIP 24

philosophy—is always confronting chaos".[205] They continue: "With concepts, philosophy brings forth events. Art erects monuments with its sensations [i.e. percepts and affects]. Science constructs states of affairs with its functions [i.e. prospects and functives]."[206] Deleuze and Guattari arguably contend that in spite of the aspiration to produce a work that is primarily philosophy, art, or science, the rhizomatic book is a locale where these three forms of thought converge—i.e. "where sensation becomes sensation of concept or function, where the concept becomes concept of function or of sensation, and where the function becomes function of sensation or concept."[207]

Thus, the rhizomatic book is simultaneously a work of philosophy, art, and science. Thoughts are *evoked* by words; and understanding consists not only in a way of 'thinking,' in the arborescent sense, but also in a way of perceiving, feeling, and doing. In WIP, for example, Deleuze and Guattari note that "painting is thought: vision is through thought, and the eye thinks, even more than it listens."[208] The notion that the eye 'thinks' is not a metaphor. Rather, it indicates the range of thoughtful activity, and thus the range of considerations for the responsible writer.

The discernable difference in a text—following these images of thought—hinges upon whether the aesthetic qualities of the words are meaningful or merely rhetorical. In the arborescent book, beautiful language and structure choices are a function of efficient communication and rhetorical force; whereas in the rhizomatic book, beautiful language and structural choices reflect the nature and constitution of the Ideas. The arborescent book is like a door through which concepts pass and are gleaned; whereas the rhizomatic book is like a room

[205] WIP 197
[206] WIP 199
[207] WIP 199
[208] WIP 195

wherein thoughts inhabit and are experienced. The arborescent book aspires to *say* its point, whereas, the rhizomatic book aspires not only to say, but also to show and evoke its point—to *be* the point.

The second point of discernment is hermeneutic. A book is arborescent insofar as it attempts to prefigure interpretation. In other words, entailed in the constitution of the arborescent book is the implicit claim that it means something particular and singular, precluding the possibility of differentiation. The leading question posed of the arborescent book is, 'What does it mean?' to which there is, presumably, a determinate answer.

Conversely, Deleuze and Guattari say of the rhizomatic book that, "We will never ask what [it] means".[209] 'What it means' is the wrong question because there always remains the possibility that it will mean something else or something additional. Rather, we will ask, "what it functions with"[210], how does it feel, and how does it work. This semantic openness is entailed in the constitution of the rhizomatic book.

The discernable difference hinges on the constitutive role of extra-textual 'content', and the kinds of demands made upon the reader. In the arborescent book, little or no content is un-articulated, in the linguistic sense; if 'content' is absent, then it is not part of the text, except as, perhaps, apocrypha. The task of the reader is to understand the authors intended message. In the rhizomatic book, the text is, in a sense, deliberately incomplete. The reader is called upon to articulate the text, in the mechanical sense, whether this means 'reading between the lines,' taking a particular course of action after reading—such as *rereading*—or acknowledging an affective dimension of the text.

[209] ATP 4
[210] ATP 4

For example, in many of the Platonic dialogues, logical lacunas and un-parsed critical avenues frequently appear to be deliberate omissions; moreover, the conspicuousness of these omissions frequently gestures towards rich insights, and occasionally resolutions to the explicit aporia. Consider the exemplary aporia at the end of one of Plato's rhizomatic[211] dialogues, *Meno*, where Socrates has apparently deduced through valid argumentation that virtue both can *and* cannot be taught. Since Meno accepts all of the arguments' premises, they remain unanalyzed. The dialogue's aporiatic structure, however, functions like a question to the reader, rather than like a datum of knowledge to be downloaded. At the beginning of the dialogue, readers perhaps resemble Meno, wishing to be spoon-fed knowledge. Upon confronting the aporiatic conclusion, readers are compelled to reread the dialogue in the spirit of another character.

The imperative to reread—not due to a poor initial understanding, but due to a developing layered understanding—most distinguishes the rhizomatic text from the arborescent. The arborescent text may require rereading, but the strength of this imperative is a function of the reader's innate talents for gleaning a particular insight; the genius, for example, will need to read the arborescent text only once. Conversely, the rhizomatic takes each reading as a premise for future readings.

Philosophical Style: Making the Multiple

The unique challenge of ATP is its choice of subject, viz. the 'multiple'. As Deleuze and Guattari note, "[I]t is not enough to say, 'Long live the multiple,' difficult as it is to raise that

[211] Obviously Plato did not characterize his dialogues as 'rhizomatic'. Nonetheless, many texts in the Platonic corpus satisfy Deleuze and Guattari's criteria for the rhizome, at least with regard to the place and priority of the reader, and the imperative to reread.

cry. No typographical, lexical, or even syntactical cleverness is enough to make it heard. The multiple *must be made*".[212] In other words, given its choice of subject, ATP must be rhizomatic. This structural imperative is due to the inextricable relationship between the Multiple and the New or the Novel.

Consider, first, that teaching a new idea requires a demonstration. For example, in order to teach the concept of 'three-ness' neither the character "3" nor the word 'three' will suffice. One will need to present three objects. Ideally the objects will be identical, since ultimately the teacher must teach the concept upon which 'three-ness' is based, viz. Number. The concept of Number consists of the unifying principles of the One, viz. a common beginning—'0'—and interval—'1'; the concept of Number warrants taking many objects collectively as *one* group of *x*. If the objects are not identical, the concept of 'three-ness' may be associated with another aspect of the demonstration, such as the size or color of the objects. Nonetheless, if the intention is to teach/learn, rather than merely to reference or repeat, then the point must be evoked or experienced rather than simply said, which is to say that its meaningful components must include some aesthetic qualities.

Over time, the demonstration of some ideas ceases to be necessary. We could call this moment, the moment of conceptualization; that which was once grounded in an experience relinquishes its "spatiotemporal coordinates".[213] We may be inclined to say that at the moment when this occurs, the idea has been learned or understood; the novelty of the idea has been overcome, and the principle of its proliferation, or the rule/formula of its instantiation, has been grasped. Number, for example, becomes a concept when we can relate and compare any two numbers, and three-ness can be identified or instantiated anytime and anywhere.

