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"BOTH OF US DISGUSTED IN *MY* INSULA": MIRROR NEURON THEORY AND EMOTIONAL EMPATHY

RUTH LEYS

In a report of the results of an experiment pertaining to a common neural basis for seeing and feeling the emotion of disgust, the claim is made that, just as we have mirror-neuron mechanisms for understanding other people's intentional actions, so we have mirror-neuron mechanisms for understanding or empathizing with other people's emotions. The article was published in 2003 by a group of scientists that included first-author Bruno Wicker and co-authors Giacomo Rizzolatti and Vittorio Gallese, the last two being well known as members of the research team that discovered mirror neurons in monkeys. I consider their paper a telling example of what can go wrong in emotion research today, and in the following discussion I shall try to say why. [1]

A mirror neuron is a neuron that fires both when an animal enacts a movement and when that animal merely observes the same action by another (especially a con-specific). In other words, mirror neurons appear to "mirror" the behavior of another animal by a kind of

motor simulation or motoric resonance. Mirror neurons were first detected in the 1990s in experiments using electrodes directly implanted in the pre-motor cortex of the macaque monkey. Although mirror neurons are often assumed to exist in humans and other species, the evidence is scant.[2] In humans, for example, the only published direct evidence of mirror neuron activity exists in the form of single-neuron electrode recordings from the brains of epileptic patients and even that evidence is equivocal.[3]

From the start, the function of mirror neurons has been the topic of much speculation and controversy. Many researchers have claimed that mirror neurons provide a mechanism for an animal's ability to grasp the motor-intentional actions of others without the intervention of higher cognitive or sensory processes. Dysfunction in the mirror neuron system is also thought to explain mind-reading failures associated with autism. Gallese and art historian David Freedberg have recently applied the idea of mirror neurons to the field of neuroaesthetics by claiming that our empathic responses to works of art as well as to everyday images depend on the activation of embodied, non-cognitive mirror-neuron mechanisms.[4] Freedberg and Gallese thus follow the trend in the neurosciences to expand the role of mirror neurons to include the capacity for emotional empathy.[5]

In their 2003 article, Wicker and his group described the results of a Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) study in which experimental subjects were asked to inhale odorants selected to produce strong feelings of disgust. The same subjects were also asked to observe video clips of other individuals exhibiting or showing the facial expression of disgust. The scientists reported that the same sites in the anterior insula (and to a lesser extent in the anterior cingulate cortex) were activated both when the experimental subjects themselves experienced disgust and when they observed the filmed expressions of disgust on the faces of others.[6] The researchers therefore concluded in reference to the mirror-neuron matching system that, "just as observing hand actions activates the observer's motor representation of that action, observing an emotion activates the neural representation of that emotion. This finding provides a unifying mechanism for understanding the behavior of others" ("BUD," 655). The study by Wicker and his team has generated considerable interest in the neuroscientific community (a recent Google search indicates that the paper has now been cited in over 900 research articles). In subsequent publications, Rizzolatti, Gallese, Keysers and others have cited Wicker et al.'s experiment on disgust as confirming the idea that there is a common neural basis for emotional empathy.[7] The experiment by Wicker and his group has also provided confirming evidence for Alvin I. Goldman's influential approach to the "problem of other minds." In his 2006 book, *Simulating Minds*, Goldman begins his review of the empirical evidence supportive of his Simulation Theory of mindreading by focusing on the "low-level" task of recognizing the emotional expressions of others because, as he

observes with reference to the findings of Wicker et al. and those of others, the case for simulation here is "very substantial."[8]

The Wicker Experiment In Detail

Let me begin by providing some details about the Wicker experiment. First, the experimenters recruited from a Marseille theater school six actors (male and female) who agreed to be filmed while smelling either neutral, or pleasant, or unpleasant odors. The actors were presented with a glass containing either pure water (for the neutral expression), water with an added pleasant odor (perfume designed to produce the pleased expression), or water with an added unpleasant odor (the content of "stinking balls" from a local toy store designed to induce the disgust expression). The actors were asked to display the relevant emotional reactions in a "natural but clear way." Each emotional reaction was filmed three times for each actor, and the "most natural example" was selected by one of the experimenters. These filmed enactments served as the visual "stimuli" for the experiment that followed.

The experiment itself was conducted with fourteen males, each of whom was asked to participate in two "visual runs" and two "olfactory runs" while undergoing fMRI. In the "visual runs" the participants passively viewed the film clips that had been made of the actors smelling the contents of the glass. The participants were not informed of the aim of the study, and were not explicitly instructed to empathize with the actors. In the "olfactory runs" the participants themselves inhaled the same pleasant or disgusting or neutral odors that had been smelled by the filmed actors.

The central finding of Wicker and his team was that the anterior insula was *not* activated during the participants' observation of happy expressions or during their experience of pleasant odors. But it *was* activated both during their observation of the actors' disgusted facial expressions and during the feeling of disgust evoked in the participants themselves when they smelled the foul odors. The investigators suggested that two different hypotheses might explain our ability to recognize and understand emotions in other people. According to the "cold" hypothesis, we recognize the affects of others by using our perceptual and cognitive mechanisms without ourselves experiencing or sharing the same emotions and without activating the same causal mechanisms. But Wicker's group claimed that their findings appeared to confirm the "hot hypothesis" according to which observing the emotions of others automatically generates the same emotion in ourselves because of a shared neural basis for seeing and feeling. In the case of disgust, the authors stated, "this automaticity may explain why it is so hard to refrain from sharing a visceromotor response (e.g., vomiting) of others when observing it in them" ("BUD," 661). The authors suggested that in evolutionary terms "hot" activation is likely to be the oldest form of emotion understanding, permitting a form of

primitive empathy that may protect monkeys and young human infants from food poisoning even before sophisticated cognitive skills develop ("BUD," 661).

Goldman considers Wicker's disgust experiment an original contribution to his Simulation Theory because it provides evidence for an "Unmediated Resonance (Mirroring)" model of simulation, according to which the perception of the target's facial expression "directly" triggers sub-threshold activation of the same neural substrate of the emotion in question. He states that this model does not require the cognitive "pretend" or "off-line" states on which higher-level mindreading is theorized to depend, but only a minimum automatic matching between the pair of emotion events in the target and the observer. "The observer's emotional system 'resonates' with that of the target," Goldman writes, "and this is the matching event on which the attribution is based." [9]

Background Assumptions

Wicker's et al.'s experiment and the conclusions drawn from it presupposed a set of theoretical and methodological premises that are deeply entrenched in the field of emotion research today, and it is important to be clear about them from the outset. The main assumptions informing their work can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. There exists a small set of "basic emotions" ("BUD," 658) defined as pan-cultural categories or "natural kinds." These basic emotions are evolved, genetically hard-wired, reflex-like responses of the organism. Disgust is one such basic emotion, as are fear, sadness, anger, joy, surprise, and perhaps contempt. The evolved status of the emotions implies some degree of emotional commonality between human and non-human animals, although the similarities and differences are rarely articulated.

2. Each basic emotion manifests itself in distinct physiological and behavioral patterns of response, especially in characteristic facial expressions. When not masked by cultural or conventional requirements of display or by deliberate deception, the face "expresses" the affects, which is to say that under the right conditions facial displays are authentic "read-outs" of the discrete internal states that constitute the basic emotions.

3. The facial expressions associated with the basic emotions can be posed or portrayed by actors in a natural way so as to convey the authentic truth of the affects.

4. Each basic emotion is linked to specific neural substrates in the brain, an assumption that implies the embrace of some degree of modularity and information-encapsulation in brain functions. Whereas (at least until very recently) the amygdala has been pinpointed as the

neural seat of fear, insula activation has been especially implicated in the response to facial expressions of disgust, a finding Wicker's experiment claims not only to confirm but extend, such that the insula is activated *both* during the experimental subject's observation of the facial expressions of disgust in others *and* during the subject's own experience of disgust. [10]

5. Emotional processes occur independently of "cognitive" or "intentional" states. [11] As Paul Ekman has declared: "[E]motional expressions are special . . . because they are involuntary, not intentional . . . emotional expressions occur without choice . . . we trust them precisely because they are unintended." [12] According to this view, the basic emotions do not involve "propositional attitudes" or beliefs about the emotional objects in our world. Rather, they are rapid, phylogenetically old, automatic responses of the organism that have evolved for survival purposes and lack the cognitive characteristics of higher-order mental processes. The tendency in the recent literature on empathy to distinguish between "cognitive empathy," our ability to identify someone else's intentional actions, and "emotional" empathy, our ability to sympathize with or match someone else's feelings, helps reinforce a non-cognitive (or non-intentionalist) theory of the affects by suggesting that our affects occur independently of our cognitions. Wicker et al.'s definition of disgust conforms to the non-cognitive model by pigeonholing disgust as in essence a sensory or corporeal phenomenon—a point to which I will return. [13] The authors explicitly present the "hot hypothesis" as a non-cognitive theory of emotional empathy.

6. Grasping another person's emotional state is also a non-cognitive process. It's just a matter of responding automatically to the triggering effect of another person's facial displays. Goldman has criticized those whose view of empathy involves imputing purposive states to others (*SM*, 10-11). Goldman argues that the kind of low-level faced-based emotion recognition that occurs in emotional empathy recruits a simulation mechanism that operates automatically and sub-personally, without the necessity of propositional contents, desires, or beliefs of any kind. The comparative simplicity of faced-based emotion recognition, he writes in this regard, "consists in recognizing emotion types (e.g., fear, disgust, and anger) without identifying any propositional contents, presumably a simpler task than identifying desires or beliefs with specific contents" (*SM*, 113). On this view, reading someone's emotional expressions has survival value and specialized mirroring mechanisms have evolved for this primitive kind of emotion detection.

Now to anyone knowledgeable about the history of research on the emotions, the assumptions I have just summarized will be familiar, belonging as they do to an emotion theory or paradigm that has had tremendous success over the last thirty years in the United States and, to a large extent, in Europe as well. Specifically, the presuppositions of Wicker and his team can be traced most directly to the work of the American psychologist Silvan S.

Tomkins, and especially to that of his follower, Paul Ekman, both of whom have proposed an evolutionary-classificatory approach to the affects.[14] Key features of their approach include the claim that there exists a small number of basic emotions, such as disgust, which can be defined in evolutionary terms as universal or pancultural, adaptive responses of the organism; that these emotions are discrete, innate, reflex-like "affect programs" located in subcortical parts of the brain; that the basic emotions manifest themselves in distinct patterns of physiological arousal and especially in characteristic facial expressions; that according to Ekman's "neurocultural" model for explaining commonalities and variations in human facial displays, socialization and learning may determine the range of stimuli that can "trigger" the emotions and can moderate facial movements according to social norms or "display rules," but that under the right conditions the underlying emotions can nevertheless leak out; and that the more complex or "higher" emotions are made up of blends of the basic emotions. This view of the emotions has been given a variety of names; in this paper I shall refer to it as the Basic Emotions View.[15]

A further claim associated with the Basic Emotions View, one that we have already seen in both Wicker et al.'s and Goldman's work, is that although the emotions can and do combine with the cognitive systems in the brain, they are essentially separate processes. For Freud and the "appraisal theorists" such as Richard Lazarus, Robert Solomon, Martha Nussbaum, Phoebe Ellsworth and others, emotions are embodied intentional states that are directed toward objects and depend on our beliefs and desires. But the Basic Emotion View denies this by interpreting the affects as non-intentional responses. It thus posits a constitutive disjunction between our emotions on the one hand and our knowledge of what causes and maintains them on the other, because feeling and cognition are two separate systems. On this conceptualization, disgust does not concern the meaning of the objects or situations that disgust us but the inherent noxiousness or offensiveness of physical objects (such as animal and body wastes or contaminated foods) that are capable of automatically triggering an adaptive disgust response.

The Basic Emotions View has been extremely influential, especially because Ekman's strategy of using pictures of posed facial expressions as "stimuli" to test the responses of subjects in experimental situations is so easy to use and conforms so well to the requirements of the newer imaging methods of research. Hundreds of experiments have now been performed using as emotional stimuli a standard set of photographs of posed expressions that Ekman and Friesen first made available for research purposes as far back as 1976.[16] In order to give the appearance of greater "ecological validity" to their study, Wicker and his colleagues used moving rather than still pictures of actors posing expressions, but this does not alter the fact

that their assumptions and research methods fundamentally adhere to the norms of the Basic Emotions View.

But are those assumptions and research methods valid? There are serious reasons to doubt it. Not only have appraisal theorists questioned the validity of the Basic Emotions View by emphasizing the role of perceptual-cognitive evaluation of the situation in emotional processing, for other reasons as well, it is doubtful whether the Basic Emotions View can withstand critical scrutiny.[17] In recent years especially, investigators such as Alan J. Fridlund, James A. Russell, Jose-Miguel Fernández-Dols, Brian Parkinson, and Lisa Feldman Barrett have published cogent criticisms of the Ekman paradigm.[18] The net result of those criticisms has been to directly challenge from within the emotion research field the empirical and theoretical validity of the Basic Emotions View. Nevertheless, for reasons I can't examine here, that paradigm continues to dominate the field. Indeed, it currently represents the orthodox position.

Critique

Against this background, I now want to raise certain questions about Wicker et al.'s experiment and the uses to which it is being put to explain emotional empathy. I cannot do justice to the entire range of issues that interest me but will restrict myself to the following points:

1. My first question concerns the validity of the assumption by Wicker and his group that there exists a small set of basic emotions and that under the right conditions facial expressions can be viewed as involuntary readouts of internal emotional states. This is an assumption that Fridlund, Russell, Fernández-Dols, Feldman Barrett, and others have criticized. If we are to take their criticisms seriously, as in my view we must, then we need to reject the presuppositions underlying Wicker et al.'s analysis of emotional empathy. The idea that there exists a set of basic emotions, which manifest themselves in characteristic patterns of physiological reactions and facial movements has been shown to be erroneous, and the "readout" view of the affects mistaken. Not that the reader would learn anything about those criticisms from Wicker et al.'s paper, which simply ignores them. The authors' failure to acknowledge the work of critics or to admit the existence of dissent exemplifies what I regard as a striking fact about the current situation of research on emotion, namely, that most scientists committed to the Basic Emotions View feel free to cite selectively and mention only the work of others that supports their views. The result is that objections are not allowed to disturb the investigators' basic premises or their experimental approach. Simply put, the network of presuppositions and methods associated with the Basic Emotions View is too attractive and the laboratory methods too convenient to be given up.

2. The experiment on disgust by Wicker and his group was based on a belief central to the Basic Emotions View, namely, that under the right conditions the face reliably and sincerely reveals the truth about the subject's "inner feelings." Put slightly differently, the body does not lie. The facial displays performed by the actors as "stimuli" for the participants in the experiment were assumed to be authentic emotional expressions of this kind. It is because Ekman thinks that under the right conditions the face is bound to reveal the authentic truth of a person's feelings that since 9/11 he has been developing methods of surveillance designed to read the telltale involuntary signs he believes will identify terrorists. His goal is to reassure us that we don't have to be frightened by the tendency of human beings to dissimulate, because trained observers can be counted on to reliably distinguish authentic facial expressions from false ones, the genuine from the feigned. His speculations have recently led to his involvement with a fanciful television series, "Lie to Me," in which the lead character, a jet-setting Ekman surrogate named Lightman, oversees a large firm of beautiful men and women, reads faces to solve crimes, and routinely makes the police and the FBI look foolish.

But what if his assurance that the face reliably divulges the truth of our emotions is false? What if, as critics have argued, there is no simple one-to-one relationship between a person's facial behavior and his or her emotional state? What if facial displays can't be considered simple readouts of underlying "basic emotions" because they are intentional communicative signals that aid in the negotiation of social encounters? As Fridlund has pointed out in this regard, "[A]ny reasonable account of signaling must recognize that signals do not evolve to provide information detrimental to the signaler. Displayers must not signal automatically, but only when it is beneficial to do so, that is, when such signaling serves its motives. Automatic readouts or spill-outs of drive states (i.e., 'facial expressions of emotion') would be extinguished early in phylogeny in the service of deception, economy, and privacy. Thus, an individual who momentarily shows a pursed lip on an otherwise impassive face is not showing 'leakage' of anger but conflicting intentions . . . for example, to show stolidity *and* to threaten" (*HFE*, 131-32). In short, what if deception is widespread in nature and can be advantageous for the displayer?[19] Wouldn't this imply that Wicker and his research team were wrong to take for granted the meaning of the posed facial expressions used in the experiment because they ignored the potential for a mismatch between facial displays and their subjects' actual emotional experiences?

So confident were Wicker and his colleagues that faces normally and automatically express the truth of the hypothesized basic emotions that it did not occur to them to ask the actors what they themselves were feeling when they sniffed the various odorants. Of course, it's possible that the actors really did feel the emotion of disgust they were exhibiting on their

faces; the smell in question was selected because it was vile and was assumed to be intrinsically disgusting. But possibly they did not—to repeat, no one asked. Nor did the investigators make any effort to find out or discern whether the participants in the experiment felt disgust when they observed the actors posing facial expressions of disgust. This omission is all the more striking because, according to the "hot hypothesis," individuals recognize emotions in others by actually experiencing the same emotions themselves. But how do we know that this was the case in the absence of any effort to find out? In the experiment by Wicker's research group, any attempt to discern what the participants were feeling was ruled out from the start. All they were asked to do was to passively witness the actors' facial displays or to smell the various odors themselves while submitting to brain imaging: emotion was equated with brain activation, with the result that the distinction between subjective experience and neuronal response was elided. In order to induce disgust in the participants, the investigators puffed the unpleasant and other odors into an anesthesia mask. Moreover, the subjects' mouth and eyes were closed throughout the olfactory runs, and during the experiment itself they did not speak or report on their feelings. In other words, it's as if the irrelevance of the subject's subjective state was assumed from the outset.[20] I could apply to the experiment what Vinciane Despret has said more generally about such methods in psychology: "The subject proves the scientist's point so well only because the latter has managed to keep him from speaking."[21]

3. My third question concerns the strategic role played in their experiment by Wicker et al.'s definition of disgust as simply and primordially a visceromotor reaction. For these authors, primitive or "core" disgust does not involve any cognitive-interpretive dimension entailing, as an intentionalist might argue, an embodied revulsion against appraised objects of various kinds, whether real or symbolic. Rather, Wicker and his team assumed that disgust is essentially a reflex response of the body to repulsive smells. The scientists treated the more familiar or ideational forms of disgust as elaborated forms of the more fundamental olfactory and gustatory reflexes that serve to protect the organism against poisoning by preventing the ingestion or inhalation of harmful substances and smells. Disgust was therefore viewed as a food-related sensation involving a reflex revulsion at the incorporation of revolting or noxious foods. On this interpretation, derived from the work of Paul Rozin, disgust just *is* the sensation of a bad smell or bad taste (as Rozin points out, the word *dis*-gust simply means "bad taste"): in human development distaste may become linked cognitively, ideationally, and symbolically to an array of non-food-related items and objects, but at its core disgust is "a type of rejection primarily motivated by sensory factors."[22] The fact that the anterior sector of the insula is an olfactory and gustatory center that appears to control visceral sensations and related autonomic responses helps support this sensory-corporeal definition of disgust (the anterior insula region is known as the "gustatory cortex").[23]

One can see the point of Wicker et al.'s definition. If disgust is just a bodily sensation with visceromotor manifestations, then the subjective-experiential dimension can be collapsed into the corporeal by studying brain activation directly, without any apparent conceptual loss. If both of us are disgusted in *my* insula, because the activation of *your* insula when you experience an emotion is automatically duplicated by the activation of *mine* when I observe your disgust expression, then scientists don't have to worry about what I am feeling or what you are feeling because the neural mechanism we share will tell us everything they need to know. [24]

But is such a reflex definition of disgust valid? Fridlund, for one, doesn't think so. He concedes that the social disgust display resembles the protective gag reflex, but thinks it is more likely that the display is a convention or a "conversational icon," of the kind we see when a child sticks out its tongue in a display of defiance (*HFE*, 120). [25] Nor does he believe that the disgust face should be considered an "expression" of a basic emotion. As he puts it, the gag reflex acts "not to 'express' sensory disgust but to abort it. Likewise, the social display signifies not 'you make me sick' so much as 'I want to do with you what I do with bad food (lest I get sick).' It thereby denotes an intention rather than an 'expression' of an emotion, and is therefore better named 'revulsion' or even 'rejection' than 'disgust'" (*HFE*, 121). In other words, Fridlund proposes that the disgust display should be regarded as an intentional movement subserving various social motives, which means not only that it is responsive to proximate elicitors but also that it is sensitive to those who are present, one's aim toward them, and the nature and context of the interaction. [26] He cites various experiments suggesting that facial responses to odors and tastes do not behave like simple reflexes but are influenced by the social situation in which they occur, including the presence of others. [27] Research on animal signaling has also suggested that many nonhuman facial and vocal displays likewise vary with the presence of interactants and with the relationship between the interactants and the displayer (*HFE*, 145-152). [28]

Such findings are known collectively as "audience effects," a characterization which has the virtue of drawing attention to the performative-transactional nature of facial and other displays. [29] It is precisely this performative-transactional dimension that Wicker and his team ignored. In their experiment, the investigators treated both the actors and the experimental subjects or participants as if the latter were entirely alone in the room, which is to say as if they were completely liberated from the various cultural constraints that ordinarily guide people in any situation along a trajectory of social interaction with the expected and appropriate roles and expressions, with the result that they were free to exhibit their natural, innately-determined expressions. In other words, these scientists forgot that the laboratory is a social space structured by conscious and unconscious or subconscious demands and expectations, including not only those of the experimental subject but of the scientists involved as well.

Fridlund has emphasized the "dramaturgical" dimension of such demands and expectations, suggesting that when subjects are asked to pose or mimic facial displays to the point of being emotionally aroused themselves, the experimenter is actually a director and the subject-actor posing the expression is a Stanislavski actor who "slips into role": "It is the role or 'set' taken in the given social context that determines the emotion," Fridlund observes in this regard, "not the facial displays themselves" (*HFE*, 179).

4. In the light of such considerations, which emphasize the sociality of facial displays, the decision by Wicker and his colleagues to define disgust as primordially a primitive reflex can be understood as a means of denying or suppressing the social-transactional character of the organism's emotional reactions. It is all the more interesting, then, to note that at one moment in their paper Wicker et al. themselves naively invoked Stanislasvki's acting theories in ways that unexpectedly redounded on themselves. The issue came up when Wicker et al. were discussing another experiment on emotional empathy, one that appeared the same year as their own and that covered somewhat similar ground. In the experiment in question, Laurie Carr and her associates asked the experimental participants—ordinary persons, not actors—to pose all six of the "basic emotions," including disgust, in order to determine by fMRI whether the same neural substrate was activated both when the participants actually experienced emotions through posing or imitation in this way, and when they observed the same emotions in others, by observing a set of Ekman and Friesen's photographs of facial expressions on a computer screen. [30] Carr's research group showed that both the imitation of emotions and their observation activated a largely similar network of brain regions, including the anterior insula, although activation was greater when the subjects imitated the expressions than when they merely passively observed them in others. [31]

In their paper Wicker and his team acknowledged the agreement between their own results and those of other researchers, including those of Carr et al. But they also drew attention to certain differences. They pointed out that no previous study of disgust, including that of Carr and her colleagues, had actually evoked the "sensation of disgust" in experimental subjects, as they themselves had done, in order to investigate whether the activated locations were common to both the experience of disgust and the perception of the same emotions in others. They stressed in this regard that merely imitating or posing an emotion, as Carr's experimental subjects were asked to do, does not require or guarantee that the poser subjectively feels the portrayed affect, because "imitation usually does not require experiencing the imitated emotion" ("BUD," 658-59). They thus declared that Carr's research group had demonstrated only that the insula was involved in imitation, *not* that it was directly involved in the "experience of emotions" ("BUD," 659). In other words, Wicker's team claimed that, unlike the subjects in their own experiment who, by smelling a foul odor actually experienced

the emotion or sensation of disgust, the participants in Carr's experiment might only have represented but not personally felt the emotions they were showing on their faces (as if Carr's subjects only experienced "cold" emotional responses).

Since Carr and her group found that the insula was nevertheless activated, their findings appeared to invalidate the claim by Wicker and his colleagues that the insula is necessary for actual emotional experience. But Wicker et al. ingeniously proposed a solution to this apparent difficulty. They suggested that, like good method actors, some of Carr et al.'s participants must have been so swept up in their role that they really must have felt the emotions they were portraying on their faces. "However," Wicker's group observed in this connection, "in the light of our findings, it is possible that, during imitation, some of their participants felt the imitated emotion—as actors do when using the 'Stanislavsky' method of emotion induction" ("BUD," 659). [32] I call the invocation by Wicker and his team of Stanislavski's theory of acting "naïve" because the authors don't seem to have appreciated the problem of acting in their own case. The interesting question here is: Why in their own experiment did these investigators use not ordinary persons but precisely actors to perform expressions in front of the camera for the purposes of making portraits of disgusted, neutral, or pleased facial expressions to show to the participants in the experiment? If disgusting smells are disgusting to everyone and automatically induce the experience (or "sensation") of disgust, then ordinary volunteers could have served the investigators' purposes just as well. The fact that professional actors were used and that they were asked to display expressions in a "natural but clear way" ("BUD," 661) suggests that some degree of acting skill and "stage direction" was necessary to produce the required disgust display, or at any rate that Wicker and his team believed that to be the case—in other words, they believed, or proceeded as if they believed, that ordinary people are not very good at portraying such emotional expressions in the way scientists require. We might put it that in their experiment, Wicker and his colleagues functioned in part as directors of the facial displays, although it remains an open question whether the performers slipped into their role so deeply that, like good "method" actors, they really felt the emotion or "sensation" of disgust the investigators attributed to them—as I say, the actors were not asked. In any case, the notion of a "natural but clear" display begs every conceivable question, implying as it does that performers or actors are capable on demand of producing "natural" appearances (as opposed to what exactly?) and moreover that they can on demand produce emotional expressions that are "intense but natural" and not, let us say, overdone or exaggerated. [33] But the entire history of modern theories of dramaturgy testifies to the fact that nothing of the sort can be taken for granted. [34] All this may be summed up by saying that in their appeal to the ideas of Stanislasvki, Wicker's team inadvertently drew attention to the contextual-social influences at work in the

production of emotional expressions, influences that their Ekman-inspired reflex, corporeal, readout approach to the affects was meant to forestall.

New Findings

The disgust story does not end here. Perhaps aware that the 2003 experiment on disgust by Wicker and his group was defective in some respects, investigators returned to the fray with a follow-up experiment in 2007. In the new study, by Jabbi, Swart, and Keysers (the latter being one of the authors of the 2003 experiment), disgusting *tastes* rather than disgusting *smells* were the focus of inquiry, but the basic experimental set-up remained the same. As before, actors were filmed while posing disgusted, pleased, and neutral expressions in a "naturally vivid manner," this time when sipping unpleasant (quinine), pleasant (sucrose) and neutral (artificial saliva) solutions from a cup, and the ten best clips for each emotional category were selected for use in the experiment. In the "Visual runs" the experimental participants (eighteen right-handed subjects, ten females and eight males) were asked to observe the movie clips of those posed expressions while they themselves underwent fMRI. In the "Gustatory runs" the participants were asked to sip the same liquids as those the actors had tasted, again while undergoing brain scanning. (The solutions were delivered by an experimenter standing beside the MRI scanner, using a tubing system consisting of a syringe connected to an infusion tube inserted into a pacifier.) Just as in the previous experiment, insula activation was reported in both the observing and the gustatory or "experiencing" condition. But this time the investigators added a new feature: they asked the participants to rate their own experiences both on tasting the solutions and on seeing the actors' emotional expressions when the latter posed their facial reactions to the same drinks. It's as if the researchers recognized that, without documenting the participants' actual subjective states, the "hot" hypothesis predicting that the participants would actually experience the same emotion as those whom they were observing had remained unproven. Put less critically, it's as if they wanted to document assumptions that in their 2003 paper Wicker et al. had apparently taken for granted but that skeptics could rightly question. [35]

It is worth remarking that the attempt to evaluate the participants' subjective responses raised some theoretical difficulties for Jabbi et al. The hot hypothesis claimed that observers experience emotions in an automatic, non-cognitive way just by observing the facial expressions of others. That hypothesis cannot be supported without demonstrating that people really do experience disgust when they see disgust expressions in others—evidence of brain activation alone will not suffice. The dilemma Jabbi et al. faced was that the attempt to determine an observer's emotional experience required asking him or her to make conscious

and explicit what, on the hot hypothesis, had been theorized as an implicit, non-conscious and sub-personal process. Evaluating a participant's subjective feelings therefore necessitated asking him or her to transform a hypothesized non-cognitive experience or event into an actual cognitive one in order to articulate and report on it. In effect the hypothesis of emotional simulation couldn't be tested, because the moment the researchers asked their subjects to report on their subjective experience the latter were doing cognition and hence transforming what was understood to be a "hot," non-cognitive process into a cognitive one. In short, the hot hypothesis couldn't be confirmed without contradicting its basic, non-cognitive premise.

Moreover, in designing their experiment Jabbi and his colleagues appear to have been motivated by a further concern, namely, that although the hot hypothesis could explain the observer's tendency to emotional "contagion" or emotional resonance, it couldn't in itself account for the empathic "understanding" of another, as the hot hypothesis had seemed to propose. As Jabbi's research team observed in this regard, infants contagiously cry when they witness the distress of other people but are presumably unable to distinguish their feelings from those of others. In contrast, more mature persons not only resonate contagiously to the emotions of others, but are able to interpret and attribute their subjective states to someone else while distinguishing their emotions from those of another, thereby acquiring genuine "empathic understanding" or "conscious knowledge" of the other. In short, in their paper Jabbi and his colleagues now appeared to concede that mirroring or resonance or contagion of the kind proposed by the hot hypothesis might be a prerequisite for empathic "understanding" of another but is not sufficient for it, as the hot hypothesis had at first appeared to claim. [36]

Against this background of issues and concerns, we can understand why in their 2007 experiment Jabbi and his team made an effort to determine the subjective responses of their experimental subjects. [37] First, the researchers rated the subjective reactions to the gustatory emotions of the actors in the movies by asking the participants how willing they would be to drink the beverages the actors had just tried (using a scale from – 6 "absolutely not willing," to 6 "very much willing"). Second, the investigators asked the participants to rate the solutions they themselves had to ingest during the experiment (on a scale ranging from "extremely disgusting" to "extremely delicious"). These scales were taken to be measures of the participants' evaluations of the beverages involved, in the third person ("He tastes") and the first person perspective ("I taste"), thus allowing a direct comparison of these two perspectives. In other words, how willing the participants were to taste the drinks they witnessed the actors ingesting was taken to be a measure of the affective states the facial expressions induced in them. In addition, Jabbi et al. obtained the participants' self-reported

empathy scores as measured by an Interpersonal Reactivity Index. The investigators then correlated these scores with the insula activation that occurred during the same participants' witnessing the clips of the actors posing the pleased, or disgusted, or neutral expressions. [38]

The main new result reported by Jabbi et al. was that for the first time it had been demonstrated that during the observation of other people's "gustatory emotions" (that is, the observation of other people's disgust expressions), the size of insula activation correlated with differences in self-reported interpersonal reactivity, or empathy. They took this finding to extend the previous demonstration by Wicker et al. that the insula was activated during the experience and observation of negative emotional states, such as disgust, and therefore to provide further support for the hypothesis that the anterior insula was involved in the transformation of emotional states into experienced ones. Their results also showed that the insula's involvement was not restricted to negative emotions but was involved in the processing of positive emotions as well.

In the light of the criticisms I have already offered in my paper, many questions could be raised about this experiment and its purported findings, but here I will raise only two. [39] First, Jabbi et al. appear to have made no attempt to ascertain whether the *participants* (observers) felt disgust or pleasure when they actually watched the actors' facial expressions, so that their effort to determine their experimental subjects' subjective experience seems to have fallen short. [40] Equally interesting from my point of view is the fact that Jabbi et al. made no attempt to discover what the *actors* experienced when they were asked to taste various liquids and produce the relevant facial movement or expression in order to be filmed. Why did the researchers limit their inquiries in this regard? Perhaps the investigators assumed that the liquids the actors were asked to sip inevitably aroused in them the relevant experience of disgust or pleasure and, according to the readout theory, therefore also produced the relevant facial expression. [41] Or maybe the researchers took it for granted that facial mimicry of the kind involved in posing expressions automatically induces in actors the relevant internal emotional states (although the evidence on the topic of facial-mimicry or facial feedback is mixed at best). [42] But Jabbi and his research group didn't address this question at all.

Why does the omission matter? I think it matters because, by failing to determine the actors' personal or subjective experiences, the authors left open the possibility that, just as in the earlier experiment by Wicker's research team, so in this experiment the actors might not have actually experienced disgust themselves but merely posed the facial expressions they were asked to represent on their faces. (Of course, as I've said, the quinine used to induce the actors' disgust expression was taken to be inherently disgusting, but this claim was not tested by asking the actors their subjective reactions, so it remains an open question whether such a response should have been taken for granted.) Actors do this all the time, and indeed Ekman's

neo-cultural theory predicts insincerity or feigning in many social situations, of which the demand that actors pose an expression can serve as an example. But the effect of the omission is to suggest that since, according to the "hot hypothesis" of emotional empathy, we automatically empathize with, or resonate to, the emotional expressions of others, we will do so whether or not the people we observe are really feeling what they show on their faces. The hot hypothesis therefore seems to imply that we are destined to spend our days resonating madly, nonselectively, immoderately, automatically to whatever facial signals someone else, anyone else, sends us, without our knowing whether those signals are telling us the truth about the latter's emotional state. If the mirror neuron theory of simulation is true, we can be fooled—we *will* be fooled—about the emotional states of others all the time. Both of us disgusted in *my* insula? It might be more accurate to say that *I* will be disgusted in *my* insula as long as *you* display or perform an expression of disgust—regardless of whether you are sincere. But what kind of theory is *that?*

* * *

It is often said by scientists that our understanding of the neural basis of empathy is in its infancy, the suggestion being that it is only a matter of time before problems will be solved, as if the difficulties facing the research field are merely technical. But the implication of my paper is that the issues confronting empathy theorists are as much theoretical or, say, philosophical, as they are technical or scientific. Adam Smith's name is today routinely evoked in introductory remarks on the nature of empathy. But how many people realize that for Smith empathy (or sympathy) was not a natural phenomenon or an automatic process of resonance with the feelings of another? Rather, according to him sympathy was conditioned by an inherent theatricality that, by making persons into actors and spectators who distance themselves from each other and even from themselves, forestalls the possibility (the dream) of complete sympathetic merger or identification.[43] Freud expressed the same difficulty, indeed impossibility, in his own way when he made psychical ambivalence—the constitutive impossibility of separating Eros and Thanatos, love and hate, immersion and distance—central to his understanding of the sympathetic-identificatory phenomenon. According to Freud, rivalry with the other is as inherent in human nature as is love, and indeed is inseparable from love: the taming of these emotions is the necessary but endless task of civilization.[44] For such thinkers, then, our knowledge of other minds cannot be explained by an appeal to a simple mechanism of mutual resonance or mutual attunement of the sort I have analyzed here. A further implication of my paper is that the problem of emotional empathy can only be rendered the more intractable if investigators persist in adopting the theoretical assumptions and experimental methods associated with the Basic Emotions View and the mirror neuron hypothesis.

NOTES

My thanks to Michael Fried, Avery Gilbert, James A. Russell, and Rainer Reisenzein for their helpful comments on my paper.

1. Bruno Wicker, Christian Keysers, Jane Plailly, Jean-Pierre Royet, Vittorio Gallese, and Giacomo Rizzolatti, "Both of Us Disgusted in *My* Insula: The Common Neural Basis of Seeing and Feeling Disgust," *Neuron* 40.3 (October 2003): 655-64; hereafter abbreviated "BUD."

2. As Dinstein has observed, in the absence of direct evidence for mirror neurons in humans many researchers interpret any fMRI response by the relevant brain areas as due to mirror neuron activity. Ilan Dinstein, Cibu Thomas, Marlene Behrmann, and David Heeger, "A Mirror Up to Nature," *Current Biology* 18.1 (January 2008): R13-R18.

3. Mukamel et al. directly recorded from the brains of 21 patients who were being treated for intractable epilepsy. Electrode location was determined solely on the basis of clinical criteria for surgery. Neuronal activity from 1,177 cells was recorded in the human medial frontal and temporal cortices while patients executed or observed hand grasping actions and facial emotional expressions. The authors reported that a significant proportion of neurons in the supplementary motor area, hippocampus, and environs responded to both observation and execution of those actions. However, a subset of these neurons demonstrated excitation during action-execution but inhibition during action-observation (in other words, these neurons showed contrasting patterns of excitation and inhibition for action-execution and action-observation respectively). The authors concluded that multiple systems in humans might be endowed with mirroring mechanisms for both the integration and differentiation of perceptual and motor aspects of actions performed by the self and others. They suggested that the inhibiting neurons seemed suited to provide the controls necessary to prevent the organism from making undesirable automatic imitations of others. Roy Mukamel, Arne D. Ekstrom, Jonas Kaplan, Marco Iacobini, and Itzhak Fried, "Single-Neuron Responses in Humans during Execution and Observation of Actions, *Current Biology* 20.8 (April 2010): 750-56.

These findings on humans were initially hailed as providing crucial empirical support for the mirror neuron theory (see for example, Christian Keysers and Valeria Gazzola, "Social Neuroscience: Mirror Neurons Recorded in Humans," *Current Biology* 20.8 (April 2010): R353-R354). But the new research results have begun to complicate the picture of the function of mirror neurons, limiting their role and giving due credit to the importance of *non*-mirror systems. Cognitive neuroscientist Greg Hickok, a long-time critic of mirror neuron theory, sees in the theoretical revisions now being proposed by mirror neuron theorists evidence of a retreat that amounts to a confirmation of his alternative theory, according to which mirror neurons are part of the sensorimotor system involved in action selection and control, rather than action understanding.

Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia have recently acknowledged the limitations of mirror neurons by restricting their role to that of allowing us to understand "from the inside" only those actions we already know how to perform (Giacomo Rizzolatti and Corrado Sinigaglia, "The Functional Role of the Parieto-Frontal Mirror Circuit: Interpretations and Misinterpretations," *Nature Reviews Neurosciences*11.4 [April 2010]: 264-74). As Hickok notes, this is a highly limited domain of function, considering the range of actions we are able to understand without being able to perform them ourselves. Moreover, Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia have also moved away from the idea that mirror neurons code particular movements via motor simulation toward the notion that they code motor goals or intentions. But since goals and intentions are non-motoric, with this concession these theorists have retreated from their claim to provide a motor explanation of how we understand the actions of others. In doing so, they have implicitly reintroduced cognitive-intentional processes into the functioning of the mirror neuron system– cognitive processes whose participation in action understanding mirror neurons were supposed to render unnecessary. As Hickok remarks of Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia's latest formulation: "This sounds like a profound insight, but in fact it pushes mirror neurons right out of the motor system and into the dreaded cognitive system that Rizzolatti and colleagues so wish to avoid." (See Gregory Hickok, "Two New Ways the Mirror System Claim is Losing Steam," www.talkingbrains.org, May 18, 2011). For further details see the discussions at www.talkingbrians.org; Gregory Hickok, "Eight Problems for the Mirror Neuron Theory of Action Understanding in Monkeys and Humans," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 21.7 (July 2008): 1229-43; Gregory Hickok, "What Mirror Neurons are REALLY doing," http://talkingbrains.org/2010/what-mirror-neurons-are-really-doing.html. September 17, 2009; Gregory Hickok and Marc Hauser, "(Mis)understanding Mirror Neurons," *Current Biology* 20.14 (July 2010): R593-R594 ;and Vittorio Gallese, Morton Ann Gernsbacher, Cecilia Heyes, Gregory Hickok, and Marco Iacobini, "Mirror Neuron Forum," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 6.4 (July 2011): 369-407.