[212] ATP 6; emphasis in original.
[213] WIP 21

Some ideas, however, those that are necessarily spatiotemporal, always require demonstration. Sensations—affects and percepts—for example, are inherently mediated by the physical body, which exists in space and time. Consider the smell of coffee, the sound of John Coltrane's saxophone, or the strangeness of physical pain. Emily Dickenson writes:

"Pain has an element of blank; / It cannot recollect / When it began, or if there were / A day when it was not. // It has no future but itself, / Its infinite realms contain / Its past, enlightened to perceive / New periods of pain."[214]

All sensations have an 'element of blank'; they are ideas, recognizable and distinct, yet they are not concepts that may be manipulated or articulated abstractly. One does not remember the taste of the vegetable rapini, for example, in the same way that we remember our multiplication tables. We remember, rather, what we were thinking while experiencing the sensation. This 'element of blank' becomes evident when we try to communicate the idea to someone who has not shared the sensation. Knowledge of these ideas consists in comparing current and future *experiences* of them—mediated by the body—with past ones.

Some ideas are inherently practical, i.e. defined by the purposes for which they are used. Consider baking recipes, driving directions, or ethical 'rules' of right action. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle makes a useful analogy between the virtuous person and the Olympic athlete. He says:

"Just as, with those at the Olympic games, it is not the most beautiful or the strongest who are crowned, but those who compete (for it is some of these who are victors), so too among those who in life are well favored and well mannered [καλῶν κἀγαθῶν: kalos kai agathos] it is the ones who act rightly who become accomplished people."[215]

[214] Poem #650
[215] NE 1099a5ff

In spite of their abstract expression, i.e. their conceptual appearance, each of these practical ideas describes a process by which something is done in space and time. A recipe for pound cake, for example, must ultimately aid in its production. And the virtuous person, for Aristotle, is not simply a concept, abstract and formal; she is a concrete person whose 'active condition'[216] *renders* her virtuous and exemplary.

And finally, germane to the difficulty of ATP, some ideas inherently lack a *principle* of proliferation. These kinds are like practical ideas that bear an 'element of blank'. Though they are not strictly mediated by the body like sensations, they, nonetheless, cannot be expressed abstractly. They bear causal relationships to things in the world like practical ideas, yet they are not processes. Thus, articulating ideas of this kind is accomplished by evoking a mood or a feeling. It is like a dish for which there is no recipe— perhaps because it is not a single dish but rather the actions of a particular chef—and consequently, in order to evaluate the 'dish', the chef must always produce it anew.

Two ideas of this kind are the Beautiful and the New. In the *Critique of Judgment,* §8, Kant says: "No one can use reasons or principles to talk us into a judgment on whether some garment, house, or flower is beautiful. We want to submit the object to our own eyes, just as if our liking of it depended on that sensation."[217] The beautiful object does not acquire its status as beautiful prior to the moment of judgment, which is an unprecedented, underdetermined moment that occurs in space and time. Beauty is something that claims and arrests *each* person, and with which there is an associated feeling. Similarly, the New is, fundamentally, an event, an unpredictable moment of emergence. There is no rule or formula of its instantiation, no principle of its proliferation. Collections of beautiful or new things are Deleuzian repetitions: "If repetition

[216] cf. NE Bk.2.5
[217] *Critique of Judgment* (hereafter: CoJ), 59

is possible, it is due to miracle rather than to law. [Moreover] It is against the law: against the similar form and the equivalent content of law."[218]

The idea of the New, in particular, emerges in two ways. One gestures toward it indirectly through an external differentiation, i.e. a proliferation of new *things*. Or two, one evokes it through a perpetual internal deferment, i.e. the creation of Multiple. The indirect method is characterized by a manic insatiability—like Tantalus' quest for food and drink—since it requires us to produce newer and newer things, *ad infinitum*, as the newness recedes behind the things.

The Multiple, conversely, sustains the New by a continuous movement through its components. The multiple evokes the insatiability of the New with an internal "forced movement"[219], a dis-ease wherein no single component offers resolution, yet only one component may be attended to at a time.

Deleuze usefully contrasts the 'numerology' of the Multiple—"$n - 1$"[220]—with that of Number or the Many, which, as alluded to above, is "a multiple derived from the One, or to which One is added $(n + 1)$"[221]. The Multiple, ultimately, is not a number. '$N - 1$' is a philosophical rather than a mathematical formulation; it is a collection minus the unifying *concept* of the One. The multiple is neither One nor Many, but rather several *taken* together. It is an evocative juxtaposition, like the ingredients of a novel metaphor. Though taken together, the components remain separate and irreducible to each other.

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[218] D&R 2

[219] The Multiple is like the triptych in the work of Francis Bacon. Deleuze explains: "[I]n the simple sensation, rhythm is still dependent on the Figure, it appears as the *vibration* that flows through the body without organs…In the coupling of sensations, rhythm is already liberated…it is now *resonance*, but it is still merged together with the melodic lines, the points and counterpoints, of a coupled Figure…With the triptych, finally, rhythm takes on an extraordinary amplitude in a *forced movement* that gives it an autonomy and produces in us the impression of Time"(FB 60-61; emphasis in original)

[220] ATP 21

[221] ATP 21

The Creation of the Multiple in ATP:

In the introductory chapter of ATP Deleuze and Guattari concede that they were unable to render the rhizome. They do not, however, justify their concession. This is not to suggest that their concession is unjustified, only that the burden of parsing it rests on us, the readers. This *unjustified* concession is perhaps the most rhizomatic component of the ATP. Nonetheless, for now let us pose the rhizomatic questions. First and foremost, how does ATP work? In spite of the text's rhizomatic presumptions and aspirations, does the Multiple ultimately resolve into a Many/One? Secondarily we may ask, what is the presumed role of the reader? What is the presumed constitution of thought? And consequently, what kinds of Ideas are deliberately foregrounded?

If we consider the explicitly "rhizomatic" tropes that Deleuze and Guattari self-consciously employ—joint authorship, a constellation of neologism, the non-linear plateau structure—a tension emerges between what is said and what is done. What is said invokes the rhizome, yet what is done betrays the arborescent. Thus, in short, ATP is not rhizomatic; it works as an arborescent text that merely discusses the rhizome. The reader is presumed to be a recipient, primarily, rather than a participant. And, in spite of the subject-matter, Concepts remain the primary form of thought.