4. David Freedberg and Vittorio Gallese, "Motion, Emotion, and Empathy in Esthetic Experience," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 11.5 (May 2007): 197-203.

5. Gallese, Stephanie Preston, and F.B.M. de Waal are among those who proposed early on that empathy depends on a perception-action model, according to which the perception of another's state automatically activates the observer's representations of that state, and that activation of those representations generates the autonomic and somatic responses associated with the emotion. See Vittorio Gallese, Luciano Fadiga, Leonardo Fogassi, and Giacomo Rizzolatti, "Action Recognition in the Premotor Cortex," *Brain* 119.2 (April 1996): 593-609; and Stephanie Preston, and Frans B.M. de Waal, "Empathy: Its Ultimate and Proximate Bases," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 25.1 (February 2002): 1-20.

6. The insula (or insular cortex) is a portion of the cerebral cortex folded deep within the brain; the cortical area overlying it toward the lateral surface of the brain is the "operculum" (meaning "lid"). The insula is divided into two parts, the larger anterior insula and the smaller posterior insula. The anterior insula appears to be involved in a variety of functions, including emotional regulation and physiological homeostasis. In its original formulation, the mirror neuron system was considered a strictly neo-cortical system, so that the assumption that mirror neurons exist regulation and physiological homeostasis. In the original formulation, the mirror neuron system was considered a strictly neo-cortical system, so the assumption that mirror neurons exist sub-cortically in the anterior insula is a theory, one that relies on indirect evidence only of the kind ostensibly provided by Wicker et al.'s experiment. For an interesting debate on the topic of mirror neurons and emotional processing see the 2008 exchange between Jan Panksepp, Ross Buck, and others at the website of the International Society for Research on Emotion (ISRE) at http://isre.org.

7. Vittorio Gallese, Christian Keysers, and Giacomo Rizzolatti, "A Unifying View of the Basis of Social Cognition." *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 8.9 (September 2004): 396-403; Christian Keysers and Valeria Gazzola, "Toward a Unifying Theory of Social Cognition," *Progress in Brain Research*, 156 (2006): 379-401; Giacomo Rizzolatti and Corrado Sinigaglia, *Mirrors in the Brain: How Our Minds Share Actions and Emotions*, trans. Frances Anderson (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

8. Alvin I. Goldman, *Simulating Minds: The Philosophy, Psychology, and Neuroscience of Mindreading* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 113; hereafter abbreviated *SM*.

9. Goldman argues that on the minimum Unmediated Resonance (Mirroring) model of simulation, the sub-threshold tokening of the same emotion experienced in the target serves as the matching or mirroring event on which the subsequent attribution or imputation (projection) of the emotion to the other is based. It is, however, only the first stage of a two-stage routine comprising simulation and projection. In Wicker et al.'s experiment, as Goldman acknowledges, the participants were not asked to judge the actors' emotional displays, so the second, attribution stage of the simulation routine was not tested. However, Goldman thinks that lesion studies of the kind he reviews in his book do clearly suggest the existence of an association between damage to substrates for the experience of disgust and impaired interpersonal judgments of disgust (Goldman, *Simulating Minds*, 137, and see also, 40). For a critique of some of the lesion studies on which Goldman relies, see Ruth Leys, "How Did Fear Become a Scientific Entity and What Kind of Entity Is It?" *Representations* 110.1 (Spring 2010): 66-104. A detailed review of Gallese's related "shared manifold" theory of empathy and social cognition lies beyond the scope of this paper.

10. In fact, Wicker and his research team showed that in the gustatory runs, the amygdala was activated along with the anterior insula; they reported that in the visual runs, only the disgust expression activated the insula and there was no activation of the amygdala in response to seeing disgust.

11. The term "cognitive" can mean different things to different theorists. Because the term "cognitive" is often associated with the "cognitive revolution" in psychology and with computer models of the mind, emotion theorist Paul Griffiths prefers to use the term "propositional attitude" theory to describe the position of appraisal theorists who stress the role of beliefs, appraisals, and meaning in emotion (Paul E. Griffiths, "The Degeneration of the Cognitive Theory of Emotion," *Philosophical Psychology* 2.3 (September 1989): 297-313; and Paul E. Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are: The Problem of Psychological Categories* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). I use the term "intentionalist" to describe these theorists as a way of signaling the importance of (conscious or unconscious) intentionality in emotion, without regard to the role of human speech. Intentionalism (or cognitivism) in affect theory is often represented by its critics as offering a peculiarly disembodied view of the emotions, but intentionalism is perfectly compatible with the claim that the emotions involve an organism's embodied disposition to act in certain ways toward the objects in its life world.

12. Paul Ekman, "Universality of Emotional Expression? A History of the Dispute," in Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, third ed.; intro., afterword, and commentaries by Paul Ekman (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 373.

13. It is an interesting question whether intentional states of the kind involved in the understanding of actions can in fact be explained by the firing of mirror neurons, or whether a philosophical confusion is involved here. For challenges to mirror neuron theory along these lines see Emma Borg, "If Mirror Neurons are the Answer, What is the Question?" *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 14.8 (August 2007): 5-19; and Pierre Jacob, "What Do Mirror Neurons Contribute to Human Social

Cognition?" *Mind and Language* 23.2 (April 2008): 190-223. For a thoughtful critique of simulation theory, including neural simulation theory of the kind advocated by Gallese, Keysers and others, see also Shaun Gallagher, "Simulation Trouble," *Social Neuroscience* 2.3-4 (September 2007): 353-65. Gallagher proposes instead a theory of mind reading based on notions of embodied enactive perception. "Rather than simulation," he suggests, "MN [mirror neuron] activation can easily be viewed as part of the neuronal processes that underlie enactive inter-subjective perception that functions within the interactional context" (Shaun Gallagher, "Phenomenology, Neural Simulation, and the Enactive Approach to Intersubjectivity," www.duq.edu/phenomenology/_pdf/gall10duquesne.pdf [2010], 13). On this interpretation, mirror activation is not the initiation of simulation, but part of an enactive inter-subjective perception of what the other is doing. There are suggestive similarities between Gallagher's enactive approach and Hickok's idea that mirror neurons should be viewed as part of a sensori- or perceptual-motor apparatus, not as a freestanding motor system.

14. Ultimately, the Basic Emotions View can be traced even further back, to the work of William James and others. But that story must be told on another occasion.

15. James A. Russell and Jose-Miguel Fernández-Dols, eds., *The Psychology of Facial Expression* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), use the term "The Facial Expression Program" to describe the Tomkins-Ekman position (7); Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are*, uses the label "the affect program theory" (77); and Alan J. Fridlund, in *Human Facial Expression: An Evolutionary View* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1994), uses the label "The Emotions View" (124): hereafter abbreviated *HFE*.

16. Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen, *Pictures of Facial Affect* (Paolo Alto, Calif.: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1976). In an earlier study of neural responses to disgust in which subjects were shown pictures of neutral, disgusted, frightened, and mildly happy facial expressions—pictures taken from Ekman and Friesen's standard set of posed expressions—while they underwent fMRI. The experiment confirmed the involvement of the anterior insula in the recognition of disgust displays. M.L. Phillips, A. W. Young, S. K. Scott, A. J. Calder, C. Andrew, V. Giampietro, S. C. R. Williams, E. T. Bullmore, M. Brammer, and J. A. Gray, "Neural Responses to Facial and Vocal Expressions of Fear and Disgust," *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*, series B 265.1408 (October 1998): 1809-1817.

17. For a recent review of appraisal theories see *Appraisal Processes in Emotion: Theory, Methods, Research*, ed. Klaus R. Scherer, Angela Schorr, and Tom Johnstone (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

18. Most current work on the emotions adopts the tenets of the Basic Emotions View. In a large literature see Paul Ekman, "An Argument for Basic Emotions." *Cognition and Emotion* 6.3-4 (1992): 169-200; Paul Ekman, "Basic Emotions," in Tim Dalgleish and Mick Power, eds., *Handbook of Cognition and Emotion* (Chichester, U.K. and New York: Wiley, 1999), 45-60; Paul Ekman and D. Cordaro, "What is Meant by Calling Emotions Basic," *Emotion Review* 3.4 (October 2011): 364-70; P. E. Griffiths, *What Emotions Really Are*; and Andrea Scarantino and Paul Griffiths, "Don't Give Up on Basic Emotions," *Emotion Review* 3.4 (October 2011): 444-54. A recent book on disgust by philosopher Daniel Kelly adopts the Ekman view of disgust as a basic emotion and fails to consider alternative approaches. See Daniel Kelly, *Yuck! The Nature and Moral Significance of Disgust* (Cambridge, Mass.: Bradford, 2011).
For criticisms of the Basic Emotions View see Fridlund, *Human Facial Expression*; Russell and Fernández-Dols, *The Psychology of Facial Expression*; Brian Parkinson, "Do Facial Movements Express Emotions or Communicate Motives?" *Personality and Social Psychology* 9.4 (November 2005): 278-311; Lisa Feldman Barrett, "Are Emotions Natural Kinds?" *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 1.1 (March 2006): 28-58; Lisa Feldman Barrett, "Solving the Emotion Paradox: Categorization and the Experience of Emotion," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 10.1 (February 2006): 20-46; Lisa Feldman Barrett, Kristen A. Lindquist, Eliza Bliss-Moreau, Seth Duncan, Maria Gendron, Jennifer Mize, and Lauren Brennan, "Of Mice and Men: Natural Kinds of Emotion in the Mammalian Brain? A Response to Panksepp and Izard," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 2.3 (September 2007): 297-312; Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007); Ruth Leys, "How Did Fear Become a Natural Object and What Kind of Object Is It?"; Ruth Leys, "Navigating the Genealogies of Trauma, Guilt, and Affect: An Interview with Ruth Leys," *The University of Toronto Quarterly*, Special Issue, "Models of Mind and Consciousness," 79.2 (Spring 2010): 656-79; Ruth Leys "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37.3 (Spring 2011): 434-72; Ruth Leys, "Affect and Intention: A Reply to William E. Connolly," *Critical Inquiry* 37.4 (Summer 2011): 799-805.

19. In Fridlund's view deception is omnipresent in nature, but he does not treat all signals as deceptive or manipulative because cooperation between signaler and receiver is also important. He thus agrees with animal communication experts who propose the existence in any signaling system of a dynamic equilibrium between cooperative and exploitative signals (*HFE*, 137-39). The question of reliability and deception in animal communication, which has played an important role in the history of debates over the nature of the emotions, is a large topic that deserves separate discussion.

20. But the researchers could have asked the participants about the feelings elicited by the odors by letting them press buttons while they were inside the fMRI tube, or by asking them about their feelings before or after the fMRI session, or by

presenting the odors a second time outside the imaging process, and so on. But none of this was done. My thanks to Rainer Reisenzein for these suggestions.

21. Vinciane Despret, *Our Emotional Makeup: Ethnopsychology and Selfhood* (New York: Other Press, 2004), 92. See also Gallese et al., "A Unifying View of the Basis of Social Cognition," in which the authors claim on the basis of Wicker et al.'s findings that the mirror-neuron system gives us "direct experiential understanding" of the actions and emotions of others without the intervention of conceptual reasoning or reflective mediation (396). But the participants' emotional experiences of disgust when observing the disgust faces of the actors was not measured by Wicker et al.

22. Paul Rozin and April E. Fallon, "A Perspective on Disgust," *Psychological Review* 94.1 (January 1987): 23-41; Paul Rozin, Jonathan Haidt, and Clark R. McCauley, "Disgust," in *Handbook of Emotions*, 2nd edition, ed. Michael Lewis and Jeannette M. Haviland-Jones (New York: Guilford Press, 2000), 637-53.

23. In support of their interpretation, Wicker et al. cite electrical stimulation experiments on the anterior section of the insula conducted during neurosurgery. The stimulations induced nausea and unpleasant sensations in the throat and mouth, suggesting a role for the anterior insula in transforming unpleasant sensory input into visceromotor reactions and the accompanying feeling of disgust ("BUD," 658). For an interesting debate over the nature of disgust between researchers Royzman and Kurzban, who defend Fridlund's strategic signaling position, and Chapman and Anderson, who defend a read-out view of disgust, see: Edward B. Royzman, Robert F. Leeman, and John Sabini, "'You make me sick': Moral Dyspepsia as a Reaction to Third-Party Sibling Incest." *Motivation and Emotion* 32.2 (June 2008): 100-08; Edward B. Royzman and Robert Kurzban, "Minding the Metaphor: The Elusive Character of Moral Disgust," *Emotion Review* 3.3 (July 2011): 269-71; Edward B. Royzman and Robert Kurzban, "Facial Movements are Not Goosebumps: A Response to Chapman and Anderson." *Emotion Review* 3.3 (July 2011): 274-75; Hanah A. Chapman, David A. Kim, Joshua M. Susskind, and Adam K. Anderson, "In Bad Taste: Evidence for the Oral Origins of Moral Disgust." *Science* 323 (February 2009): 1222-1226; Hanah A. Chapman and Adam K. Anderson, "Response to Royzman and Kurzban." *Emotion Review* 3.3 (July 2011): 272-73. Royzman and Kurzban's "Facial Movements Are Not Goosebumps" is especially useful for its brief discussion of how problematic the evidence is for the existence of characteristic disgust facial expressions in congenitally blind people, children, and other individuals.

24. It appears that for Rozin disgust is a more cognitively sophisticated emotion than Wicker et al. take it to be, even if food rejection is central to it. On this point see William Ian Miller, *The Anatomy of Disgust* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); and Edward B. Royzman and John Sabini, "Something It Takes to be an Emotion: The Interesting Case of Surprise," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 31.1 (March 2001): 29-59.

25. Darwin described the disgust response in these terms: "The term 'disgust,' in its simplest sense, means something offensive to the taste. It is curious how readily this feeling is excited by anything unusual in the appearance, odour, or nature of our food. In Tierra del Fuego a native touched with his finger some cold preserved meat which I was eating at our bivouac, and plainly showed utter disgust at its softness; whilst I felt utter disgust at my food being touched by a naked savage, though his hands did not appear dirty" (Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, third ed., ed. Paul Ekman, 255). As Ahmed has pointed out, despite Darwin's apparent emphasis on the self-evident nature of the disgust reaction, his own description points to the complexity of the emotion in its mediated entanglement with questions of familiarity versus unfamiliarity, purity versus impurity, proximity versus distance, white man versus native, and so on. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 82-84. Recently, Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia naively quote this passage from Darwin as if its meaning is self-evident, because for them disgust is one of the basic emotions they regard as visceromotor reflex responses with characteristic facial movements, emotions to which we empathically respond in a mirror-like simulation process. See Rizzolatti and Sinigaglia, *Mirrors in the Brain*, 175-78.

26. Wicker et al. regard the contagiousness of vomiting as further evidence of the automaticity of emotional empathy ("BUD," 661). Fridlund, however, argues that only when odors are very strongly unpleasant or irritating to the nose and throat do expulsive facial reflexes occur (as when the trigeminal nerve is irritated by ammonia), and considers these brainstem-mediated, protective reflexes whose actions imply neither hedonics nor emotion. So for him the issue is whether, apart from such supranormal stimulation, patterned faces automatically accompany the hedonics of odor or taste. His conclusion is that they don't. He does not regard the contagiousness of retching as a matter of the automaticity of simulation but as an aversive reaction caused not only by the sight of the face but by the sound and posture of vomiting, as well as by the sight and smell of the vomitus (*HFE*, 108-122, 153-54).

27. For a review of the experimental literature up to 1994, not mentioned by Wicker et al., see *HFE*, 155-57; Russell and Fernández-Dols, *The Psychology of Facial Expression*; Peter Marler and Christopher Evans, "Animal Sounds and Human Faces: Do They Have Anything in Common?" in *The Psychology of Facial Expression*, ed. Russell and Fernández-Dols, 133-226; and James A. Russell, Jo-Anne Bachorowski, and Jose-Miguel Fernández-Dols, "Facial and Vocal Expressions of Emotions," *Annual Review of Psychology* 54 (2003): 329-49.

Fridlund has called his approach to the emotions the Behavioral Ecology View in order to emphasize that facial movements function not to express the so-called basic emotions but to communicate information about social motives to implicit or explicit audiences. For a related set of experiments on the influence of audiences, this time experiments on the smile, see Robert E. Kraut and Robert E. Johnston, "Social and Emotional Messages in Smiling: An Ethological Approach," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 37.9 (September 1979): 1539-1553; María-Angeles Ruiz-Belda, Jose-Miguel Fernández-Dols, Pilar Carrera, and Kim Barchard, "Spontaneous Facial Expressions of Happy Bowlers and Soccer Fans," *Cognition and Emotion* 17.2 (2003): 315-26; and David Matsumoto and Bob Willingham, "The Thrill of Victory and the Agony of Defeat: Spontaneous Expressions of Medal Winners of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 91.3 (September 2006): 568-81. In a recent experiment comparing Ekman's neurocultural theory and Fridlund's Behavioral Ecology View, Studtmann and Reisenzein tried to address various perceived limitations in these previous studies of the smile. The initial report of their findings appeared to affirm the validity of Fridlund's theory by stating that "1: Bowlers do not smile because they feel happy about a good score. 2: They smile because they have a social motive and an audience they can communicate the motive to. 3: Having a feeling of joy but no appropriate audience is in most cases not sufficient to display happiness." Markus Studtmann and Rainer Reisenzein, "Bowlers' Smiles Revisited: Disentangling Influences of Feelings and of Social Contexts on Displaying Happiness," talk at the 13th European Conference on Facial Expression, July 26-28, 2010, Duisburg, Germany.

Reisenzein now rejects the language of "social motives" on the grounds that although one can attribute the results of the study to a social-communicative motive, as the initial report of the results did, the experiment did not provide independent evidence of social motives or its contents. He therefore proposes a new statement of the findings as follows: "Studtmann and Reisenzein found that bowlers do not smile simply because they feel happy about a good strike, they also need an audience to which they can communicate their feelings" (personal communication). Thus instead of suggesting that facial actions lend themselves to a direct social-motive interpretation without reference to an internal emotion needing expression (Fridlund's view), Reisenzein proposes a model in which Feelings + Audience produce a "Communication of Feelings." In short, he posits the existence of feelings independently of social motives—social motives that are presumably determined by the presence or absence of an audience and that merely serve as a gate on the expression or communication of those feelings. The risk of this formulation is that it makes it hard to see any difference between it and Ekman's neurocultural conception according to which our basic emotions are internal states that express themselves outwardly in facial expressions, which may be modified by culturally-determined display rules. My thanks to Markus Studtmann and Rainer Reisenzein for discussing this experiment and their report with me.

In a recent study Sandra Miener also undertook a comparison between Ekman's and Fridlund's positions, focusing on the emotion of disgust, using as stimuli computer images of objects held to be inherently disgusting to the observer, and manipulating the conditions under which the experimental subject viewed these objects, such as being alone, or with friends, or with strangers. Sandra Miener, *Die Basisemotion Ekel: Untersuchungen zum Zusammenhang zwischen Gefühl und Ausdruck* [The Basic Emotion of Disgust: Studies on the Relationship between Feeling and Expression] (Ph.D. Diss., University of Bielefeld, Faculty of Psychology and Sports, 2007). Available at http://bieson.ub.uni-bielefeld.de/volltexte/2007/1128/index.html. Miener's findings were mixed, but a detailed discussion of her experiments lies outside the scope of my essay. I thank Markus Studtmann for drawing my attention to Miener's work.

[28.] In an interesting investigation the facial responses of female subjects were videotaped while they smelled six odors in each of three experimental conditions (spontaneous, posing to real odors, and posing to imagined odors). Videotaping was covert in the spontaneous condition (in other words, the subjects were unaware of being filmed) but overt in the posed condition. Raters were then asked to identify the type of odor—good (cloves, roses), bad (urine, rancid sweat), and neutral (mineral oil only)—from the poses. The findings demonstrated that subjects exhibited few facial responses to the odors when smelling them in private, despite dramatic differences in their hedonic ratings of the odors. In short, patterned faces did not automatically accompany the hedonics of odor, as the reflex theory of facial expression predicted, but were influenced by the social demand character of the setting. See Avery N. Gilbert, Alan J. Fridlund, and John Sabini, "Hedonic and Social Determinants of Facial Displays to Odors," *Chemical Senses* 12.2 (June 1987): 355-63. For a more recent discussion of experimental work on the facial expression of disgust, including a critical analysis of Rosenberg and Ekman's 1994 experimental work on disgust, see also Jose-Miguel Fernández-Dols and María-Angeles Ruiz-Belda, "Spontaneous Facial Behavior During Intense Emotional Episodes: Artistic Truth and Optical Truth," in Russell and Fernández-Dols, *The Psychology of Facial Expression*, 255-74.

[29.] For a comparison between Ekman's Basic Emotions versus Fridlund's Behavioral Ecology theories which finds little evidence to support Ekman's position, see Parkinson, "Do Facial Movements Express Emotions or Communicate Motives?" Fridlund's and Ekman's approaches tend to make different predictions about the impact of interpersonal contexts or audiences on facial movements. Whereas Ekman's theory tends to suggest that the presence of other people may make us moderate an otherwise "spontaneous" expression of emotion of the kind we make when we are alone,

Fridlund argues that displays are always forms of address to some audience, literal or implicit. According to Ekman's position, then, there should be less inhibition or masking of emotional expression, which is to say *more expressive movements, when we are unobserved or alone* than when we are in observed situations. By contrast, according to Parkinson, Fridlund's theory predicts that there will be *less facial movements in unobserved situations* than in those in which an "amenable" addressee or audience is present.

However, it is important not to adopt too literal a view of Fridlund's position, since according to his theory, how we respond depends on the context. As he points out, friends sharing a humorous experience face-to-face are likely to exhibit greater facial responses than if they are separated by a partition, but friends asked to play poker may well exhibit less. Then, too, facial behavior that is socially censored, such as crying in front of strangers or casual acquaintances, may produce less facial movement with increasing sociality. In other words, social role is an important determinant of facial behavior: thus "commuters on a subway may be within inches from each other yet pretend not to notice; if they are friends, however, their talk and facial behavior may be incessant. (There are exceptions, as when we 'spill out our guts' to a total stranger on a plane, and here, our faces pour out with our words)" (*HFE*, 70).

Fridlund has observed in this connection that it is hard to strip an experiment of the impact of such social roles. The result is that social influences are difficult to control or handle experimentally. In any situation, the number of variables potentially influencing behavior is enormous; even unconscious influences can't be ruled out. The risk of being too literal about the "alone" (or "spontaneous") condition is especially high, with researchers too often assuming that just because an experimental subject is alone in a laboratory setting he or she loses all cultural influences. Instead, according to Fridlund, when we are alone we often act as if real or imagined others are present. "In the implicit sociality view," Fridlund writes, "implicit or imaginal interactants can never be excluded" [*HFE*, 166].) Experiments are suspect, then, which proceed on the assumption that sociality can be ruled out if the experimental subject is alone in the laboratory or viewing room. The same criticisms apply to experiments, all too frequent, that operate on the assumption that facial electromyography, the electrical recording of facial muscle activity through the use of tiny electrodes attached to the skin, is uncontaminated by social roles and contexts. Such studies often wrongly assume that electromyography reflects pure emotion because the experimental subject is "alone" while viewing or imagining, and because electromyographic activity is below or at the edge of visibility. But from a Behavioral Ecology point of view, electromyography techniques don't offer the chance to penetrate below the social, but instead reveal the covert sociality of what can't be seen. (See *HFE*, 171-72, for a cogent discussion of this issue.)

The issue of the sociality of expression is at the center of Fridlund's important critique of Ekman's canonical Japanese-American experiment, an experiment that is foundational for the Basic Emotions View. For an analysis of Ekman's effort to respond to Fridlund's criticisms, see Leys, *From Guilt to Shame*, 88-89. Likewise, Despret observes that leaving a subject alone in a room and thinking that he or she is not aware of being observed borders on the naïve—and thinking that the subjects are naïve (Despret, *Our Emotional Makeup: Ethnopsychology and Selfhood*, 85).

30. Laurie Carr, Marco Iacoboni, Marie-Charlotte Dubeau, John C. Mazziotta, and Gian Luigi Lenzi, "Neural Mechanisms of Empathy in Humans: A Relay From Neural Systems for Imitation to Limbic Areas," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 100.9 (April 29, 2003): 5497-5502.

31. Carr et al. frame their results in terms of mirror neuron theory by suggesting that "the type of empathic resonance induced by imitation does not require explicit representational content and may be a form of 'mirroring' that grounds empathy via an experiential mechanism" (Carr et al., "Neural Mechanisms of Empathy in Humans," 5502). The main difference between the findings of Wicker's team and those of Carr's group was that, according to the latter, the insula's importance was not restricted to its role in disgust but extended to the other basic emotions as well.

32. It's possible that Carr's experimental subjects did in fact induce emotions in themselves in some "method-acting" way. Carr et al. simply report that their subjects were "asked to imitate and internally generate the target emotion on the computer screen, or to simply observe" (Carr et al., "Neural Mechanisms of Empathy in Humans," 5498). On the other hand, their subjects were not actors trained in method acting, so how good they were at generating internal emotions while imitating facial expressions on the computer screen is an open question. Moreover, we don't know what Carr et al.'s subjects actually felt when imitating the emotions because, as I say, they were not asked to report on their subjective experiences.

33. In a study of emotional recognition in a patient with extensive brain damage from severe *Herpes simplex* encephalitis, including bilateral damage to the amygdala and insula, an effort was made to test the patient with "dynamic facial expressions" by having one of the experimenters pose the expressions held to characterize the basic emotions when seated across from the subject. The researchers report that in each case, the experimenter produced an "intense but natural expression of an emotion." The investigators also followed up on the patient's impaired recognition of disgust by "acting out" behaviors or acting "scenarios" normally associated with intense disgust, such as eating and then regurgitating and spitting out food, accompanied by retching sounds and facial expressions of disgust. See Ralph Adolphs, Daniel Tranel, and

Antonio R. Damasio, "Dissociable Neural Systems for Recognizing Emotions," *Brain and Cognition* 52.1 (June 2003): 63, 66. But in the light of my criticisms, these methods seem naïve.

34. Thus for Denis Diderot, for example, the threat of exaggeration or falseness or mannerism—in short, of "theatricality"—in acting is omnipresent. It may be that an inspired actor under exactly the right conditions can by some inner process of "identification" produce now and then the impression of authentic feeling, but the whole point of Diderot's well-known text, *Le Paradoxe sur le comédien*, is that this can't be assured. Instead, he insists that what matters is simply how an actor's performance appears to the audience—with the further, crucial proviso that an authentic-seeming performance requires that the actor convey not the least suggestion that the audience has been taken into account. This explains his recommendation that the actor treat the audience as if it did not exist, or as if the curtain separating the actor from the audience had never risen. In other words, the actor must seek to create the illusion that he or she is entirely absorbed in the actions and situations taking place on the stage; only then will the performance have the look and ring of "authenticity"—but it is an illusion, not some ultimate truth. In other words, these are deeply complex issues that defy facile formulations. A further layer of complexity is implied by the fact that live performance is one thing, but posing for a photograph or a film is something else again (two different somethings, as a matter of fact). Yet the scientists who have used posed expressions seem oblivious to this entire nuance.

35. Mbemba Jabbi, Marte Swart, and Christian Keysers, "Empathy for Positive and Negative Emotions in the Gustatory Cortex." *NeuroImage* 34.4 (February 2007): 1744-1753. However, the authors no longer imply or believe that insula activation is specific to negative emotions such as disgust or pain, since they provide evidence of insula activation also in the case of positive feelings. More recently, Keysers and colleagues have acknowledged the absence of a reliable mapping of particular emotions onto specific brain regions. Instead, the authors propose the existence of a "mosaic" of affective, motor, and somatosensory components involved in emotional processing, while continuing to stress the role of motor simulation in triggering the simulation of associated feeling states. Jojanneke A.C. J. Bastiaansen, Marc Thioux, and Christian Keysers, "Evidence for Mirror Systems in Emotions," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, series B 364.1528 (August 2009): 2391-2404. For a general critique of the locationist approach to the brain basis of emotions see Kristen A. Lindquist, Tor D. Wager, Hedy Kober, Eliza Bliss-Moreau, and Lisa Feldman Barrett, "The Brain Basis of Emotion: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Behavioral and Brain Sciences,* in press.

36. The problem Jabbi et al. were dealing with is one that has haunted simulation theory for a long time, as the philosopher Shaun Gallagher has pointed out. Simulation depends on one's own first-person experience as the basis for what goes into the simulation. "We start with our own experience and project some tentative empathic conception of what must be going on in the other's mind . . . The question is, when we project ourselves imaginatively into the understanding of the other, are we merely reiterating ourselves? Goldman describes simulation in the following way: 'In all these cases, observing what other people do or feel is therefore transformed into an inner representation of what we would do or feel in a similar situation—as if we would be in the skin of the person we observe' . . . But [Gallagher goes on] how does knowing what we would do help us know what someone else would do? Indeed, many times we are in a situation where we see what someone is doing, and know that we would do it differently, or perhaps not do it at all." Gallagher calls this the "diversity problem" in order to stress the idea that most of the time we don't impute our experience to others, nor do we automatically feel what others feel. He goes on in this and other publications to suggest that it is an error to call mirror neuron systems "simulations" at all, since such processes are neither "pretend" processes nor modes of instrumental actions, as the term simulation usually implies. In subpersonal mirror neuron processes of the kind proposed by Wicker et al. there is no pretense, since neurons either fire or don't fire: they don't pretend to fire. There is no "as if" involved at all. (See Shaun Gallagher, "Phenomenology, Neural Simulation, and the Enactive Approach to Intersubjectivity" www.duq.edu/phenomenology/_pdf/gall10duquesne.pdf [2010].)

37. Of course, like facial movements themselves, self-reports of emotion may also be closely attuned to the perceived interpersonal context and hence be sensitive to audience effects or experimental demand. For a discussion see Parkinson, "Do Facial Movements Express Emotions or Communicate Motives?"

38. Jabbi et al.,"Empathy for Positive and Negative Emotions in the Gustatory Cortex," 1747-48.

39. In a paper originally titled "Voodoo Correlations in Social Neuroscience" that has caused a lively controversy, Jabbi et al.'s 2007 experiment was included in a list of "non-independent" studies that were accused of exaggerating the correlations between emotional and other behaviors and measures of brain activity. See Edward Vul, Christine Harris, Piotr Winkielman, and Harold Pashler, "Puzzlingly High Correlations in fMRI Studies of Emotion, Personality, and Social Cognition." *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4.3 (May 2009): 274-290; and Edward Vul, Christine Harris, Piotr Winkielman, and Harold Pasher, "Reply to Comments on 'Puzzlingly High Correlations in fMRI Studies of Emotion, Personality, and Social Cognition," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4.3 (2009): 319-24. For replies to Vul et al. see Mbemba Jabbi, Christina Keysers, Tanya Singer, and Klaas Enro Stephan, "Responses to 'Voodoo Correlations in Social Neuroscience' by Vul et al.,

summary information for the press"; Matthew Lieberman, Elliot T. Berkman, and Tor D. Wager, "Correlations in Social Neuroscience Aren't Voodoo: Commentary on Vul et al. (2009)," *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 4.3 (May 2009): 299-307.

40. It is unclear to me from Jabbi et al.'s description of their experiment if they determined whether the participants (observers) felt disgust when they were actually watching the actors' facial expressions.

41. But then wouldn't this also be true for the participants? So why bother to ask them to rate their responses?

42. For a discussion of the origins of the facial feedback theory and a critique of the various attempts to prove its validity, a critique based in part on the claim that the experimental tests have been inextricably confounded with implicit suggestions to subjects about how they should act, see *HFE*, 173-82. For a more recent discussion see Jean Decety, "To What Extent is the Experience of Empathy Mediated by Shared Neural Circuits?" *Emotion Review* 2.3 (July 2010): 204-07.

43. David Marshall, *The Figure of Theater: Shaftesbury, Defoe, Adam Smith, and George Eliot* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 167-92.

44. As Menninghaus has usefully reminded us, for Freud, the emotion of disgust is the direct opposite of a natural given, since it is a result or symptom of the repression of archaic libidinal drives and hence of the passage into culture: as a transformation of eros, disgust is indissociable from pleasure or desire. Wicker et al.'s narrow definition of disgust as essentially a visceromotor reflex, like vomiting, contrasts with the long Western tradition of theorizing disgust that, since Kant, has been oriented toward questions of aesthetics and aesthetic judgment. In his discussion of this tradition, Menninghaus brings out the ways in which in earlier theorizing both attraction *and* revulsion—hence ambivalence or conflict—were seen to characterize the disgust experience, a dimension entirely lacking in contemporary scientific definitions of the kind adopted by Wicker et al. See Winfried Menninghaus, *Disgust: Theory and History of a Strong Sensation*, trans. Howard Eiland and Joel Golb (Albany, N,Y,: State University of New York Press, 2003). For an account of the role of sympathetic identification or imitation in Freud's work on trauma and the affects, see Ruth Leys, *Trauma: A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

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PASSIVE AND ACTIVE SKEPTICISM IN NICHOLAS RAY'S *IN A LONELY PLACE*

ROBERT PIPPIN

> "Who is it that can tell me who I am?"
> –King Lear (I, iv, 238)

I

In a Lonely Place (1950), while often characterized as a film noir,[1] also has the emotional intensity, the sense of intimacy, the tenderness in its treatment of very flawed characters, and the psychological complexity that one associates with a film by Nicholas Ray. It presents as well an intense focus on romantic love, or at least on the possibility of romantic love, that in standard noirs would be a matter of obsessive attachment to, or mostly submission to, a murderous femme fatale, and so a relationship contaminated by an underlying struggle for power. The movie is modest in scale and seems offered as material for reflection; as if it poses a question rather than just narrates and resolves a story. There is much more conversation than action, heightening its more reflective aspects.

It is reflective in another sense too, and I will come to that in a moment. There are two intertwining narrative threads in the plot. In the main plot, a bitter, apparently burned-out Hollywood script writer, Dixon Steel (Humphrey Bogart), is accidentally connected with a murder victim, one Mildred Atkinson (Martha Stewart), a hat-check girl from his favorite restaurant, whom he had asked home after work to tell him the plot of a popular book he has been asked to adapt for the screen. Since Dix was the last person known to have seen Mildred alive, and since he has a long record of fights, attacks on others, even perhaps domestic abuse, the police figure him for a violent character and suspect him of the murder. (As in many noirs, one has to pause often in plot summaries. This last bit—that Dix has been "known for violence"—may not be what it seems. As Victor Perkins points out, the police captain in charge of the investigation, Captain Lochner (Karl Benton Reid), is shown recounting, very slowly and solemnly for dictation, almost comically so (as if his belief in what he is saying is comical), the list of Dix's scrapes, but he is clearly reading from press clippings, not from police records.[2] (Any movie audience could be expected to know all about press agents and their problematic relation to the truth.[3]) But Dix has an alibi. One Laurel Gray (Gloria Graham, still Ray's wife at the time), an unemployed starlet, is a new neighbor of Dix's and had happened to come home at the same time as Dix and Mildred (a spectacular entrance, close to the femme fatale appearances that doom so many noir heroes; it won't take long before we learn she has suspicious past, with "gold digger" associations). She swears that she also saw Mildred leave Dix's apartment, alone. (Another interruption: it is of some importance that this claim is not supported by what the viewer is allowed to see. All we see of what Laurel sees is that Dix has partially disrobed, is in a dressing gown, alone in his apartment after midnight with a young woman, and we surmise that she must have heard Mildred loudly yelling twice for help.[4] (Mildred is enthusiastically acting out a part from the book, but Laurel does not know this, does not mention the screaming for "help" to the police, she never asks Dix about it, and we never hear this lacuna explained from her point of view.) We do not of course *know* that she has not seen this, but we are given no confirmation. Moreover, later, when people are trying hard to convince her that Dix did do it, she never replies resolutely, "Look, I *saw* her leave alone." And by the end of the film she is clearly convinced that he could have done it, which has to mean that she did not see Mildred leave alone.[5]

Dix and Laurel fall in love, and immediately Dix can write again. His own life now has a "plot," with love at the center, and he can write himself and Laurel into it. (This also suggests, at the reflective level again, that they may be trapped by Hollywood expectations, by Dix's "script" for them too. Lauren's main function in their relationship is as the transcriber of *his* words. As we shall see, the last lines of the movie, her lines, are from Dix's script.) But from the beginning of their romance, the police put a lot of pressure on Dix, plant a lot of doubts in Laurel's mind, and that, and what Dix (rightly) regards as several violations of his trust, and

the exhibition of his own terrible temper, doom their relationship.[6] At the end of the film, after their nearly violent break-up (Dix appears to be intent on strangling her until the phone rings), they learn that the real murderer has been caught and that Dix is in the clear. Laurel says that this news would have meant everything had they heard about it they day before, but now it is too late, again as if they are typical film noir victims of mere chance.[7]

In this, the major plot, it is obvious that the question the characters are struggling with, and so the one addressed to us, as viewers, is something like "what do we really know when we claim to understand someone, or to understand their 'character' or 'true self' or who they really are, especially to the extent necessary (whatever extent that is) to trust someone, and so expose oneself to possible betrayal?"[8] Or: what is the right way to acknowledge and live out the implications of realizing that we will very likely *never* be in a position to resolve such issues? Everyone—Laurel, Dix's agent, Mel (Art Smith), Dix's improbably named army buddy, Brub Nicolai (Frank Lovejoy), who is also the police detective working the Mildred murder case, Brub's very conventional and suspicious, even hostile wife, Sylvia (Jeff Donnell), and Captain Lochner—they all want to know whether Dix is *capable* of murder. The usual tropes and figures come to mind: they want to know what is "inside" him, want to know the real, if hidden, Dix. The issue is naturally most important to Laurel, since she is in an intimate relation of trust with Dix; exposed to him, to his supposed instability, and to his potential violence, as it were. As we shall see though, once she allows the question of whether this trust and faith are justified to arise, the possibility of answering it immediately changes, as her relation to Dix just thereby changes; he notes the change, is wounded, *he changes*, and then, and only then, does he begin to evince what could be, and are taken to be, indications that he really *is* "capable of murder." The movie, in other words, introduces us to a reflection on one dimension of the philosophical problem of "skepticism about other minds," but in a distinctly practical register (perhaps the only appropriate register, as we shall see). In the modern period (and it seems to be an exclusively modern problem) the most general form of the issue is: how do I know that other apparently human beings *are* actually human beings (at least are human beings like me), and not automata, and so forth, and the most common focus for the discussion is the experience of pain and its relation to pain behavior. That is: I only see, know, can be sure of, another's expressions, presumably of pain. How do I know the other experiences what I experience when I experience pain? But our inability to enter and "have" another's experience or in some other way know what they experience in the way I experience what I do, gives rise to many forms of doubt or skepticism, most famously in cases like Othello's, and is certainly at issue in this film.[9]

There is an interconnected subplot too, and that suggests that other level of reflectiveness mentioned earlier. This concerns the "Hollywood plot." Dix, we are told, "hasn't written anything good since before the war," now some time back. His own reason for this, which we are invited to share and sympathize with (up to a point), is that this is because of his integrity, his refusal to churn out the schlock that Hollywood requires.[10] We are several times shown Dix befriending an alcoholic actor friend, Charlie Waterman (Robert Warrick), clearly a Shakespearean actor of the "old school," genuinely trained as an actor, familiar with the classics, who later actually recites Shakespeare's "When in disgrace in fortune and men's eyes" sonnet. This seems to suggest that there *was* a time when movies aspired to something real and honest, whereas they are now made by what Dix calls "popcorn salesmen." Everything we see of the movie industry, often from what seems to be Dix's point of view, is of a soulless mass culture machine, geared to the "Mildred Atkinson tastes" of the public.[11] There are many other "internal" references to the industry in the Ray film itself. I mean not in the plot but in what can be taken as references by Ray to himself in Dix (the apartment complex is the one Ray lived in when he came to Hollywood), to Bogart and Bogart's reputation, to studio heads and so forth.[12] But if the problem *in* the film is sincerity and trust, the problem *of* the film (as a film) is very similar. Dix wants everyone to know that Hollywood films are false, dishonest, pandering and in that sense "insincere." So if the former problem concerns what it would mean, how it would be possible, to know someone well enough to trust him or her, to trust not just that they are honest but that their own (sincere) "presentation of themselves" is not itself a self-deceived fantasy, is reliable, this latter concerns what it is for a film (or a work of art) to be "genuine" too, to prove Dix's skepticism about the movies wrong. This was partly at issue in the "interruptions" above; feeling sufficiently assured that the "formula plots" we are apparently invited to invoke are inadequate, that the film has rejected such satisfactions, would invite us to closer attention; something that is itself, at the outset, an act of faith by the viewer, based on some sort of trust.