Deleuze and Guattari's joint authorship attempts to undermine the univocity of an arborescent text. With multiple distinct voices, the presence of dissenting voices can be productive. The space between the voices yields a third thing, a relationship, that when left

unarticulated, becomes dynamic, making unique demands upon the reader. The Platonic dialogues are the most famous philosophical example of this dynamic plurivocity, where the unarticulated relationship between the characters is as important to the text as the positions held by the characters.[222]

The dialogue form stands in contrast to what we may broadly refer to as the narrative form. In the narrative form, a single narrative voice—i.e. a narrator—orients the story and implicitly determines the conditions of truth and meaning; the narrator is a character within that which Gérard Genette calls the "narrating instance,"[223] though frequently the narrator is a character within the story as well. In the dialogue form, there is no narrator; thus the reader is called upon to determine the conditions of truth and meaning. In the most dynamic cases, ones that we would call rhizomatic, the reader's conditions of truth and meaning are anticipated by the text—perhaps a character has voiced the reader's position, which another character ultimately finds objectionable. The reader is then called upon to reread the text with revised conditions of truth and meaning.

Nonetheless, in spite of Deleuze and Guattari pretension to a rhizomatic, dialogical joint-authorship, they speak from one narrative voice, arborescently. The sense in which "each of [them] was several"[224] is like the plurality of the Greek chorus chanting in unison, or like the *pluralis majestatis*, a discursive condescension of the sovereign. The inability to distinguish at least two voices—which should not be confused with the desire to attribute names or identities to these voices, such as "Deleuze" or "Guattari"—suggests that having Many voices, as it allegedly occurs in ATP, is no different than having only One.

[222] cf. esp. Plato's *Symposium*.
[223] Narrative Discourse, 212
[224] ATP 3

The constellation of neologisms is an attempt to break from the historical strictures imposed by canonical terms. For example, terms like "concept" and "idea" invoke the entire history of philosophy, and presuppose a particular image of thought. Thus, if the historical image of thought is the subject of one's critique—as in the case of ATP—then one must either deconstruct the historical terms, bestowing upon them a new sense, or one must use entirely new terms that convey the new sense(s). The neologisms of ATP aspire to accomplish the latter.

In spite of this aspiration, however, the neologisms are introduced narrowly *as* Concepts. Deleuze and Guattari say, "We just used words that in turn function for us as plateaus […] These words are concepts, but these words are lines, which is to say, number systems attached to a particular dimension of the multiplicities […] Nowhere do we claim for our concepts the title of a science."[225] Some of their words that function for them as plateaus are not concepts, or rather should not be concepts, but rather are Affects, Percepts, Functives, or Prospects. And thus, some of them should claim the title of a science, and others the title of an art. Consequently, the arborescent image of thought prevails.

And finally, the structure of the book, "composed of plateaus"[226], attempts to undermine the arborescent structures of linearity and hierarchy. In the arborescent book, the reader follows the line of inquiry outlined by the order of the chapters, since subsequent chapters build upon previous ones. Conversely, in the rhizomatic book, the chapters can be read in any order. The reader is invited to choose the order, and since each chapter will inform subsequent ones, the reader's choice will partially determine the meaning of the book—like a choose-your-own-adventure book, where the reader's choices partially determine the plot. Non-linearity depends upon the relative independence of each chapter. They should not explicitly inform or anticipate

[225] ATP 22
[226] ATP 22

each other. They should constitute a Multiplicity, a repetition. If one chapter explicitly anticipates or informs another, then there is an inherent suggestion of order, a suggestion that one chapter *naturally* precedes the other.

The 15 chapters of ATP do entail the suggestion of an order. Briefly consider the minor convergence between chapters five, seven, and eleven of ATP. Chapter five analyzes the structure of signfiance and subjectification. The convergence of these structures produces the Face, which receives its closest analysis in chapter seven. Deleuze and Guattari characterize the logic of the Face, in terms of its proliferation, as a refrain. The refrain receives its fullest treatment in chapter eleven. Though the three chapters are dispersed, the similarity of the language—an analysis in one chapter, for example, is paraphrased and extended in a later one—suggests that they comprise a single sustained meditation.

Employing the geological metaphor, rather than each chapter existing as a distinct plateau, they are like sub-summits on a mountain, collectively contributing to the general elevation of the most prominent peak.[227] A close reading betrays a formulaic conceptual convergence between the chapters. In a sense, Deleuze and Guattari concede this convergence. They say, "we watched lines leave one plateau and proceed to another like columns of tiny ants."[228] In the final chapter, Deleuze and Guattari concisely catalog this cross-pollination. Their concept of an "Abstract Machine," for example, is invoked over 200 times, occurring in every chapter.[229] The independence of each chapter requires them to hang between togetherness and

[227] Topological prominence is a measurement of the "independence" of a mountain. It is calculated as the change in elevation from the peak to the nearest col, or shared high point between two contiguous peaks. This enables us to determine whether two neighboring peaks should be considered as two mountains or a single mountain. For example, though the south summit of Mt. Everest is taller than K2—K2 is considered to be the second tallest mountain on Earth—with a prominence of only 36ft, the south summit is not considered to be an independent mountain, only a sub-peak of Mt. Everest, the world's tallest mountain. (http://www.peakbagger.com/peak.aspx?pid=18716)
[228] ATP 22
[229] ATP 510

separateness like a triptych; lamentably, they do not. The apparent non-linearity of ATP is mere lip service to the rhizome, but it does produce the rhizome.

Conclusion

Nonetheless, the failure of ATP is ultimately instructive, particularly in the light of WIP and FB. The failure is a consequence of the mis-execution—in both senses—of the concept of the Multiple. First, ATP needed to deconstruct the presumption that concepts comprise the image of thought. In WIP, we receive a broader image of thought, albeit in a deliberately arborescent text.