There is a visual embodiment of both levels of reflection in the opening credits. This first thing we see are Dix's eyes in the car's rear-view mirror, and so the problem of both our knowing him (the eyes being windows to the soul), and *his* knowledge of himself, or anyone's knowledge of themselves, is introduced. (It is probably deliberate and important that at no point in the opening shot does Dix look at himself in the mirror or even check the mirror. If though, as this avoidance might indicate, he knows himself poorly, then his remaining "true to himself" and all his clinging to fiercely held ideals of integrity will carry a different weight in what follows.) But we are also at this point not just watching Dix *in the movie*; the credits are rolling by, so we are also attending *to the movie*, not what it represents. (We are in effect seeing a movie screen (the mirror) within a movie screen.)[13] And since the movie is itself, or presents itself as, a mirror to the events, "reflecting" them (not just their visibility but

their meaning) realistically, the question of the film's reflective honesty or genuineness is also at issue, perhaps problematically at issue if the same doubts about what the film (any film, implicitly) "purports to be" can be raised as about Dix's self-knowledge.

Clip 1: Opening

II

At this point I will need to introduce some philosophical apparatus in order to develop what has been introduced. Given the framework already presented (skepticism, other minds, genuineness, fraudulence, revelation, acknowledgement), it should come as no surprise that the approach I will take up is Stanley Cavell's discussion of the problem of skepticism in *The Claim of Reason*, and his own use of his approach in essays like "Knowing and Acknowledging" and "The Avoidance of Love" in *Must We mean What We Say*? And "Othello and the Stake of the Other," originally the closing discussion in *The Claim of Reason* and reprinted in *Disowning Knowledge in Seven Plays of Shakespeare* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). I am interested in Cavell because he provides a different approach to, and an often perspicuous vocabulary for, discussing a Hegelian idea that many have found either opaque or dangerously illiberal or both (in Hegel and also in Cavell's source, Wittgenstein): that what it is to know oneself as a subject is wrongly conceived at the outset if understood as some sort of particularly intimate relation between a thinker or an agent and itself, as something essentially "inner" and directed to a particular kind of object. (Both Hegel and

Wittgenstein stage their dissatisfactions in terms of re-thinking something like the logic of "inner and outer" in philosophical psychology. And so for both, an implication of this re-thinking is that "knowing" another can be nothing like the fantasy of looking "inside" them, or telepathically gaining insight into "what *they* experience." And for both, this is because it is the wrong model for the person himself, for his own self-knowledge. [14]) Cavell goes so far as to say the whole notion of a knowledge of others is wrongly framed. The struggle with attempting to understand others requires something other than a special sort of propositional knowledge; it requires instead a certain "acknowledgement" of them, as he puts it. The context in which doubt about what I take to know of another arises is often, in Cavell's discussion, a particularly intimate one; a great deal is at stake in the burden of such doubt and in what is achieved if it can be alleviated. With so much at stake, one manner of self-protection—an unavoidable consideration—is to ensure that each is as exposed as the other, as much at risk, even if no stable form of reassurance about this is ever available. (This is certainly the case in the movie; there is a great deal at stake in Laurel's knowing "what Dix is really capable of"; there is a great deal at stake for Dix in whether Laurel can be trusted, what it "means" that she had been the kept girlfriend of a real estate tycoon.) This means for Cavell that such an attempt to know something about another is inseparable from what he calls "taking up an attitude" towards that other.

I understand what he is trying to say in the following way. (And here I will stray a bit from his own formulations, will not be so concerned with global skepticism about the human/non-human distinction, and will try to put his points in my own words.) First, that any intimate involvement with others inevitably involves a struggle of some sort, ideally a mutual struggle, to understand each other. This also means that the struggle is necessarily dynamic. That is, knowing each other is not a matter of episodic, punctuated inspections or momentary revelations, but always a struggle over time to understand and be understood, where what is to understand and to be understood is itself at least somewhat unstable, itself changing over time. Secondly, in the context of one's involvement with another, thinking one knows what, say, another would do in some situation simply amounts to a matter of whether one can trust the other *to do* this or that. Knowing that another will stay loyal in some crisis is, in a practical context, counting on them to stay loyal. (Counting on them is what it is to know them; the former is not based on the latter.) Wanting to know whether another loves me is determining what I can expect, count on, from the other. One *makes it true* (even if not in some wholly self-constituting way) that the other is loved by what one does, not by registering a feeling. Hence the link between knowing and taking up an attitude, and any such taking up of an attitude is an acknowledgement of the other in some way or another, an expression of a resolution of confidence that such and such is the case, or not. So such attempts at acknowledgement are of a sort that can also fail. Ray's film is about such a failure, and while it is certainly not

King Lear or *Othello* (the scale of the film is much smaller, more intimate), there is much to be learned from it as to why such a failure is a failure.

I do not mean to say that Ray's film in some way exemplifies or supports Cavell's analysis, but that we cannot really understand what that analysis amounts to until we see the issues "alive" in an appropriately complex dramatic or literary context. I take his own work on literature and film to be guides to how that "realization" (to use Hegel's word) is to be understood.[15] In Cavell's terms, what we see in the film are characters trying to understand what others mean by what they say and do, all under the pressure of a great deal of uncertainty, and the pressure of unavoidable, immanent decisions, and where the stakes in getting matters right or wrong are quite high. This attempt, as Cavell explains it, involves not trying to understand what is literally said, but what is meant by a character's saying what is said, *what he or she means*, not simply "what is meant," or what she meant by doing what she did or did not do.[16] (An obvious example in the film: the police must ask what it means that, when Dix learns of Mildred's death, he remains flippant, cracking-wise, and apparently indifferent.) This will involve quite a complex activity, though still everyday and familiar, of interpretation, assessment and, especially, evaluation (*rendering ourselves intelligible to each other is inseparable from the way we render ourselves answerable, accountable, to each other*),[17] all of which is made even more difficult when the characters are in intimate relations of dependence, exposed emotionally to each other. In those cases, the question must also involve issues like: what did he mean by saying that to *me*, then (or doing that, then) and when I have a great stake in his meaning one thing and not another, in his understanding me one way, rather than the other. (The skepticism involved is what Cavell calls a "motivated" skepticism, and we will hear more about it shortly.) If all of this is so, the task of investigating what it is to understand another, another's meaning and deeds, will need to be carried out in some context where the complexity of such factors can be constantly visible and bear on the issues in a credible way. Simple and contrived philosophical "thought experiments" are not going to do the job.[18]

And as viewers of filmed drama, all of these issues of what is involved in understanding others are in play for us as well, with a fundamental difference that needs to be worked out: we are not exposed in any way *to* those whom we are trying to understand, and the characters in the drama cannot do anything to make themselves available to us. We cannot struggle together to be understood.[19] However, if what was said above about the nature of the problem of subjects who are "other to each other" and find that otherness unsatisfying and even disturbing is correct, then, in watching the film, we can be said to have come to understand something (if we have) *about that* in some way not reformulable in an argument or in a more familiar philosophical justification (or not all that well, as in what I am going to say discursively about the film). Something like the compellingness of the narrative will have

illuminated something in a way again much closer to having *understood someone*, than it is to having *proved something.* [20]

II

What I need from Cavell in order to address these issues in the film are three major claims, mostly worked out in *The Claim of Reason*, but present almost everywhere else in his corpus. The first is directly related to what was just mentioned: the nature of the problem. For Cavell claims that skepticism about other minds is really not skepticism but "tragedy," and, as he says, "there is no human alternative to the possibility of tragedy" (*The Claim of Reason*, 453). [21] He establishes this somewhat indirectly, by arguing that such a putative skepticism about other minds cannot at all be made to parallel traditional skepticism about the external world, which, at one major level, can clearly be at least initially formulated as a problem about knowledge. [22] For one thing, the latter cannot be lived out as a form of life; we leave it, like Hume, in the philosopher's study, and treat the world, as we must if we are to avoid injury, as full of real, spatio-temporally located objects. But we *do* have to live out and live with a kind of deep, irremediable uncertainty that we will ever know what we think we need to know in order to deal with other human beings, as well as with a kind of uncertainty about just what *would* ease our anxiety about this situation (a fact that immediately calls into question whether our frustration at the otherness of the other can be understood as product in our finitude in trying to know). We take it as intuitively obvious that each of us occupies an absolutely superior position with regard to our own mindedness, i.e., "what it is like to be me." So we are then tempted to think that overcoming skepticism about other minds would be knowing the other's mindedness by occupying just *that* sort of a superior position with respect to *her* mindedness (by "having" *it*). It is *very* unclear what this could be, though.

If I imagine myself with extraordinary telepathic powers, so that I can begin to see and feel things exactly as you do, then either this is incoherent (for *you* don't experience the world as *me* having those experiences as *mine*, as I would, with such powers) or, the whole difference or separateness between me and you vanishes (like Cavell's Corsican brothers example in "Knowing and Acknowledging," one of whom simply has every and only every experience the other has). In that case, we do not have someone knowing another's mind, but the simple collapse of the separateness of persons altogether. We have just one mind, perhaps in this fanciful example, in two bodies; not one mind knowing *another*. So, Cavell says, what we have in this concern with knowing others is not frustration at the limitations of knowledge (an assumption that implies there is some limitation that can be overcome, and we have just seen what the fantasy of overcoming it would amount to), but unavoidable, constant disappointment with what we do have available from the other, disappointment with what is available (all that is available), once we have disabused ourselves of the fantasy of "breaking

into" the other's world. [23] However, once we have given up that fantasy, the idea that what we are left with is "insufficient," or a frustrating result of an in principle overcomeable finitude, can no longer get a grip. [24]

Second, with this established, Cavell can introduce an analysis of what is motivating our concern with the other's knowability (once it can be established that the problem cannot be an epistemological or even philosophical problem), suggesting that our enacting our inability to break into the other's world is motivated by ("means") an anxiety that others will be able to break into ours (and so a defense against that) or a fantasy of inexpressiveness about ourselves which insures our unknowability to them, itself a reassuring response to an anxiety about being revealed, available to others' gazes. So, "[t]he block to my vision of the other is not the other's body, but my incapacity or unwillingness to interpret or judge it accurately, to draw the right connections" (*The Claim of Reason,* 368). And "…the alternative to my acknowledgement of the other is not my ignorance of him but my avoidance of him, call it my denial of him" (*The Claim of Reason*, 389).

This last point already introduces the third and most important contribution of the book, the differences between, and especially the complementarity and inseparability, of what Cavell calls active and passive skepticism about other minds. The first, active skepticism, just reiterates what we have mostly been focusing on: how can I know another, the true nature of that other's (supposedly) inner life. The latter though is a concern, or an anxiety about whether *I am ever truly known* ("as I really am") by an other. And the two modalities are interconnected. [25] If we assume, as we should given Cavell's concerns, a domestic, or intimate, or dialogic situation of self and other, where the question is not what "any self" (a human sciences researcher, say) can claim to know about anyone at all, but the everyday struggle to make ourselves intelligible to each other, then in claiming to know something about you, and in claiming this *to you*, I of course risk being misunderstood. I need to make sure that *I* am being understood, not just that my words are intelligible. This requires some effort; it does not just happen. And it comes with emotional risks. And it is often just in those cases where I am trying to convey to someone what I take it I have learned about her, I feel myself badly misunderstood. Feelings are hurt; friendships can fracture. Likewise, in hearing from others what they take themselves to have understood about me, I want to reserve some special authority to acknowledge or reject such claims; I am not just an object to be inspected and reported on.

And the connection is deeper. Insofar as I strive to understand something about another, I must be willing to *make it possible* for that other (or even any other) to understand *me*, or I will not be understood, in the sense just discussed; or, better, in Cavell's way of seeing it, I will have not been able to say what I mean. And in so far as I want to understand myself,

I cannot claim that my own understanding is inexpressible, cannot be understood by others. (If that is so, then famously, *I* can't be said to have expressed what I mean either.[26]) But this also involves accepting that I have to struggle to make my own putative self-understanding available for others, subjecting to some extent the question of what I mean to say to another's view of what saying that *would* mean.

And just by considering something like the common neighborhood these concepts inhabit, it is clear that such a claim to authority and rejection of a claim can often also be a version of defensive protectiveness against an unpleasant truth (too close to be easily or effectively distinguished), just as the putative claim about me can be motivated, directly or in a self-deceived way, by hostility and an urge to wound. It can be this and also be true, of course, but our question is what *the other* meant by saying what she did. Moreover, the situation is even more difficult if set out, as an intentional task, to get the other to see things as I do.

> But then the responses you produce in the other are apt to be directed to the wrong thing, to the part you have enacted, not to yourself. It is as an alternative to the wish to produce the response in the other that I claimed you must let yourself matter to the other. *(The Claim of Reason,* 383)[27]

This leaves us with three complicated levels of complexity. This dynamical picture, especially this link between active and passive skepticism,[28] means that the struggle to understand another must also be a struggle to be understood, and a mutual struggle against suspicions of insincerity, mere seduction, manipulation, simple misunderstanding. But there is a second level of difficulty when we realize that in many contexts sincerity resolves none of the major anxieties, and this because a sincere avowal by an other may be an expression of self-deceit. In some cases I am called on to understand the other better than she understands herself; called on to admit that another may have understood me better than I understand myself.[29] And third, this struggle goes on over time, at no point in which can there be any resolution once and for all of what provoked the anxiety and uncertainty. Sometimes my very attempt to *question* another's self-representation alters what one *might* have understood about such a person *before* any such interrogation or expression of skepticism. (As we shall see, this certainly happens in the film. Dix's *being* Dix, one might say, changes a great deal under the pressure of everyone's doubts about him. In returning to the film, we shall also return to the question of what it would mean to, as Cavell puts it, "let yourself matter.")

III

Let us say that the issue of anyone's knowledge of any other is dialectical; not a matter of a subject knowing, or confirming in some way in the face of doubts, its knowledge of an object. Moreover our understanding of such an other subject is often available to us only in terms relevant to that subject's relation to us. It could even be that what we think we understand of another is a result of that subject's acknowledgement of or engagement with, an "us" that was not genuinely or honestly made available for acknowledgement, and this can "distort" the "results." In this and several other senses, acknowledging and being acknowledged are inseparable elements of inter-subjectivity, and so subject to these dialectical gymnastics. [30]

In the terms presented by Nicholas Ray's film, the major issue for the police, and for Dix's friend Brub, Brub's wife Sylvia, Laurel, and Dix's agent Mel, is understanding Dix's "temper and potential violence," and, just as Cavell would have it, that issue cannot be isolated as a mere report or a matter even of knowledge. There would be something bizarre about simply "recording" the fact that another "tended to violence." Always? In any circumstance? In what circumstance and why? That is an assessment, a judgment in the normative sense, with consequences for conduct, but it is also not something "seen" or, that is, "provable." And there is a good deal of emphasis by Ray on *the extremely limited* bases for any such judgment, unavoidable as it is. Lochner seems to suspect Dix because Dix is flippant and did not call a taxi for Mildred. Laurel stands up for Dix, perhaps lies for him, because she "likes his face." Brub invokes the cliché that artistic geniuses do not and cannot behave like the rest of us. Sylvia thinks, on the basis of the vividness of Dix's imagination, her "college education," and Dix's unusual behavior, that he can be classified as psychologically "abnormal." And this is an issue for the viewers as well, complicated even more for us by the fact that this is Humphrey Bogart, and I think it is fair to say that we, or most viewers, accept the early indications of his violent tendencies as marks of Bogart's toughness, integrity and unwillingness to suffer fools gladly. As the movie goes on, however, those early explanations become less and less credible, and the questions about the meaning of Dix's conduct become much more complicated, as if *we* are being called to some account for our own early "acceptance" of the incidents.

This all has something to do with the ease, one might say, of a straightforward reading of the plot. Ray is clearly aware of this and is somehow referring to rather than invoking this expectation. A man, a war veteran, with a hair-trigger temper is suspected of murder. A woman saves him with an alibi of sorts; she is probably lying, because she is immediately infatuated with him, as is he with her. Their love suffers from the continued police scrutiny and her growing doubts about Dix. These doubts prove justified. He seems eventually to snap and attacks her. But, thanks to a lucky phone call, he does not injure her, and they learn "too late" that he has been cleared.

The hold of such a reading can be very strong, and I believe it is connected with a kind of default hermeneutic in understanding other people: that when someone does something startling or dramatic or hitherto unexpected or objectionable (violently beating a motorist after an accident, say) we are justified in saying: we *now* know *he is the type who would do such things*. In one sense this is a trivial and obvious tautology; he did it. In another sense, it is profoundly misleading, and is under sustained attack in this film. (If the phone call had occurred before the beach scene, Dix would not have been such a type? Someone can be such a type without ever expressing his type?) The same doubt is being cast on the typological explanations mentioned above. That is, this appeal has something to do with the deeply misleading and just as deeply entrenched reliance on *ex ante* elements like fully transparent, determinate intentions, character traits, dispositions, and the like, in the explanation of actions, and, by contrast, what is actually the essentially retrospective or belated nature of self-knowledge and the knowledge of others unavoidably linked to such self-knowledge. [31]

Here is a montage of the first two episodes in the film of Dix's violence. After these, the near fight in the street at the beginning, and the bar fight, the turning point of the movie occurs at a beach picnic, and the character and meaning of "the violence" change dramatically.

Clip 2. First two episodes of violence

These first scenes raise no suspicions about Dix/Bogart (they are "in character" for a Bogart character), [32] but everything changes with most important scene in the movie, a friendly beach picnic the Nikolais had arranged with Dix and Laurel. Laurel had been called in to Lochner's office for more questioning, or more pressure, since Lochner suspects she is lying about the alibi. At the interview she learns that Brub's dinner for his friend Dix had *also* been part of the investigation, a confidence we hear Brub had explicitly asked Lochner not to reveal. (Again, exposure, betrayal of intimacy, as a strategy in a struggle for control of the agenda is made visible.) Laurel does not tell Dix about the added interview, nor about the minor but still significant betrayal by Brub of his friendship. She thus enters into a collusion with the Nikolais, and from here on, Dix's violence is a reaction, each of the next three times, to his learning of such a betrayal; actions by people he trusts, trying to find out something about him without asking him, or to act in a way that is hidden from him, indicating a distrust of his honesty and a certain objectification of the object of their study. [33] This attitude towards Dix arrogates a certain position of superior power to those who adopt it, and part of what Dix's violence means, intends, is a rejection of such power, something not ever understood or even considered by Lochner or the Nikolais or Laurel. And it is hard to exaggerate the importance of Sylvia's revelation. It is the pivot on which everything in the film turns. It leads to the car accident, the fight, a catastrophic collapse of Laurel's trust in Dix, her panic, her attempted flight, and Dix's paranoid reaction to all that, and eventually to the irrelevance of Dix being cleared.

Clip 3. Beach and Road Rage

We are prepared for the intensity of these reactions by a scene in which Dix's vulnerability, his fear of "letting himself be known," in Cavell's words, is painfully visible. The extent of his need to be known and loved (to finally escape his "lonely place"), the extent to which he is not theatricalizing the self he presents to Laurel, and so the palpable fear of the exposure and rejection of himself as *he* understands himself, all amount to the extent to which he is enraged at finding himself treated in such a third- and not second-person way, let us say. [34] Here is the scene, as much against the Bogart type, especially at the beginning, as one will see. You will also see a kind of anticipatory, defensive, somewhat scary reaction to his own fear, an ominous foreshadowing. (Call it the "murderousness of love.") Watch the positions of his hands and listen to the foreboding undercurrent in the music. I think that part of what is so intense about Dix's speech in this love scene is that the viewer senses how deep is his hope that someone will finally be able to tell him who he is, that his loneliness has not been a matter of his being always by himself but that, being alone, there was nothing for him to be, or be with, at all. (This is connected with the fact that Dix now switches to a kind of overheated movie-script language, elevating and formalizing his address.) I would guess that for most viewers it is only on a second viewing that we sense the great imbalance in the scene, how silent Laurel is, how less desperate. Compare what you hear here from Dix with what is on her side: "I'm interested."

So what appears to be this desperate desire to be loved is dangerously close to a massive fear—great to the point of implied violence—that he *will* be intimately known, unguarded. His gesture of tenderness is also, at the same time, murderous. It is also oddly photographed for a love scene, with him standing and her sitting, something that may signal that Dix believes he is in charge, running the show, however vulnerable. It turns out to be an ironic pose.

Clip 4. Dix's vulnerability

Compare this now with the scene near the end when Dix learns that Laurel had been planning to flee and begins to attack her. The position of his hands clearly couples both scenes.

Clip 5. The attack

And throughout these developments, the meta-movie issues reappear as well. At a dinner with the Nicolais, as they discuss the case, Dix stages a reenactment for them, and assumes the role of film director, setting up the set, positioning the actors, explaining their motivations, and indicating how easily we can be made to believe the "truth" of dramatic representations, how vulnerable we are to the conventions of screenwriters. (We have already seen and will see throughout, the reliance of characters on clichés, stereotypes, hasty, stock generalizations for interpretation, and this scene dramatizes how powerfully "movie logic" can fill the role once played by traditional roles, social hierarchies, natural order, and so forth.) The continuity of this scene with the opening credits is established by lighting, which highlights Dix's eyes, just as they were in the mirror. While we may be surprised at the effectiveness of Dix's direction, the scene ends with a nice irony. The person who most confuses image with reality (is most susceptible to the confusion) is the "average" middle-class Brub, who, it turns out, begins actually to strangle his wife. Ray seems both to be indentifying with Dix's talent, and so identifying his movie with powerful scenes like this, and keeping some ironic distance. Dix begins to look positively insane in the scene, although there is an unmistakable pleasure on his part in theatrically terrifying Sylvia, perhaps having sensed her suspicions of him. Ray seems to be playing along with Dix, garishly highlighting his "insane" eyes.

Clip 6. Dix's staging the scene

I have said that Sylvia's betrayal of a confidence is *the* central dramatic explosion in the film's narrative. Afterwards, everything in Dix's relation to his friends and to Laurel changes, and because of that everything about the attempt "to understand Dix," especially by Laurel, has to change as well. That which results from trying to know someone is a function of what one allows of *oneself* to be known (often based on a fragile and self-deceived sense of what there is to be known), and that this dialectic is inseparable from issues of control and fear of exposure, is prominently on view from now on in the film. When Laurel says that "we" didn't want to upset you, so we kept the meeting with Lochner from you, we should feel a chill of betrayal. Up to this point, what has Dix done to deserve this infantilizing, disloyal treatment? He had counted on them believing him and in him; that is, he trusted them, and they had been false. They were all reserving judgment on whether he could be guilty of murder. The "Dix" we see from here on in relation to these intimates can hardly be called "the true Dix coming out," however genuinely dangerous he has become. (Nothing in anything we have seen or heard about suggests the nearly homicidal rages he is *now* subject to. Does this prove that the suspicions were correct? That he "was capable of murder"?)

But Sylvia does not initiate everything; the spark she provides finds pretty combustible material. Everyone agrees that Dix is "not normal," that he has an aura of unpredictability and a sometimes violent refusal to compromise that attracts attention and erotic interest. (Mel, who loves him most and perhaps best, explains that you just have to take all this on if you

want closeness to Dix.) Laurel's first contact with him after all, is as a murder suspect, and she must be harboring doubts and anxieties that are easily brought to active life. Those doubts are very near the surface and after the road rage incident, are uncontrollably present. When she visits Sylvia after the fateful picnic (another act of disloyalty; Dix had insisted that people stop talking about him behind his back), she admires their cozy house and says that this is what she wants, domesticity and kids; normalcy. Laurel? With Dix? We have heard none of this before and it rings completely false. She is already trying to escape, and concocting self-deluded fantasies about herself to justify it. We have also already seen that Sylvia and Brub have "converted" sexual passion into marital or domesticated love by means of several normalizing strategies. Sylvia gets to be the smart one, for example, Brub the "average one." Nothing about their domestic situation makes them look appealing as the "future" of Dix and Laurel. Marriage, the bedrock, foundational bourgeois institution, the contract to love and so the heart of the system that maintains that all the humans passions can be contracted into submission and control, thus assumes a kind of metonymic role for the social order, and greatly elevates the stakes in the issue of whether Dix and Laurel will, or can, marry. Take as a single example the suppressed hostility and self-deceit on view in this picture of marriage. [35]

Clip 7. Brub and Sylvia

And similar doubts about Laurel had been suggested throughout the film, and we learn, in the restaurant scene when Dix hits Mel, that he too has been thinking all along of what appears to have been something close to concubinage between Laurel and the real estate tycoon, "Baker." In one of the strangest scenes in the film, the point seems to be to reveal to us Laurel's "secret life" in the past; how little available for Dix she had really been. In the scene, the relation with her masseuse, Martha, seems "coded" for a lesbian relationship. She calls Laurel "angel," the tone of the conversation is of a jilted lover's and is aimed clearly at "breaking up" Laurel and Dix, and she says later, "I'm all you have." (In fact Ray has obviously set up a clear parallel love-match in each of the two cases, two same-sex friendships, between Mel and Dix, and between Martha and Laurel, that are more stable, perhaps even deeper and more intimate than the heterosexual love affair, although both are also based on some very implausible, fatalistic conviction that the loved one, Dix or Laurel, has a fixed nature that must be wholly and uncompromisingly accepted in love.) [36]

Both of them, in other words, Dix and Laurel, have created, in all sincerity, a fantasy of intimacy and love (a Hollywood fantasy, one might say) that most viewers have largely bought into, and both of them are subject to intense panic and retreat and even violence when that fragile fantasy begins to collapse. Of course, to make things even more complex, as complex as they are, it is not unheard of for human beings to formulate for themselves some ideal goal, and invest so heavily in its achievement and what they expect from it, that they insure that they cannot achieve it. Practical contradictions like this are the natural home of "real" contradictions. Some of the intensity and overwrought investment in what they expect from being in love is framed by the fact that both live "inside" the movie world and *its* fantasies. Some of this resonates with Cavell's themes in another, even deeper way. If it is true that Dix and Laurel have jointly formulated a kind of goal that insures they will fail, then that failure means they have also achieved a form of self-protection, and can in that sense (Cavell's "avoidance" sense) be said to have intended to fail. That an agent can be doomed, *can doom himself*, by what he does to escape doom, is the stuff of tragedy both ancient and modern. [37]

The film builds to a conclusion in a powerful scene, full of undercurrents and double-meaning. Dix, sensing that Laurel is drawing away (she cannot sleep, has been taking pills) suddenly proposes marriage, and this in a manic, impatient way that contrasts all the more with Laurel's sleeping-pill haze and her own clear hesitations. Bogart gives as powerful a performance here as he ever did, suggesting by the business of his action, and his air of unease, and the pace of his speech, that he knows everything is falling apart, and that he is simply refusing to see it, wants instead to push forward before it is too late. (As you will see, he is trying to "straighten out" something already crooked.) Laurel, for her part, enacts a Cavellian theme, but in a slightly different register. She has not "let herself be known" by Dix,

let herself matter to him, but this is because she doesn't know what she should reveal or how. Her lack of self-knowledge, which we saw when she spouted her pieties about domesticity, is on view here, as she seems unable to look into one mirror, and then, as if to make the point again, she turns to *another mirror*, and again fails to see her reflection (all of course an echo of the opening credits). And Dix enacts the domesticity she says she wants, but, as you'll see, clumsily. Here is the scene. The irony of Dix's description of their own love scene, that it is like his movie script, is true but (a) that also means it is posed, that just as in a fiction film, it is staged by both of them as they both suspect things have fallen apart, and (b) ironic because there is actually no real love anymore. The irrelevance of what they simply "tell" each other is also a point made, but is has a different meaning than the one Dix intends. Bogart has never been better, as, when he sits on the couch for breakfast and Laurel comes toward him, the fleeting expressions on his face register at once what he knows, but what he also will not admit.

Clip 8. Kitchen

This all serves as prelude for Dix's final, violent attack on Laurel, interrupted by a phone call that will announce he is cleared. Ray is willing to go very far in this scene to suggest that what has happened is not the result of mistakes, moral failures, correctable blindness. He stages the aftermath to suggest that their last nearly deadly physical encounter[38] was also at the same time something like the last time they made love, suggesting too that the violence and the

love are intertwined, given what we have seen of the complex demands—almost impossible demands—made on these lovers, and by these lovers. [39] That intertwining is unmistakably and rather startlingly suggested by Laurel's dishabille.

Clip 9. Finale

That closing line, "I lived a few weeks while you loved me," brings together many of the themes of the movie and, appropriately, leaves a good deal unsettled. Laurel is quoting a line from Dix's new movie, lines that Dix had already expressed as if a foreshadowing of the end of their own affair. ("I was born when she kissed me; I lived a few weeks while she loved me. I died when she left me.") There is, first, genuine pathos in the line; they, Laurel especially, *had* missed their chance for "life." There is, second, the fact that Laurel expresses herself in a line from a film, not her own words, and so that second level of reflectivity returns: the movie's relation to the audience, its own genuineness or honesty, and so here the question of its quotability, or the meaning of Laurel's use of it to express herself. [40] (She sees herself in lines provided by a movie, and this could mean either that the movie script has captured something genuine, or that Laurel is as "real" as a character from a film.) Third, there is her alteration, changing the third person (she) to the first (me). Laurel seems to realize that Dix's "leaving her" is as much a result of her distrust and that she is back where she began, a starlet with a shady past. Astonishingly, in her mind, *Dix left her.* ("I died when you left me," would

be the continuation); they did not break up—all an odd way to put it after what we have just seen.

Stanley Cavell has argued that skepticism about other minds, while an expression of uncertainty about another, is not properly skepticism in the philosophical sense, but tragedy, and that there is no human alternative to tragedy. I think Nicholas Ray would agree.

NOTES

I have benefited a great deal from conversations and correspondence about this paper with a number of people. I am especially indebted to Lauren Berlant, Jim Conant, Michael Fried, Markus Gabriel, Gertrude Koch, Paul Kottman, Dan Morgan, Richard Neer, Thomas Pavel, Victor Perkins, Martin Seel, George Wilson, and the audiences at presentations at Bonn, Frankfurt, Chicago, and Zürich.

1. It is included, for example, in the excellent anthology, Ian Cameron, ed., *The Movie Book of Film Noir* (London: Studio Vista, 1992) and is the subject there of a brilliant article by Victor Perkins, "In a Lonely Place" (222-31). And it exhibits the modest "B movie" production values associated with the genre, as well as the thematic issues of fatalism (characters who cannot seem to make their own fate, seem doomed from the start), paranoia (police spying is a central element of the plot), and moral ambiguity (we are as attracted to what seems like the integrity, honesty and forthrightness of Dix Steele, the Humphrey Bogart character, even as we begin to suspect he may be capable of murder). And it is a study, a fairly intricate study, of failure; here the failure of love. See Robert Pippin, *Fatalism in American Film Noir: Some Cinematic Philosophy* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2012) for more on the philosophical dimensions of the noir genre.

2. Lochner has a kind of super-ego role in the film, The Supreme Father, for Brub and Laurel and to some extent Dix. His distaste for Dix is obvious as he reads out the incidents, making clear that he is as much condemning Dix as reciting facts.

3. Mel says early on, "It is much easier to get people's names into the paper than to keep them out," reminding us of the press agent's role.

4. Ray takes care later in the film to establish that sounds from Dix's apartment can easily be heard throughout the complex. When asked if he just lets his phone ring and ring, he replies that he does and his neighbors will confirm that fact. ("Just ask my neighbors.")

5. Dana Polan notes this (Dana Polan, *In a Lonely Place* [London: BFI, 1993], 65). It is an extraordinarily important piece of information in the film—that all along, from the very beginning, Laurel had been lying to the police about their chief suspect, a man she does not know, and whom she decides to protect (decisively) on the spur of the moment, because she liked his face. (This already tells us a great deal about Laurel.) Extraordinarily important, but, typical for Ray, this fact is only silently present throughout the rest of the film.

6. Another interruption: this is at least what the surface narration seems to indicate, the explanation we are invited to accept: that sheer bad luck, the murder, dooms the relationship. As we shall see the psychological reality of the film is much more complicated.

7. We are invited to accept this too, but that would be another mistake. It is not so much that her fears about Dix would have been assuaged if only she had known the truth earlier. As in many such cases, her *needing* to have them assuaged already means they cannot ever go back to where they were before she began to find such fears credible.

8. This is complicated for us, the viewers too, because by 1950, we certainly think we "know" Humphrey Bogart, know what a Bogart character is. But he is very much not that character in this film. Perkins notes that Bogart's biographer, Joe Hyams, reported that Bogart disliked the film, perhaps realizing how vulnerable and so untypical and unheroic he looked (226).

9. We seem pressed to a kind of holism in such understanding. I might come to understand another's dispositions, commitments, beliefs and anxieties and so forth; that is, understand the content of such states. But I would not thereby really understand what they mean to her, how they fit into some unique psychological economy. To understand that, I must simply have come to understand her. But that can't be formulated in any propositional content. It is to understand how she does and would go on in all sorts of ways.

10. This appears to be his stance/excuse now. It is clear from conversations with a movie director at a bar that Dix *had* been willing to write what the studios wanted. Not any more, though; so he claims.

11. Another interruption: so much for the surface plot again. Paradoxically, even though Dix's eventual script contemptuously ignored the book on which it was to be based—just as Ray did with Dorothy Hughes's novel—the supposedly corrupt movie producer is actually crazy about its quality and wants to start production right away. This could mean either that Dix was wrong; quality films *can* still be made, like the one we are watching perhaps; or that Dix was wrong about his high-brow ambitions. Maybe he thought he had written *Citizen Kane*, but he ended up with another good way to sell popcorn. Perkins suggests that an association between Dix and Herman J. Mankiewicz may be deliberate (224). For more on the "Hollywood frame" for the narrative, and the suggestion that the "lonely place" referred to in the title is Hollywood itself, see Bernard Eisenschitz, *Nicholas Ray: An American Journey*, trans. Tom Milne (London: Faber and Faber,

1993), 133-146. Polan notes the interesting noir narrational theme: "forward motion combined with the undoing of confident progress by a paranoid looking back…" (12).

12. Again, many of these references are pointed out by Perkins.

13. Eisenschitz calls this "the fragmentation of the screen that was to assume obsessional form in Ray's work" (135).

14. Cf. Wittgenstein: "The human body is the best picture of the human soul," (Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), II, iv, 178. And his more general remark that since the meaning of an expression is not tied to an inner, punctated experience, even God could not learn, by such inner inspection, what someone meant by "bank" if he had said "Wait for me by the bank." (*Philosophical Investigations*, 217) From Hegel: "Hence what is only something inner, is also thereby external, and what is only external is also only something inner" (G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, and H.S. Harris [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991], §140). And "an individual cannot know what he is until he has made himself a reality through action" (G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Terry Pinkard, 401. [http://web.mac.com/titpaul/Site/Phenomenology_of_Spirit_page.html]).

15. See his account of how and why he was "pushed to literature" (and one assumes, film) "to discover the problem of the other," and to finding it "undiscovered for philosophy (in English)," (Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999], 476; originally published 1979).

16. This is a common theme throughout Cavell's *Must We Mean What We Say? A Book of Essays*, updated edition (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). A particularly clear formulation is at *The Claim of Reason*, 355. In Cavell's "The Avoidance of Love," the theme is introduced by attention to Shakespeare criticism, and in opposition to the idea that there could be differing, distinct emphases; some on "character," some on "words."

17. See Cavell on Wittgenstein on "attitudes" towards others. "…human expressions, the human figure, to be grasped, must be read. To know another mind is to interpret a physiognomy, and the message of this region of the *Investigations* is that this is not a matter of 'mere knowing.'" *(The Claim of Reason,* 356) And: "In no case is such knowledge [of others, of their 'physiognomy'] expressed by a 'mere report'…" (*The Claim of Reason*, 356).

18. "In general, Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations* moves into this region of meaning. It is a region habitually occupied by poetry" ("The Avoidance of Love," 271).

19. So one, merely preliminary version of the special competence humans have in being able to acknowledge other human beings, what Cavell calls "empathic projection," is largely what I am limited to in aesthetic appreciation (though not in social experience; see below). The Cavellian drama of the inseparability between knowing and being-known can occur aesthetically only in the domain of the imagination. For the relevance of the notion to pictorial art, see Michael Fried, *Menzel's Realism: Art and Embodiment in Nineteenth-Century Berlin* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002) 36-39 and 226-29; and Michael Fried, *The Moment of Caravagio* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 105-06.

20. See Cavell in "Music Discomposed" on "why it is we treat certain objects, or how we can treat certain objects, in the way normally reserved for treating persons" (*Must We Mean What We Say?*, 189).

21. There is a lucid summary of this point in *The Claim of Reason*, 432.

22. "At one level," because at another deeper level, Cavell will want to say that most intimate or proximate mode of our being in a world, oriented and familiar with it, is not "knowledge," and skepticism is not primarily a matter of the limitations of what could be known, had we more powerful capacities of sentience and sapience.

23. *The Claim of Reason*, 341 and 434.

24. There is a clear indication of the role the fantasy of looking "inside" another is playing in the dynamics of the film in a brief bit of dialogue between Dix and Laurel once he notices an oddity in the angles at which their apartments face one another.

Dix: You know, Miss Gray, you're one up on me—you can see into my apartment but I can't see into yours.

Laurel: I promise you, I won't take advantage of it.

Dix: [*wryly*] I would, if it were the other way around.

Thanks to Richard Moran for discussions about this issue and for pointing out this moment.

25. This interconnectedness is the main reason that understanding acknowledgement as "empathic projection," introduced in *The Claim of Reason* on page 421, is no longer adequate by page 442, where this other (passive) skepticism/anxiety is both introduced and linked to the active form.

26. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §244-271.

27. See also Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 352.

28. See Richard Moran, "Cavell on Outsiders and Others," *Revue internationale de philosophie*, 256.2 (September 2011), 250.

29. An implication: if I want to understand the other (in the practical, attitudinal sense, want to count on the other), even direct access to "what she thinks" can be dissatisfying. What *she thinks she thinks* and what *she really thinks* may be quite different.

30. Another, very important sense is one explored by Richard Moran in "Cavell on Outsiders and Others." It is that in exploring what knowing others' mindedness would amount to, I have to be oriented from my sense of what it is for me to be known, and this as measured by my superior position with respect to myself. Exploring this further, Moran shows, should lead us to doubt that the issue itself is correctly posed in terms of knowledge. Cf. also this very apt formulation:

> With respect to other minds it may seem that the problem is rather to break into another circle of experiences. But the main point is that the objects of external world skepticism do not have a perspective on what it is to be known. The question of their knowability has to be solved on the side of the knower alone, with no 'confirmation' from the side of the known object. The possibility of forms of skepticism both with respect to knowing an other mind (the "'active skeptical recital'") and with respect to being known by an other mind (the "'passive skeptical recital'"), will turn out to be crucial for understanding the instabilities in the idea of an Outsider in other minds skepticism, and for understanding what may be distorting in seeing the problem of others as a problem of knowledge in the first place. (246)

I discuss the implications of this distinction below.