And second, ATP mis-represented the Multiple *as* a concept. This reflects an ambivalence in Deleuze's work, where, according to WIP, even though thought consists of *Ideas*, the 'philosopher' is charged with the task of creating only *concepts*. If the tasks of the philosopher, the scientist, and the artist are indeed distinct, then arguably ATP did not fail. As a 'philosopher,' Deleuze merely needed to articulate the concept of the Multiple in ATP. ATP is meant to be programmatic rather than exemplary. *Making* the Multiple is the work of the artist, and making the Multiple *work* is the work of the scientist.

This distinction, however, between the philosopher, the scientist, and the artist is a forced one, if not a false one. On the surface, we may note that all three are thinkers, allegedly specializing in different aspects of thought. Yet, if we parse each of them, they betray a greater interrelatedness than Deleuze acknowledges. The philosopher's task of creating concepts renders

her a conceptual artist. Moreover, as *Ideas*, the philosopher's concepts inevitably feel a particular way and do certain things; they are affective and functional.

Deleuze says in his lectures on Leibniz:

"In some ways, the philosopher is not someone who sings, but someone who screams. Each time that you need to scream, I think that you are not far from a kind of call of philosophy. What would it mean for the concept to be a kind of scream or a kind of form of scream? That's what it means to need a concept, to have something to scream!"[230]

Granted, some would argue that some singing sounds like screaming, and particularly for those who love to sing, the need to sing could feel very similar to having "something to scream!" Nonetheless, Deleuze's insight is that that which motivates the philosopher's task is non-conceptual; it is bodily. It begins in our abdomen, so to speak, forces its way through our vocal chords, discordant and arrhythmic—which is simply to say that its rhythm and melody are unprecedented—resonating in our ears. If we are within earshot, it demands our attention, however brief. If the concept is a scream, then it is also a monument and a practice, a work of art and a scientific protocol.

Deleuze's FB is a philosopher's scream, and also the most rhizomatic text in his oeuvres.[231] ATP emerges out of an awareness—following D&R—of the importance of considering in addition to rigor and clarity, the aesthetic aspects of the philosopher's project and practice. Beauty, cogency, and practicality are all philosophically important; thus the responsible thinker must consider herself not only a philosopher, but also a scientist, and perhaps most importantly, an artist.

[230] Translated by Charles Stivale: http://deleuzelectures.blogspot.com/2007/02/on-leibniz.html
[231] The proper explication of FB is beyond the scope of the paper.

CONCLUSION: The New Philosophers: Morrison, Rawls, and the Ethico-Political Implications of the Philo-Literary

"*As an already- and always-raced [read: Black] writer, I knew from the beginning that I could not, would not, reproduce the master's voice and its assumptions of the all-knowing law of the white father. Nor would I substitute his voice with that of his fawning mistress or his worthy opponent, for both of these positions (mistress and opponent) seemed to confine me to his terrain, in his arena, accepting the house rules in the dominance game."*

— Toni Morrison, "Home"

I conclude with two major claims. First, looking back on path that this inquiry has taken, philosophy and literature are akin in rich and meaningful ways. Novels make arguments; philosophy includes aesthetic considerations. And second, looking forward, there are ethical and political consequences to the distinction. The exclusion of literature from philosophy is, at least, analogous to—if not directly instrumental in—the marginalization of certain voices. Recognizing the ways which all voices are particular in spite of the pretension to an abstract universality—in the same way that all philosophy is literary in spite of its pretension to 'pure content'—will force us to reconsider which voices and texts are actually philosophical rather than merely nominally philosophical as a consequence of adopting a particular way of speaking.

PART ONE: A Brief Review

Generally, we make a distinction between philosophy and literature, which, we might say, crudely parallels the distinction between the 'mind' and the 'body'. Philosophy is like the mind; literature is like the body. Philosophy is content, thought, rigor, truth, and value; literature is medium, feeling, inexactitude, and beauty. Though philosophy and literature frequently converge, they are, nonetheless, independent aspects of the text. Philosophy can occur in any

number of literary mediums, though some may be more efficient than others; and any literary medium could bear any number of 'philosophies', though some would be more or less accessible, or cumbersome.

At this juncture, I present two contentions. First, the medium, i.e. the form of discourse, is not a mute vehicle for content, but also constitutive of content. As Martha Nussbaum claims, famously, in the opening lines of *Love's Knowledge,* "Literary form is not separable from philosophical content, but is, itself, a part of content—an integral part, then, of the search for and the statement of truth."[232] The decision to write an essay or a narrative is not reducible to the rhetorical or artistic considerations of accessibility, persuasiveness, or pleasurableness. Rhetorical, artistic, and stylistic choices convey philosophical commitments. These choices constitute the content as well, functioning as additional premises, if not entire arguments unto themselves. The "non-philosophical" content of a text interacts with the "philosophical" content, modifying, amplifying, and occasionally negating it. The form and content are integrated to make a complete statement. Disjointed statements, when they appear deliberate, we might attribute to irony; when they appear accidental, they read as simply poorer statements.

The traditional philosophical style of discourse, for example, is wedded to a particular idea of reason that excludes emotions, character, and other aesthetically grounded forms of intuiting; it also committed to a certain idea of precision that brackets or excludes contingencies that admit inconsistency or even contradiction. Conversely, the novelistic form draws upon a broader budget of vocabularies, structures, and tools in order to articulate philosophical problems. Mystery and detective stories, for example, begin from a place of measured ignorance. We might say the genre as a whole asks: what if you do not know (or cannot know) a seemingly

[232] Nussbam, LK 3

crucial piece of the puzzle? How does this lack of knowledge affect reason and judgment? With detective stories, the narrator knows everything, but the reader does not. In a mystery, the narrator and the reader are equally blind.

We could imagine a syllogistic argument that aspired to function like a detective story. We might have a comprehensive list of possible premises upon which we impose a structural limitation. For example, imagine that eight of the listed premises are needed to make a sound argument, but the reader can use only five. Which five premises produce the strongest argument? Which five premises gesture toward the "true" conclusion? And what if these sets of premises are not the same? If done well, this would be a fascinating essay, but I would wager that the philosophical problems would work more efficiently as a narrative.