31. See my *Fatalism in American Film Noir*. And for a much more detailed account, *Hegel's Practical Philosophy: Rational Agency as Ethical Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

32. They are "both linked to the Hollywood environment and stressing the rage it arouses in Dix Steele" (Eisenschitz, 136).

33. Right after apparently realizing that she "should have told" Dix about the interview, and apparently willing to heed his advice to "ask him" if she wants to know something, Laurel shows up at Sylvia's house, again discussing Dix in worried tones. She knows whose wife Sylvia is, and so reaching out to her has to count as a form of disloyalty. (Sylvia's motives are also interesting. The Freudian slip seems intended to ruin the marriage she is ostensibly encouraging. Is she jealous of what Laurel has? Attracted to Dix? Dissatisfied with her "average" husband?) I am grateful to Michael Fried for this point about Sylvia's possible motivations.

34. Sylvia's slip also touches another nerve. Brub and Sylvia and Laurel had all been talking about a matter of great intimacy and importance to Dix—his marriage—all without consulting him.

35. Now the great subject of nineteenth century prosaic literature, the novel and drama, is marriage. This is appropriate; it is the central institution of bourgeois society: marriage represents *the* compromise between passion and law, or contract: the improbable unity of contracted passion. (I promise to love you forever.) I am not dealing with the issue the same way he does, but I assume that my enormous debt to Stanley Cavell's pioneering pair of books is obvious: *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), and even more, *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Drama of the Unknown Woman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
There is accordingly always a great anxiety about this; whether the unity required in marriages built on romantic love between individuals is a fantasy, or ideological. (If it is, then perhaps all contractual constraints are; say, property; contractual restraints on takings.) That is why the central plot in such novels is adultery. (And why the subject of gay marriage touches such a nerve of anxiety in modern American society. Varying its contractual conditions seems to many to open a disturbing set of questions about what marriage itself is. If we are able to vary its contractual conditions, where can it stop? The people who are anxious think: those in favor of varying the contract think there is no such objective, real, "natural" thing as marriage, and they are right.) But the topic of marriage also requires some collective understanding how persons enter marriage; how we pick our partners, by means of intense romantic love. And there is the same kind of anxiety? Is there such a thing? And this depends on what we take it to be. One profoundly influential form of understanding (instructing us as to how to understand it, and assuming several conventions in projecting it back to us) is Hollywood film. Romantic love is a form of engagement with others that can be haunted by its own form of skepticism. In this film, a central element in that mythology is view. Laurel likes Dix's face. Dix sees her in the courtyard for a second. And we also see in both how much they expect such a romantic relationship to do for them, how religiously Dix, at least, expects to be saved, as well as the lived-out implications of such a structure of understanding.

36. It is also the case that much of the film is suffused with an air of paranoia and the constant surveillance and pressure exerted by the commercial interests of Hollywood and the police. In this scene the "world of women," pressured and

dominated by the much more powerful "world of men," is also visible. There are some remarks relevant to this issue by Polan (39-41).

37. I don't mean that each of them has cynically, or simply out of fear, withheld themselves. *How* could Dix "explain" his past violence and expect to be understood, rather than even more suspected? (When he does try once, saying that he will not allow the other driver or anyone to call him names like this, Laurel recalls that the grave insult was, "blind knuckle-headed squirrel.") Extraordinarily, though, Laurel knows why he is angry but never apologizes, as if conceding that explaining *herself* would be impossible. And it is simplistic in the extreme to suggest that she should have "told Dix all about Martha and Baker." As we have seen, it would take some super-human talent to find a way to break through the conventional language of "abnormal," "unstable," "gold-digger," "unemployed starlet," "kept woman" and so forth. As noted, there is something here of what Cavell finds in *Lear*: the characters *avoid* trying to do something like this, and that can be called "the avoidance of love." But it is much more credible here, in this world, to say that they *can't* "let themselves be known," not merely that they won't.

38. This ending was improvised on the set. The original script, which they filmed, has Dix murder Laurel just as Brub arrives to tell him he is in clear for Mildred's murder, and so has to arrest him for Laurel's. In an interview, Ray remarked "I just can't do it! Romances don't have to end that way…Let the audience make up its own mind about what's going to happen to Bogie when he goes outside the apartment area…" (quoted from Ray's documentary portrait *I'm a Stranger Here Myself*, in Eisenschitz (144) and in Polan (61), who notes that the original ending was shot, and that Ray ordered a closed set for the next day, and re-shot with the ending we have.

39. Perkins notes that the "investment in love" on both sides is "excessive," and so the relationship is "doomed" (225). The reasons for such an excessive investment amount to the great theme of nineteenth century novels, such as *Madame Bovary*, *Anna Karinina*, and *Effie Briest*. Bourgeois marriage often serves as a great figure for bourgeois domesticity and convention itself (that is, ordinary life), and romantic adventure, adultery, as a kind of salvation or liberation from such a fate; there as here an illusory salvation. The great cinematic treatment of such fantasies about love: Max Ophuls's *Reckless Moment* and *Caught*.

40. It is a Hollywood line, not Shakespeare, but I don't think Ray is ironizing its use here. I assume we are meant to understand that it does express both the pathos of the moment, Laurel's reliance on *Dix's* words (the closest she'll get to *self*-knowledge), and her own realization of who has done what to whom.

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SALA WITH SCHILLER: WORLD, FORM, AND PLAY IN *MIXED BEHAVIOR*

MICHAEL FRIED

In the twelfth of Friedrich Schiller's "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man" (originally written 1795), a foundational text on aesthetic thought for the modern period, the German poet, playwright, and thinker posits two fundamentally opposed drives within the human psyche—first, a purely receptive drive to experience the sheer succession of sensations, which is also to say the sheer flow of time (or succession as such); and second, a drive to assert control over such material, to give it form, which is also to say (as Schiller does toward the end of the eleventh "Letter") to annul time, to affirm persistence within change, and to subjugate the manifold variety of the world to the unity of the self.[1] As he also writes: "In order . . . not to be mere world, [man] must impart form to matter; in order not to be mere form, he must give reality [to form]" (117). Schiller calls these drives the *sensuous drive* and the *formal drive*, and further imagines, first, that each naturally seeks to realize itself to the maximum, and second, that the essential task of culture (his ultimate concern) is precisely to do justice to both drives equally, to maintain each against the other: "*first*, to preserve the life of sense against the encroachments of freedom [the will, the drive to autonomy]; and *second*, to secure the personality against the forces of sensation. The former it achieves by developing our

capacity for feeling, the latter by developing our capacity for reason" (122). (Needless to say, Kant's philosophy, in particular the *Critique of Judgment*, hovers in the immediate background.)

There follows a passage of particular interest in the present context:

Since the world is extension in time, i.e., change, the perfection of that faculty that connects man with the world will have to consist in *maximum changeability and maximum extensity* [my emphasis]. Since the person is persistence within change, the perfection of that faculty that is to oppose change will have to be *maximum autonomy and maximum intensity* [my emphasis]. The more facets his receptivity develops, the more labile it is, *and the more surface it presents to phenomena* [my emphasis], so much more world does man *apprehend*, and all the more potentialities does he develop in himself. The more power and depth the personality achieves, and the more freedom reason attains, so much more world does man *comprehend*, and all the more form does he create outside of himself. His education [the work of culture] will therefore consist, *firstly*, in procuring for the receptive faculty the most manifold contacts with the world, and, within the purview of feeling, *intensifying passivity to the utmost* [my emphasis]; *secondly*, in securing for the determining faculty the *highest degree of independence from the receptive* [my emphasis] and, within the purview of reason, *intensifying activity to the utmost* [my emphasis]. Where both these aptitudes are conjoined, man will combine the greatest fullness of existence with the highest autonomy and freedom, and instead of losing himself to the world, will rather *draw the latter into himself* [my emphasis again] in all its infinitude of phenomena, and subject it to the unity of his reason. (122-23)

In the next "Letter," indeed, Schiller suggests that were it possible for a human being actually to maximize both drives, to combine receptivity and autonomy at something like full strength, he (Schiller means he or she) "would have a complete intuition of his human nature, and the object that afforded him this vision would become for him a symbol of his *accomplished destiny* and in consequence (since that is only to be attained in the totality of time), serve him as a manifestation of the infinite" (126).

Assuming that such cases could actually occur, Schiller says, they would awaken in the subject a new drive, a third drive, which he calls the *play drive*, and which he claims "would be directed toward annulling time *within time* [an extremely interesting claim in view of what will follow], reconciling becoming with absolute being and change with identity" (126). Or again: "The sense drive wants to *be* determined, wants to receive its object; the form drive wants *itself* to determine, wants to bring forth its object. The play drive, therefore, will endeavor so to receive as if it had itself brought forth, and so to bring forth as the intuitive sense aspires to receive" (126). In other words, following some difficult sentences on contingency, the play drive will "introduce form into matter and reality into form. To the extent that it deprives

feelings and passions of their dynamic power, it will bring them into harmony with the ideas of reason; and to the extent that it deprives the laws of reason of their moral compulsion, it will reconcile them with the interests of the senses" (127).

In the following "Letter," the fifteenth, Schiller explains that "the object of the sense drive, expressed in a general concept, we call *life*, in the widest sense of the term: a concept designating all material being and all that is immediately present to the senses. The object of the form drive, expressed in a general concept, we call *form*, both in the figurative and in the literal sense of this word: a concept that includes all the formal qualities of things and all the relations of these to our thinking faculties. The object of the play drive, represented in a general schema, may therefore be called *living form*: a concept serving to designate all the aesthetic qualities of phenomena and, in a word, what in the widest sense of the term we call *beauty*" (128). At this point, or rather just before it, I want to leave Schiller behind: the notion of beauty will be of no use whatsoever in what follows, and indeed strikes one almost as an atavism when it suddenly comes to the fore in the passage I have just cited. For we are on the threshold of the decisive turning in aesthetics that will be represented by Hegel, in whose *Lectures* on the topic the concept of beauty, as is well known, plays a structurally minor role. (Cf. Wittgenstein: "The way whole periods are incapable of freeing themselves from certain concepts—e.g. the concept `beautiful' & `beauty'."[2])

Nor do I wish to follow Schiller in maintaining that the opposition between the sense drive and the form drive is determining for the human psyche as such, or that ideally both drives are reconciled, brought into relation with each other, via a third or play drive also within the psyche, so to speak. Not that it is hard to imagine, not that one is not familiar with, less convincing claims than these about the nature and structure of the human psyche. But my aim in what immediately follows is more narrowly focused: I want to use the terms in which Schiller seeks to define the drives as a means of characterizing, perhaps I should say of framing, an exemplary work of video art by Anri Sala.

The work is called *Mixed Behavior* and was made by Sala in 2003. Ideally it would now be possible for the reader to leave this essay and view the actual piece, which lasts exactly eight minutes and nineteen seconds, preferably more than once. Unfortunately, that isn't possible. Nevertheless I shall proceed by describing the video *as if* the reader had just watched it.[3] A few preliminaries:

First, *Mixed Behavior* was filmed in Sala's native Tirana on New Year's Eve, 2003 (and then worked on extensively afterward). According to Sala, in the course of the 1990s and the first years of the new decade the New Year's Eve celebration in Tirana became more than a little dangerous, with individuals setting off their own fireworks and also firing guns the sound of

which was masked by the fireworks, so that the next morning it would turn out that people had been killed and no one had realized it. In important respects, *Mixed Behavior* represents an inspired response to this situation. Second, *Mixed Behavior* brilliantly exemplifies one of Sala's chief concerns throughout his career to date: the relation of image to sound, or perhaps more accurately image track to sound track, which in many of his videos or short films are treated as essentially autonomous elements that nevertheless—or rather, precisely by virtue of that autonomy—are made to articulate each other in fascinating and productive ways. This is true of *Long Sorrow* (2005), in which the noted free jazz saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc has been filmed at extremely close range improvising on his instrument—which we no more than glimpse—while suspended outside a window on the eighteenth floor of a large apartment complex in Berlin.[4] *Mixed Behavior* takes a similarly inventive approach to the same basic issue. But its import goes beyond even that, as I shall try to show, or at least suggest, with the help of the preceding summary of Schiller. Finally, if the reader were about to watch (and listen to) the actual video I would say at this point: above all keep your eyes open; don't let yourself be lulled by an expectation that the video will simply continue as it starts—in fact about two minutes and fifty seconds into the piece distinctly strange things begin to happen. As follows:

The video opens confusingly. It is dark, nighttime, and we hear the sound of raindrops striking some sort of surface (a plastic tarpaulin, it turns out). We then become aware of a light source—a flashlight of some sort?—the other side of a transparent plastic sheet that seems to be covering . . . what? Some sort of equipment: we first see a dark rectilinear form with wiring coming out of its top—probably a battery, a power source of some kind. We notice too that someone is moving just beyond the plastic sheet, we see the sheet being lifted, we glimpse an earphone gripped in a hand, we sense the person beyond the sheet ducking to get his head under its protection, then we are given a glimpse of his head and face and realize that he—a young man with short-cropped dark hair—has put on the earphones, and as all this is taking place we first become aware of a few crackling noises, like firecrackers or gunshots, and then, as the young man seems to do something with his hands to the equipment in front of him, we also hear music, a disco beat . . . All this takes less than a minute, in fact after fifty seconds our point of view shifts decisively to a position directly behind the young man and the plastic sheeting-covered equipment and perhaps fifteen feet away, and when this happens we also become aware of the larger situation: the young man and the equipment (on a table), indeed we too, in a manner of speaking, are on the roof of a building from which we look past the young man and the equipment toward the dark city beyond. Most conspicuously there

is a large building right of center which we feel must be several hundred feet away, part of which remains dark and part of which shows lighted windows (possibly, though, we are seeing two different buildings at somewhat different distances from us), plus there are various smaller buildings in the distance, but the upper half of the image is taken up by the night sky and the rocketing or exploding fireworks. And along with the sound of the fireworks, and the background sound of the rain, there is now equally prominently the sound of music with its Latin-sounding beat (actually the music started up around forty seconds into the piece, when we were still under the plastic sheeting), music we quickly gather is somehow being controlled—actually it is being "remixed"—by the young man, who in effect is playing the role of a DJ on this curious occasion. [5]

And that is the basis of the entire work: the camera now stays fixed, we are shown the young man always from the rear, sometimes bent considerably over so as to get his entire upper body under the plastic sheeting, sometimes only partly bent over, but always his hands and the equipment are covered by the sheeting, and within a minute or two our attention shifts almost exclusively to the sky and the fireworks, or rather to the interplay between the remixed music and the fireworks—the latter as both visual and sonic phenomena—which are clearly meant to be experienced in some at least partly motivated relation to each other. In the upper

left corner of the image we see the scalloped bottom of an awning that presumably has been lowered to help protect the camera (and in a sense us) from the rain.

As for the overall structure of *Mixed Behavior*, two points should be stressed. First, I count four more or less distinct phases or "movements" based on shifts in the music, which as I have said begins roughly forty seconds into the piece; a second phase begins around the four minute mark; then shortly after five minutes the music stops and for nearly forty seconds we hear only fireworks (and rain), until around 5:50 a new burst of music comes on, supplemented at around 6:28 by voices chanting something we cannot quite make out (there were voices earlier, too); finally a last phase begins around 6:55 with music of a different beat, though the voices return shortly before the eight-minute mark. Then there is silence except for a few fireworks until the piece ends at 8:19.

Second, an absolutely crucial point, about two minutes and forty seconds into the piece something altogether out of the ordinary happens: two fireworks *go into reverse*, by which I mean that instead of simply exploding into a large number of brilliant fragments that then (often) explode again and slowly fall, extinguishing themselves en route, the explosion and fanning out of fragments are followed by an exactly opposite movement as the fragments contract back to the originating explosion (and beyond). Following the first few reversals, however, the explosions return to normal for roughly 20 seconds, then another explosion goes into reverse, and starting just after three and a half minutes the reversals return in force to great effect—they cannot now be missed. And just over one minute later, around 4:37, we see a single explosion expand then contract and then expand and contract again twice more; this takes place in the sky right of center, where most of the more spectacular fireworks go off, and the effect of playfulness as well as of what can only be called authorial control—but this will call for qualification—is extremely strong. Something of the sort also happens just over one minute later, the fireworks this time being more than usually dramatic and the reversals much speedier, more palpably "in one's face," than any until now. In the last minute and a half we are made particularly aware of the awning at the upper left, as well as of

rockets exploding overhead, beyond the limits of the "frame," drenching the DJ-figure and his protected equipment with bursts of red and green illumination. (Something similar happens toward the beginning of the piece.) Toward the end of the video there is music alone for maybe half a minute; then we see the DJ stand up as if to leave the scene though not quite in the flesh—rather he appears superimposed over a shot of the equipment as if he were a ghost rather than an actual person. We hear the voices again and a few last explosions, then the screen goes black and the video is over. —Not that the foregoing amounts to a thorough inventory of what *Mixed Behavior* offers to be seen and heard: for example, at various moments skyrockets or Roman candles whiz by at what seems dangerously close range, and in general more seems to happening than can be readily inventoried, even after repeated watchings. Plus there is the impression the piece conveys, both visually and sonically, of all this taking place not just some distance away but also overhead, in close proximity to where we seemingly are. (Of course, almost every time I have said "we" I have meant the camera.)

The question that now arises is how exactly Sala's video relates to Schiller's account in the "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man" of the interaction among the three drives—the sensuous drive, the formal drive, and the play drive—assuming that such a relation between the two exists. Let me say for a start that after I had watched *Mixed Behavior* several times, Schiller's text irresistibly came to mind, and that when I sat down and reread the latter—it had been years since I had last done so—I was powerfully struck by the affinity between the two. Take for example Schiller's account of the sensuous drive, which you will remember he equates in the first place with the sheer succession of sensations as well as with the flow of time (or succession as such): what could better exemplify these than a display of fireworks exploding in a night sky, which is to say successively albeit unpredictably rising from the ground, bursting into brilliant, different-colored outward-expanding patterns, the individual fragments of which then fall back to earth, losing brightness as they do so, as other fireworks arise and explode, to be replaced in turn by still others (fireworks as an "art" of pure sensation, visual and aural)? And then there is the rain, which, like the fireworks, we both see and hear, with the further implication that were we actually on the roof we might be feeling the impact of the rain as well. Indeed the sound of the rain on the plastic sheeting chimes with

Schiller's claim that the "perfection of that faculty that connects man with the world will have to consist in maximum changeability and maximum extensity . . . The more facets his receptivity develops, the more labile it is, and the more surface it presents to phenomena . . ."—the surface of the plastic sheeting serving in this context as a figure for the heightened or "extended" receptivity of the self. (The presence of the sheeting both was and was not fortuitous. The original idea for *Mixed Behavior* did not call for it; but as New Year's Eve approached Sala realized that rain was likely—it had been raining all week, apparently—and provided for that contingency. Brilliantly, as matters turned out.) As for the form drive, it is exemplified in the first instance by the DJ, whom we soon come to perceive as seeking to use the music he is remixing as a means of gaining control over the fireworks, or at least of "including" the fireworks in the music; and up to a point the video may appear to suggest that he succeeds in this, at least some of the time, most notably at those moments when the fireworks go into reverse, or rather—to quote Sala from an unpublished discussion with Hans Ulrich Obrist—when their movements "go forward and backward depending on the movements of the music." In any case, we quickly sense that the DJ has no audience for his music beyond the immediate situation, however the latter is described.

Here it is crucial to get the sense of competition or struggle between the two drives both in Schiller's "Letters" and, in my account, as figured in Sala's video exactly right. Most important, it would be faithful neither to Schiller's thought nor to the logic of the video if one came to see the DJ—avatar of the form drive (in this reading)—as simply or unequivocally mastering the flow of sensations as figured by the fireworks (and indeed the rain). I think of him rather as fictively absorbed in pursuit of that aim; that he is forced to do so under the plastic sheeting in order to keep the rain off his equipment—a state of affairs that in obvious respects would tend to separate him from the fireworks (as would, for that matter, his wearing of earphones)—reinforces one's sense of the difficulty of his project, hence of the magnitude of his absorption in it, even as our somewhat distanced view of him from behind activates a familiar structure from absorptive painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—think of Chardin, Courbet, Caillebotte, Hammershøi, others. And from recent photography—Struth's first museum series and various works by Jeff Wall, in particular. The rain doubly matters, in other words, as a figure for the successiveness of sensations and because it requires that the DJ work under wraps, so to speak. Or rather triply, in that the sheeting comes to stand for the receptiveness of the self. (Was Sala lucky that it rained, then?