The second contention: literature is excluded from philosophy because of an unproductive double standard. In other worlds, in order for literature to be considered philosophy it must satisfy criteria to which we do not hold of philosophical texts. On the one hand, literature is not philosophy, we say, because it is not "true". In many cases it is, explicitly "fiction." On the other hand, literature is not philosophy because it does not edify. Horrible people are well read, and those same people enjoy stories that should broaden their experiences of the world, cultivating their senses of compassion, and other virtues that would make them better people.

Literature may be true; literature also *may* edify. Nevertheless, literature is, like philosophy, primarily argument. Literature *and* philosophy aspire to be persuasive, not necessarily true or trueing. The beautiful literary text is *believable*. Correspondence with the world is, of course, frequently an important consideration in 'telling a good story'—just as 'truth' contributes to a persuasive syllogistic argument—but that correspondence is not the primary goal. Similarly, just as we do not expect familiarity with the classics of moral

philosophy to yield better judgment, we should not necessarily discount the philosophical value of literature for failing to do so. Attributing a distinct nature to literature for failing to meet these alternate criteria is a disingenuous cordoning off of literature. The relegation of literature to the margins of philosophy as mere supplement, or pejoratively as 'art' or 'rhetoric', impoverishes philosophy, since it silences dissenters and interlocutors.

Concerning the first contention, consider the philosophical contributions of the literary choices of some traditional philosophical texts. In many of the Platonic dialogues the dramatic context, which includes the dialogical form itself, functions as additional "content" that is, nonetheless, irreducible to the explicit content. In other words, the presence of characters provides important context for claims and actions, context that functions as additional premises in the explicit arguments. In Descartes' *Meditations,* the presence of the narrator is not merely a rhetorical trope; rather, the narrator of the *Meditations* is an essential premise, without which the fundamental *cogito* ceases to be a syllogism, much less a syllogism that provides clear and distinct knowledge. And Hegel's *Phenomenology* demands a narrative structure. In other words, the *Phenomenology* is, effectively, a bildungsroman by necessity. The "formative education"(¶28) of Spirit, which is the project of the *Phenomenology*, consists in the development of spirit (and the reader). This development presumes two moments, a developed and undeveloped state. The *Phenomenology* as a material artifact must facilitate the movement between these two moments.

Concerning the second contention, consider the ways in which ostensibly literary texts make "arguments". In Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveler,* driving the story is an argument and an analysis of the relationship between the reader and the text. The inherent

reflexivity of the subject matter—an argument about reading must also be *read*—demands a text that performs and articulates its premises and conclusions; otherwise, the text would serve as its own refutation by counterexample.

Second, just as Hegel's *Phenomenology* is a philosophical text that demands a narrative form, Melville's *Moby Dick* is a narrative that demands a non-narrative form. In other words, on the analogy of inside jokes, the story of the White Whale is what we might call an "insider's story"; unlike the majority of whale references in literature and philosophy, *Moby Dick* is a *whaler's* story of whaling. In order for the lay reader—i.e. the non-whaler, to whom *Moby Dick* is addressed—to understand and appreciate the story of the White Whale, she must be educated to the standpoint of the whaler. The "story" presumes numerous non-story perspectives and references that constitute the whaler's world. Consequently, *Moby Dick* must embed in the narrative encyclopedic, para-narrative accounts of the routines and mythologies of whalers.

And third, Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* explicates an idea of the universal characterized by the Example, where, as Proust says, "the particular and the general lie side by side."[233] The experience of love, Proust illustrates, functions as a compelling metaphor for this idea of the universal. For though we are educated and solaced by anecdotes and claims about love, our experiences of love are always singular, fundamentally resisting abstraction. The knowledge of love is only the knowledge of our particular loves; yet, such knowledge is communicable. The Example has the same structure; whereas it is singular, it has the purview of a law.

[233] Proust, vol.6, 312

From these examples, and many others, we can extract three basic literary considerations. First, the collaborative role of the reader is an inextricable component of every philosophical or literary text. This collaboration occurs in a number of ways. First, every writer is also her first reader. Second, the necessary moment of articulation occurs in a language that is neither private nor personal. Third, the activity of reason(ing) is a function of being in the world, which is an inherently inter-subjective. And fourth, the simple and pragmatic intention to communicate something to someone—a "someone" who may be oneself—is the contingency that instigates the labor of articulation. In other words, quite plainly, we write and speak with the hope that we will be understood.

Second, there is an inherent temporality to every text, i.e. innate narrative structures to the practices and projects of both philosophy and literature. These include, for example, the concrete, temporal practices of reading and writing. We read and write letters, words, sentences, and paragraphs in a sequence. Analogously, the parts of syllogisms must unfold in a particular order. At the very least, conclusions must *follow* (from) premises. Thus, the reduction of any philosophical project to a conclusion is never sufficient since such a reduction overlooks the movement that yields the conclusion. The innate narrative structures also include the movement entailed in edifying, persuading, and believing—and their passive counter-movements—each of which presume two moments: an original philosophical orientation and a future altered one. These two moments consist of a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, the Proustian idea of the universal—though universal claims are general, they are always also particular. This idea of the universal is characterized by the Example. Structurally, the example straddles the universal and the particular. On the one hand, an example is always singular and concrete; it is, literally, one of a

kind, occurring in space and time. Yet, on the other hand, it has the purview of a law; in spite of its particularity, it functions as a rule, a guide, or a model, occurring, in a sense, in all places and at all times. For example, Toni Morrison's beautiful, tragic novel, *The Bluest Eye,* is but the tale of a particular black girl in the 1940s, moreover a fictional girl. Yet, like all compelling accounts, imagined or historical, the story functions like a universal because it constructs for its readers a paradigm, i.e. a lens and a vocabulary, through which we may understand human experiences in general. For each reader—man, woman, or other; adult or adolescent—the time and place of the story becomes our time and place.

The most salient quality of the Example is Beauty. We must, however, conceive of Beauty in a relatively novel manner. In brief: as a concept, if it is a concept, beauty characterizes the prescriptive force of the exemplary. In other words, the example is *the particular that guides*. As a guide, examples are prescriptive. This sense of 'prescription', however, is not deontological. Rather, it describes the attractiveness of our beliefs and values. To say that the exemplary is prescriptive is to say, simply, that it is compelling; it exhorts us to believe or act in ways that are consonant with it. Thus, to say that the exemplary is prescriptive is to say simply that it is beautiful.

Beauty, thus, is an inherent quality of the example. The example is the beautiful particular—the particular that attracts, that moves us, that guides us. Beauty is aesthetic because *examples* occurs in space and time, apprehended by sense perception. Beauty does not merely wash over our passive minds and bodies, arresting and dislodging us from our daily routines, no more than the example is something that we stumble over in the course of the blind trudge of habit. Since examples are not found-objects—they are actively identified or created—beauty is

not something to behold, i.e. the found-object of a disinterested judgment. It is also an activity, as Toni Morrison notes, something one can *do*.

These considerations are taken for granted in literature, but philosophy certain conventions of philosophical writing and speaking have unfortunately moved away from these.

PART TWO: Looking Forward

The exclusion of literature from philosophy is analogous to the relegation of non-dominant voices in philosophy to the margins. The particularity of literature—as contrasted with the purported abstractness of philosophy—corresponds to the particularity of certain voices—as contrasted with the divine voice of the purported unmarked subject. The hallmark of the universal is its ability to extend, ideally, to all times, places, and perspectives, and literature, being a particular story—"here", "now", and via a particular narratorial formulation—seems unable to function in that way. Similarly, the Black voice, the Woman's voice, and the Queer voice are too mired in their subjectivity, some argue, to provide insights that bear upon humanity in general. Questions that admit their particularity are ghettoized as sub-specialties of "applied philosophy"—e.g. "feminist ethics", "black existentialism—or excluded outright, relegated to other disciplines, such as sociology, cultural studies, history, anthropology, etc.[234] The implicit claim is that "philosophical" insights concerning particular identities may contribute to ethics or politics, but they do not bear upon the core questions of metaphysics, epistemology, or the fundamental presuppositions of philosophical method.

[234] I am not making a claim about the relative merits of these other disciplines vis-à-vis philosophy. Questions concerning particular identities are obviously at home in many of these disciplines. My contention is with the exclusion of these questions from the heart philosophy, where these questions should also find a hospitable place, if not a home.

Following the two literary contentions, at this juncture I present two analogous considerations. First, just as the form of discourse makes a statement, the purported limited purview of any particular voice is a fiction, moreover, a prejudice, since all voices are particular, even those with a universal scope. As many writers have observed and argued, the divine voice of the unmarked subject, once interrogated, betrays the particularity of the dominant perspective—usually white, male, straight, Christian, financially secure. In *Changing My Mind,* Zadie Smith observes:

> [T]he 'neutral universal' of literary criticism pens me in and makes it difficulty [to speak]. To write critically in English is to aspire to neutrality, to the high style of, say Lionel Trilling or Edmund Wilson. In the high style, one's loves never seem partial or personal, or even 'loves,' because white novelists are not white novelists but simply 'novelists,' and white characters are not white characters but simply 'human,' and criticism of both is not partial or personal but a matter of aesthetics. Such critics will always sound like the neutral universal, and the black women who have championed *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in the past, and the one doing so now, will seem like black women talking about a black book.[235]

Similarly, in philosophy, white Americans, for example, are not white Americans but simply 'citizens'. And rationalizations of white and male dominance are not rationalizations, but 'truths' produced by 'reason'. In *Blackness Visible*, Charles Mills argues more forcefully:

> [T]here is a feeling, not to put too fine a point on it, that when you get right down to it, a lot of philosophy is just white guys jerking off. Either philosophy is not about real issues in the first place but about pseudo-problems; or when it is about real problems, the emphases are in the wrong places; or crucial facts are omitted, making the whole discussion pointless; or the abstractness is really a sham for what we all know but are not allowed to say out loud. The impatience or indifference that I have sometimes detected in black students seems to derive in part from their sense that there is something strange in spending a whole course describing the logic of different moral ideals, for example, without ever mentioning that all of them were systematically violated for blacks. So it is not merely that the ideal was not always attained but that, more fundamentally, this was never actually the ideal in the first place. A lot of moral philosophy will then seem to be based on pretense, the claim that these were the principles that people

[235] Smith, *Changing My Mind,* 11-12

> strove to uphold, when in fact the real principles were the racially exclusivist ones.[236]

Mills continues,

> One can no longer speak with quite such assurance of the problems of philosophy; rather, these are problems for particular groups of human beings, and for others there will be different kinds of problems that are far more urgent. A relativizing of the discipline's traditional hierarchies of importance and centrality thus becomes necessary.[237]

Consider briefly a figure like John Rawls, whom I choose because, at least a case can made that he is well intentioned. He is a champion of American liberalism, and in taking up the question of justice, we might hope that he is concerned with some actual injustices. Nevertheless, his commitment to ideal theory is thoroughly "colored" by the privileges of his position. Consider briefly the Rawlsian "Original Position" and the "difference principle". The original position is the imagined place where citizens negotiate fairly the terms and structures of society. The most notable feature of the original position is that negotiators "are not allowed to know the social positions or the particular comprehensive doctrines of the persons they represent."[238] Since negotiators do not know whether they will be a privileged Bill Clinton or an unfortunate Trayvon Martin, they will create a society that will be in the best interest of both. The difference principle

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[236] Mills, BV, 4

[237] Mills, BV, 10. The entire passage: "The universalizing pretensions of Western philosophy, which by its very abstractness and distance from vulgar reality seemed to be all-inclusive of human experience, are thereby shown to be illusory. White (male) philosophy's confrontation of Man and Universe, or even Person and Universe, is really predicated on taking personhood for granted and thus excludes the differential experience of those who have ceaselessly had to fight to have their personhood recognized in the first place. Without even recognizing that it is doing so, Western philosophy abstracts away from what has been the central feature of the lives of Africans transported against their will to the Americas: the denial of black humanity and the reactive, defiant assertion of it. Secure in the uncontested sum of the leisurely Cartesian derivation, whites find it hard to understand the metaphysical rage and urgency permeating the non-Cartesian sums of those invisible native sons and daughters who, since nobody knows their name, have to be the men who cry "I am!" and the women who demand "And ain't I a woman?" From the beginning, therefore, the problems faced by those categorized as persons and those categorized as subpersons will be radically different. One can no longer speak with quite such assurance of the problems of philosophy; rather, these are problems for particular groups of human beings, and for others there will be different kinds of problems that are far more urgent. A relativizing of the discipline's traditional hierarchies of importance and centrality thus becomes necessary." (9-10)

[238] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement,* 15

accounts for inevitable inequalities; insofar as they exist, they must be "attached to offices and positions open to all…and second, they are to be to the greatest benefit of the least-advantaged members of society".[239]

In this idealized space, Rawls proposes a curious inversion. The negotiators are homogenous behind the veil, and their differences are hypothetical. Out of fear, everyone, presumably, will become an advocate of the hypothetically disadvantaged. Two problems emerge. First, injustices are not ideal; thus, the idea of a *hypothetical* disadvantage is oxymoronic. One can only advocate for actual disadvantages. Second, if a theory of justice is to be meaningful, much less useful, i.e. more than an interesting puzzle to dawdle over in one's 'idle time,' then, re-invoking Edith Wharton, "[T]here must be something that *makes* it crucial, some recognizable relation to a familiar social or moral standard, some explicit awareness of the eternal struggle between man's contending impulses, if the tales embodying them are to fix the attention and hold the memory."[240] The original position fails in this regard, mostly because it is, in the terms of E.M. Forster, 'unconvincing'. Were it a story, the suspension of disbelief would be difficult for many readers. Actual negotiators cannot retreat behind the veil of ignorance, and the account of the original position does not entail an argument explaining how they are able to do so in the world of the Rawlsian text. If the actually-disadvantaged are even allowed at the negotiating table, they will advocate for their particular disadvantages, and the actually-privileged will "gamble" that they will be privileged in society.[241] Furthermore, all parties

[239] Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, 42-43
[240] Wharton, 14
[241] The gamble is, of course, insincere, since they know the outcome of the "bet". Nor is there a need, while negotiating, to make too many concessions to the disadvantaged. In *Faces at the Bottom of the Well,* Derrick Bell argues that racism is permanent. Included among his arguments are two notable narratives that persuasively challenge Rawls' assumptions. "The Racial Preference Licensing Act" is a fictional bill in the spirit of the difference principle. The bill would allow any business to purchase a license to discriminate against a certain clientele. The license would need to be displayed, and a percentage of the profits of a business would be directed to assisting the discriminated clientele in other spaces. "The Space Traders" is an account where structures determined in something

recognize that "fairness" is *only* attained between privileged members of society, rather than between all members. To presume otherwise is to occupy the privileged perspective—hence the whiteness of Rawls' theory of justice.

In addition to be being unconvincing, Rawls' theory of justice, due to its sincere pretention to an abstract universality, renders an injustice. Descartes, at least, could be read ironically, since the narratorial "I", in spite of itself, concedes the particularity of the voice. Moreover, the particularity renders the Cartesian project all the more persuasive, since the "I" serves as is a structural mechanism for trying on the narrator's particularity, and/or substituting some of the particularities for one's one, thereby testing their relative necessity. Rather than claiming that Descartes is flat-out wrong, because my experience, for example, serves as a counter example to his implicit generalizations, I concede that Descartes' situatedness enables the mind/body dualism to verge on something like truth.

There is no such concession in the Rawlsian project. There is no first person pronoun, no deliberate narratorial voice, no concession that his situatedness might inform him. So as not to jettison the entire thing, however, we might hope that we, the readers, could make these concessions for him; *we* could read the particularity of Rawls' voice into his proposals—grounding the project in its historical context, and rendering explicit Rawls' socio-political position. If we were to do so, however, the Rawlsian project would unravel itself. The original position cannot sustain such a concession, and without it, the Rawlsian project barely gets off the ground.

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like an original position are violated in practice in the face of a strong enough incentive. In this story, aliens arrive on Earth. They offer to fix many of Earth's problems—food, pollution, technology issues, health, etc—in exchange for *all* of the African-Americans. The U.S. makes the deal against the protestations of African-Americans, and in violation of the constitution (rather, the constitution is amended so that African-Americans *can* be bartered away).

The second analogous contentions: The whiteness of philosophy is not simply a secondary effect of an unfortunate history that yielded a racial hierarchy, where ideals are "white" because of the self-affirming gesture of a Nietzschean 'noble morality'. The whiteness of philosophy is sustained by a pernicious double standard. On the one hand, just as philosophy uncritically pretends to a non-literary pure content, the particularities of whiteness are uncritically presumed to attain an *abstract* universality. And on the other hand, just as literature must justify its status as philosophy using criteria that neither literature nor philosophy satisfy, non-white particulars are also subjected to hyper-scrutiny. They must, first, "apologize" for their particularity—read: non-whiteness—and, second, justify their claim to the universal. In other words, the process of justification does not entail an explanation of the ways in which universals are already particular, or the ways in which particulars become universal when they dubbed Examples. Rather, the process consists in defending their similarity to the de facto universal, viz. whiteness.

In her incisive essay, "How is the this Paper Philosophy?" Kristie Dotson explains the particular practices by which this double standard is enforces. The practices are characterizd by, Dotson explains, a 'culture of justification':

> To say that philosophy has a culture of justification, then, is to say that the profession of philosophy requires the practice of making congruent one's own ideas, projects and, in [Gayle Salamon's] case, pedagogical choices with some "traditional" conception of philosophical engagement.[242]

She continues:

> As such, a culture of justification will include at least three components. It will 1) manifest a value for exercises of legitimation, 2) assume the existence of *commonly-held*, justifying norms that are 3) *univocally relevant*. That is to say, a disciplinary culture of justification is driven by the creation and/or discovery of papers and/or projects that fall within the purview of a certain set of commonly

[242] Dotson, 6

> held, univocally relevant justifying norms. Compliance with these justifying norms, in turn, confers positive status on those papers/projects.[243]

In brief, philosophy demands methodological and ideological congruence from 'philosophical' projects and practices. Arguments, styles, and ideas that implicitly endorse the status quo are not asked to justify themselves. Arguments, styles, and ideas that are critical—and not merely critical in a way where nothing is at stake, conceding, ultimately, the fundamental presuppositions of one's "opponent"—must answer the question "How is this paper philosophy?" On the surface, the question is, of course, one that all philosophy should continually ask. The subtext of the question, however, levies a demand for congruence; cueing the insiders like a dog whistle, it reads, "How can you, outsider, say what *you're* in such a way that I can continue to say what I am saying?" If the points are sufficiently critical, then the question cannot be answered. Or, it can only be answered in a few ways: 1) the insider cannot continue to say or do what she is saying or doing; 2) the outsider's criticism is wrong; or 3) the outsider's criticism is not actually a criticism, since it is not actually philosophy. Since the burden of justification falls on the outsider, answer One is precluded; and answers Two and Three do not challenge the status quo.

The demand for justification also extends reflexively to attempts to highlight the absurdity and particularity of the mechanism by which the whiteness of philosophy is maintained. Fanon describes this paradoxical space vis-à-vis reason in *Black Skin White Masks*. He says, "My unreason ['unjustified' outrage] was countered with reason [i.e., the moors of justification] my reason [logic and demands for consistency] with 'real reason'[i.e. the univocality of 'common sense']. Every hand was a losing hand for me."[244]

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[243] Dotson, 7-8; author's emphasis
[244] Fanon, Markmann translation: 132; Philcox translation: 111

The question, "How is this Paper Philosophy?" sets a trap, a double bind, which, as Lyotard says in *The Differend*, "consists in applying to two contradictory propositions, *p* and *not-p*, two logical operators: exclusion (*either..., or*) and implication (*if..., then*)."[245] The double-bind reads: either *p* or not-*p, and* if *p* then not-*p*. Thus, all inputs yield not-*p*. Thus the question erects the following strictures: either the paper is philosophical or its not; and if it *is* then it isn't. The question is particularly insidious because it is insincere. In spite of the pretension to uncertainty, only certain speakers and arguments must answer the question. Therefore, nothing is at stake in the question. There is no doubt to be resolved. In short, there is no question. The speaker is already determined not to be a 'philosopher,' and her argument is already determined not to be 'philosophical,' preemptively silencing dissenters and interlocutors.

There is however, a productive dis-analogy between the marginalized voices of philosophy and the excluded styles of discourse, viz. literature. Non-dominant voices are trapped in dialectic, where any attempt to address the dynamic of marginalization, much less criticize it, entails, as Morrison notes, "accepting the house rules". Blackness is not merely another voice, but innately contrasted with the white voice. Merely asserting the importance of Blackness still concedes the terms and structures of white dominance. As Sylia Wynter argues, and history shows, such a project is doomed to fail because it confuses the map with the territory, which is to say it fails to account for the ways in which racism is already inscribed in our (academic) categories of race. Pretending to do away with racial categories allows the dominant identity to remain silently normative; and elevating Blackness to the 'heights of whiteness' also concedes the "house rules". A true revolution would radically alter whiteness by rendering it Black, which

[245] Lyotard, 6

is to say, by accomplishing the difficulty task of dragging it down into the depths and grittiness of the Example.

Literature, conversely, is not dialectically bound to philosophy. Thus, unveiling the ways in which philosophy *is*, and has always been literary, and vice versa, *can* accomplish this revolution. Whereas asserting the importance of Blackness has ultimately functioned as an indirect assertion of whiteness; asserting the philosophical importance of literature changes philosophy, freeing it from its self-impoverishing pretentions and strictures by betraying its naïveness, or in some cases, its willful ignorance.

Finally, I gesture towards Toni Morrison as an example of what I call the 'new' philosopher. Morrison's work is 'new', not because it occurs 'now'. Rather, it serves as an example for how philosophers might engage questions in the future. Morrison's writings are self-consciously philosophical in ways that incorporate the three philo-literary considerations outlined in this dissertation. First, she reads *as a writer*, and she writes with the reader in mind. In *Playing in the Dark*, she notes, "books reveal themselves rather differently to me as a writer."[246] To read as a writer is to listen to the text rather than to consume. In *Unspeakable Things Unspoken*, Morrison explains the many considerations involved in drafting the opening lines of her novels. The opening lines of *The Bluest Eye*, for example, "Quiet as it's kept…" was intended to lure the reader into the story with the colloquial cueing of gossip, ultimately in order to implicate us in "The void that is Pecola's 'unbeing'."[247] Morrison aspires to make the reader viscerally complicit in in the tragedy of her novels, in order to convey the destructiveness of American racial dynamics. Second, her voice and characters are deliberately particular. Morrison is self-consciously creating exemplary figures rather than 'generalizable'. Concerning her voice,

[246] Morrison, *Playing*, 3
[247] Morrison, *Unspeakable*, 270

she speaks unapologetically as a particular voice, liberally employing the first person pronoun in her essays, referring to, and drawing upon her situatedness. And her stories aspire to address real problems, beginning from actual injustices that she aspires to ameliorate, if not solve. In *What Moves at the Margins*, Morrison explains,

> If anything I do, in the way of writing novels (or whatever I write) isn't about the village or the community or about you, then it is not about anything. I am not interested in indulging myself in some private, closed exercise of my imagination that fulfills only the obligations of personal dreams—which is to say yes, the work must be political. It must have that as its thrust. That's a pejorative term in critical circles now: if a work of art has any political influence in it, somehow it's tainted. My feeling is just the opposite: if it has none, it is tainted.[248]

And finally, quality of language is taken for granted too often. But if the task of the philosopher/artist is to create and/or identify Examples, then the 'pretty' and the 'clear' are two of the most effective tools that one might wield in the service of the Beautiful. As Proust argues in *Time Regained*

> Quality of language, however, is something the critical theorists think that they can do without, and those who admire them are easily persuaded that it is no proof of intellectual merit, for this is a thing which they cannot infer from the beauty of an image but can recognise only when they see it directly expressed.[249]

Too frequently we abdicate our responsibility in the construction of our ideals.

Appropriately, I will close with the words of Toni Morrison: "There is nothing more to say—except why. But since Why is so difficult to handle, one must take refuge in How."[250]

[248] Morrison, *Margins*, 64
[249] Proust, vol.6, 278
[250] Morrison, *The Bluest Eye*, 3

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