No doubt. But he has repeatedly shown, as in the dazzlingly opportunistic *Air Cushioned Ride* [2007], that he knows what do with his luck. A topic for another occasion.)

More broadly, in Schiller's text both the sensuous drive and the form drive are understood to strive for maximum expression, and to the extent that in a particular instance this proves attainable—to the extent to which the two drives operating at full strength turn out to be harmonizable with one another—that will be the work of the play drive, which Schiller associates with the "aesthetic qualities of phenomena and, in a word, what in the widest sense of the term we call beauty"—let us simply say with art. And *that*, I want to suggest, is figured or expressed in *Mixed Behavior* by the work of the artist, Anri Sala, though of course it is also possible to see the DJ as a surrogate for the artist—but again only up to a point. Indeed the non-documentary or say fictional status of the DJ is insisted on at the end of the video when he is rendered ghostlike as he stands up to leave. And even before that moment, though it is difficult to make out, the DJ's actions themselves go into reverse whenever the fireworks do—Sala had no way of reversing the exploding fireworks other than by reversing the image track as such. (One can see this in the way roman candles and the like streak downward toward their points of origin at those moments.) Finally, the very theme of "connection" between the fireworks and the music is consistent with Sala's larger concern throughout his career with the relation of image-track to sound-track; the special character of *Mixed Behavior* in this regard is that it thematizes that relation as one in which the sound of the remixing seeks to master the image, also in a sense the sound, of the fireworks. But as I have said, it is crucial to recognize that this is only a fiction, and that Sala's project, as distinct from the DJ's, is at once to create that impression and to acknowledge, in the modernist sense of the term, that the truth of the piece is more complex—more playful, one might say. In this connection it is interesting to note that much of the post-filming work concerned the sound; for example, Sala went back to Albania with recording equipment and set off his own fireworks to make sure the sonic dimension of the piece would be exactly as he wanted it.

(Something else one wouldn't know simply from experiencing the video is that Sala himself was crouching under the plastic sheeting covering the battery and mixers throughout the duration of the shoot; it was he who filmed the opening seconds of *Mixed Behavior* from that cramped vantage point. During the rest of the filming there was no one behind the camera—but of course the directorial intelligence throughout is his.)

It's in this light, too, that I understand one of the features of *Mixed Behavior* that most surprised me when I first viewed it, and for some time afterward—I refer to the fact that the initial reversal of exploding fireworks occurs relatively early in the piece, after no more than two minutes and fifty seconds. One might have expected that Sala would have chosen to make the viewer wait longer before introducing that patently unnatural effect. But then (after repeated viewings) I realized that introducing it early on meant that the viewer had ample opportunity to become accustomed to the fact of reversal, with the result that by the time reversal comes back at just over three and a half minutes and again just after four and a half minutes and five and a half minutes, and not only comes back but is increasingly activated in syncopation with the music, the viewer—I'm taking my experience as

typical—has begun at least somewhat to lose hold of the "natural" tendency of the fireworks to explode outward and then fall to earth, and thus to accept reversal as something other than anomalous within the structural logic of *Mixed Behavior* as it unfolds over time. In other words, the cumulative effect of temporal reversal in Sala's video is not so much that of contravening or dominating the natural order of events—in Schiller's terminology, the mastering of sensation and succession by a drive toward form—as it is something like what Schiller provocatively characterized in his fourteenth "Letter" as the "annulling of time *within time*," which in this case I understand to mean preserving the effect of temporal succession while taking radical imaginative liberties with temporality as ordinarily experienced. (Transforming temporal succession from within, so to speak.) More broadly, Schiller says of the play drive that it "will endeavor so to receive as if it had itself brought forth, and so to bring forth as the intuitive sense aspires to receive"—a rather prescient paraphrase of the overall import of *Mixed Behavior* as I have described it. As is the notion that if the two drives could be conjoined, "man . . . instead of losing himself to the world, will rather draw the latter into himself in all its infinitude of phenomena . . ."

Let me be clear about what I take all this to mean: I am not suggesting that Sala conceived of *Mixed Behavior* in terms of the argument of Schiller's text—nothing could be less likely, or indeed more foreign to Sala's general approach to his art. In particular the fact that the video is set in Tirana has everything to do with Sala's personal history as well with a certain "ethical" or "political" impulse—to neutralize or even to redeem artistically a situation, the firing of guns throughout New Year's Eve, of which he disapproved. And as I have already noted, Sala's work from the start has been concerned with relating image track to sound track in original and compelling ways. I *am* suggesting, though, that the basic argument of the "Letters" with respect to the three drives bears a surprisingly close relation to Sala's video, or to put this slightly differently, that the medium of video in Sala's hands turns out to have lent itself to an artistic project that can usefully be understood—I'd like to think that puts it mildly—in terms of Schiller's exalted but also quite specific vision of the stakes of art and the mission of culture. This may appear to defy common sense of a contextual sort: between Schiller's "Letters" and Sala's *Mixed Behavior* there looms a chronological gulf of more than two centuries, not to mention the disparity in almost every cultural regard between the Weimar of Schiller and Goethe and the Tirana or Paris or Berlin (Sala's cities) of the early

2000s. But it may be that contextual considerations are an unreliable guide in situations such as this one. In my 2008 book *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* I tried to show that as regards the practice of a number of leading contemporary photographers, the antitheatrical artistic regime or episteme that first emerged in the course of the 1750s and '60s in France and of which Diderot in his writings on painting and drama was the most lucid advocate is still in force–dialectically transformed, that can't be stressed too strongly, but nevertheless in force. And in my book *Four Honest Outlaws* I extend that account to cover the diverse work of Sala, Charles Ray, Joseph Marioni, and Douglas Gordon. I would not want to launch a comparably sweeping claim about the contemporary relevance of Schiller's aesthetics, and yet there is an important sense—if I am right in reading *Mixed Behavior* as I have—in which it was precisely the technology of video that established the conditions for the belated realization of his vision especially with regard to the issues of play and temporality as these are theorized in the "Letters."

Needless to say, this is to take Sala's achievement in *Mixed Behavior* extremely seriously—much more seriously than is usual in commentaries on contemporary art. And it is to take Schiller's ideas extremely seriously as well—if not more seriously then in a different, less strictly historicist spirit than is usual in commentaries on German post-Kantian thought.[6] To which I will add that the treatment of temporality in *Mixed Behavior* is consistent with what in *Four Honest Outlaws* I seek to show has been Sala's intense concern with one or another version, also dialectically transformed, of the high modernist ideal of "presentness," a major theme in my 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood."[7] Just as the conspicuous trumping of mechanical causality—the normal progress of exploding fireworks—by the artist's intentions is in line with the high modernist insistence on intentionality all the way down, or rather with the redoubling of that insistence in the work of contemporary artists such as Thomas Demand and Charles Ray.[8]

A final pair of claims: the strongest art of today is far more philosophically interesting and at the same time more genuinely ambitious than standard accounts of the present situation often suggest; and Sala, not yet forty, is at the cutting edge of the developments that make it so.[9]

NOTES

1. Friedrich Schiller, "Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man," *Essays*, trans. Walter Hinderer and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 1993), pp. 118-21; the statement about annulling time and affirming persistence within change is on page 118. Further page references will be in parentheses in the text. See also the discussion of the "Letters" in Frederick Beiser, *Schiller as Philosopher: A Re-Examination* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

2. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value: A Selection from the Posthumous Remains*, rev. ed., ed. Georg Henrik von Wright with Heikki Nyman, rev. ed. of text by Alois Pichler, trans. Peter Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 91e. Obviously Wittgenstein feels that it is imperative that we do so free ourselves, and I am with him on this. Not that one might not be moved to say of certain contemporary work—the paintings of Joseph Marioni, for example, or certain photographs by James Welling—indeed the entire photographic oeuvre of Robert Adams—that they are "beautiful." But beauty as a master concept, or indeed *the* master concept, for art and esthetics belongs to another age.

3. I saw *Mixed Behavior* under ideal conditions at Sala's 2009 exhibition at the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati. It was shown on a 4:3 format video monitor suspended in the middle of a dark (but not pitch black) room, with stereo speakers sitting behind the monitor more or less at the same (imagined) distance as that between the viewer and the DJ in the video. It was hard to break off watching and listening.

4. For a close analysis of *Long Sorrow* see Michael Fried, *Four Honest Outlaws: Sala, Ray, Marioni, Gordon* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 32-49.

5. The DJ is using two CD players and a mixer, not that there is any way of knowing this from the video itself. According to Sala, his choice of music was inspired by that of Kruder and Dorfmeister, an Austrian duo who came to the fore starting around 1993. My thanks to Sala for providing this and other information about his piece.

6. A notable exception: the writings of the philosopher Robert Pippin. See for example Robert B. Pippin, "What Was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Hegel)," *Critical Inquiry* 29.1 (Autumn 2002): 1-24.

7. Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood" (1967) in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 148-72.

8. On Demand in this regard, see Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 261-76; and on Ray (in particular his sculpture *Hinoki*), see *Four Honest Outlaws*, 91-97. The trumping of causality by intentionality is a crucial theme in Jennifer Ashton, *From Modernism to Postmodernism: American Poetry and Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), ch. 5: "Authorial inattention: Donald Davidson's literalism, Jorie Graham's *Materialism*, and cognitive science's embodied minds," 146-76.

9. This essay was originally presented as a lecture in a series of talks on artistic modernism at the Art Institute of Chicago in April 2010; it was subsequently published in the catalogue for Sala's 2011 exhibition at The Serpentine Gallery in London (*Anri Sala*, exh. cat. [Serpentine Gallery, London, October 1 to November 20, 2011], 97-104).

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FEATURES

DIFFERENT FACETS OF ANALYTIC CUBISM

LISA FLORMAN

The following essay was originally written as the opening address for a symposium at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art held in conjunction with the exhibition Picasso and Braque: The Cubist Experiment, 1910-1912.[1] *The talk was designed to provide a frame of reference for both the exhibition and the symposium's subsequent papers through its brief review of the most compelling interpretations of Analytic Cubism of the past 50 or so years. The present iteration of the essay has been slightly modified to better accommodate its new, nonsite-specific context.*

We have now had over 100 years to come to terms with Analytic Cubism, to make sense of its fragmented forms and shallow, intermittent spatiality, its dense value gradations and heavily worked surfaces. Despite having had that century for reflection, however, there exists little consensus today regarding either Cubism's underlying intentions or its successes and failures. Picasso himself offered relatively little explanation of his project, and Braque was no better. Presumably they talked to one another, even daily, and at considerable length; but neither ever penned a manifesto of the movement, say, or offered interviews elaborating their intentions, at least not until long after the fact. (In that regard, they were virtually unique among early twentieth-century artists, whose paintings were almost invariably accompanied

by some written explanation—instructions, as it were, for the uninitiated.) In the case of Analytic Cubism, interpretation was left to others: other artists, or critics, who felt the need for an account of this work that looked so radically different from everything preceding it. [2]

Fig. 1. Picasso, Glass of Absinthe (autumn 1911), Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College

The first serious attempts at explanation tended to fall into two opposing camps—or frequently, as Christine Poggi has pointed out, into both at once. [3] On the one hand were claims for Cubism's heightened "realism," principally through its purported ability to offer *multiple* views of objects, rather than remaining confined to the singular vantage point normally considered endemic to painting. According to this account, in a work like Picasso's *Glass of Absinthe* [fig. 1], the "glass" in question—that conglomeration of black-outlined forms situated about two-thirds of the way between the leftmost edge of the canvas and the right—was to be understood as given both in "plan" (the circles and semi-circles suggesting the round base and the stem seen in cross-section) *and* in "elevation" (the vertical lines between and above the circular forms indicating the upright orientation of the glass).

Whether this was interpreted as indicating the painter's movement toward and around the object or as the result of that object's conceptual (rather than merely perceptual) apprehension, the implication was that Cubism had overcome painting's earlier limitations, and so could now provide a more complete grasp of things in their totality.

On the other hand there was the widespread assertion that Cubist paintings were *themselves* totalities, autonomous things in their own right, "real," if you will, because no longer tied to illusionistic description of the natural world. Carl Einstein, in his "Notes on Cubism," perhaps summarized this position best: "The totalization of the painting comes about," he said, "as a consequence of its *unverifiability*, and the fact that the spectator never exits from the reality of the picture."[4] The claim was that, in contemplation of a work such as Picasso's *Glass of Absinthe*, the viewer cuts him- or herself off from the external world, which consequently recedes in memory. That world then ceases to be the yardstick against which the painting is measured.

Again, these two views—on the one hand, that Cubist pictures give us better or truer depictions of things as they actually are; on the other, that they are themselves independent or autonomous *things*—would seem inherently contradictory. (The first emphasizes the representational function of the image, the second all but denies it.) Of course, that didn't prevent both views from being voiced by one and the same individual, often in the space of a single essay. Rather than seeing this as a flaw of the criticism, however, I want to suggest that the contradictions inherent in the early interpretations of Cubism actually reveal something very important about the works in question. They help us to see that Cubism was an art built out of, and sustained by, contradiction. Consequently, the very best accounts of it we have are precisely those that emphasize the things most contradictory in its aims and ambitions.

As far as I know, the first person to explicitly acknowledge the contradictions of Cubism and to offer a compelling account of its development based on their interplay, was the critic Clement Greenberg. In his 1959 essay, "Collage," Greenberg described the dilemma he saw confronting Picasso and Braque over the course of their shared enterprise. Every Cubist work, he said, in contradistinction to centuries of Western paintings preceding it, "had to spell out, rather than pretend to deny, the *physical fact* that it was flat"—that it was, in other words, a "real," tangible object—"even though at the same time it had to overcome this proclaimed flatness as an *aesthetic fact* and continue to report nature."[5] We should pause briefly to take stock of that rather peculiar phrase in the last line: "aesthetic fact." It, too, has a hint of the contradictory or oxymoronic about it. Plainly, in using it, Greenberg hoped to give the painting's aesthetic qualities a weight comparable to that of its physical or factual existence. It was not enough, he felt, for the Cubist work to be flat; a blank canvas, an ironing board, a

piece of wallpaper, for that matter, are all flat. To be a *painting*, the Cubist work would have to confess its flatness but also—somehow—overcome or negate it. [6]

Greenberg's concerns at the beginning of his essay were with Picasso's and Braque's paintings from 1911, which is to say, with those from the height of what is sometimes referred to as Cubism's "hermetic" phase. According to Greenberg, works of this period took the particular form that they did as a result of an effort to achieve a balance between, on the one hand, flattened "facet-planes" that would echo and therefore emphasize the two-dimensionality and rectilinearity of the canvas and, on the other, a modeling that could potentially disrupt our awareness of the surface. The modeling should do nothing more than that, however. Were it to function successfully, creating a plausible illusion of solid, volumetric form, the painting would have to be deemed in *denial* of its physical flatness—masquerading as sculpture, then, rather than owning up to being the painting that it actually is. Greenberg's terminology is nicely counter-intuitive here: "The main problem at this juncture," he said, "became to keep the 'inside' of the picture—its content—from fusing with the 'outside'—its literal surface" ("Collage," 71). If Greenberg designated the surface of the canvas as *outside*, and the work's representational content *within*, it was presumably to emphasize that, for Picasso and Braque, representation remained the proper purview of painting. Conversely, any work that abandoned that function would become simply an object and, as a result, fall *outside* the domain of art.

Fig. 2. Braque, Violin and Pitcher (late 1909 - early 1910), Kunstmuseum Basel

At the same time Greenberg wanted to call our attention to the way that "inside" and "outside" were coming into increasingly close proximity, and so he referred not to the painting's "illusionistic depth" but rather to its *"depicted flatness."* "Depicted flatness," he said, "—that is, the facet planes—had to be kept separate enough from literal flatness to permit a minimal illusion of three-dimensional space to survive between the two" ("Collage," 71-72). Early on, Braque had tried to address the problem by means of *trompe-l'oeil*. In his *Still Life with Violin and Pitcher* [fig. 2], he painted a tack at the top of the canvas casting a highly illusionistic shadow below. By effectively conflating the wall of the room—in other words, the rearmost of the painting's represented planes—and the physical plane of the canvas itself, Braque was able to suggest a space forward or *on top of* the picture's rendered flatness, between the depicted planes and the space that we ourselves inhabit. But such devices, Greenberg felt, were mere "expedients," more gimmick than actual solution to the problem at hand. Still, they did bring Picasso and Braque to a crucial realization—namely, that there might be a way to overcome literal or physical flatness by, paradoxically, bringing it to the fore. It's worth quoting this part of Greenberg's argument at some length:

> If the actuality of the surface—its real, physical flatness—could be indicated explicitly enough in certain places, it would be distinguished and separated from everything else the surface contained. Once the literal nature of the support was advertised, whatever upon it was not intended literally would be set off and enhanced in its non-literalness. Or to put it still another way: depicted flatness would inhabit at least the semblance of a three-dimensional space as long as the brute, undepicted flatness of the literal surface was pointed to as being still flatter. ("Collage," 72)

Fig. 3. Braque, The Portuguese (autumn 1911- early 1912), Kunstmuseum Basel

Hence the printed or stenciled letters and numbers that, in 1911, first Braque and then Picasso began introducing into their compositions [see fig. 3]; the point was to draw attention through those inscriptions to the literal surface of the painting, so that everything less obviously adhering to that surface would appear to recede in depth as a result of the comparison.

Fig. 4. Braque, The Clarinet (summer 1912), Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice

The only problem, according to Greenberg, was that familiarity seemed to weaken the effect. By 1912 Picasso and Braque had begun selectively adding sand to their paint so as to give it a visible texture [see fig. 4]. The hope was that, by introducing an explicitly tactile element, still larger areas of the actual surface could be emphasized, thereby prolonging the desired spatial illusions everywhere else. As Greenberg tells the story, this strategy too eventually proved insufficient; and, of course, it was bound to. Insofar as the intention was to overcome (and not merely to deny) the literal flatness of the painting's material support, the project was doomed to failure from the start. *Ontological* failure, I hasten to add—not aesthetic failure. On aesthetic grounds, I think we can agree, most of the works manage quite nicely. Yet it

was their nonreconciliation to flatness—to, we might say, the unavoidable conditions of their own existence—that Greenberg regarded as their most distinctive feature. It is also what he saw motivating Cubism's development. Faced with the impossible demand to simultaneously spell out and overcome its literal flatness, Cubist painting was driven to ever more extreme measures; its history appears, as a result, as a succession of retrospective, dialectical responses to its inability to free itself from its all-too-literal, material support.

Fig. 5. Braque, Fruit Dish and Glass (September 1912), Private Collection

In the end, as Greenberg tells the story, the accumulation of stenciling and textures threatened to overwhelm and thereby collapse the distinction between depicted and undepicted flatnesses that it had been the explicit purpose of those devices to produce. But it was just at this point, and presumably as a direct result of those earlier failures, that Picasso

and Braque hit on the idea of papiers collés [see fig. 5].⁷ To be sure, the new ploy raised the stakes considerably. The pieces of paper that were affixed quite tangibly to the surface declared that surface with an unprecedented literalness. The risk was even greater now that undepicted flatness would become "the main event of the picture," effectively subsuming any and all implications of depth ("Collage," 75). The brilliance of the new medium, according to Greenberg, was that within the narrowing confines of an opposition between literal surface and illusionistic depth—and at the very moment when literal surface seemed on the brink of becoming the *only* term—papier collé delivered a solution in which illusionism was transformed but thereby preserved. Again I think it's worth quoting Greenberg at some length on these matters, particularly as he sees them playing out in a specific work:

> In the upper center of Braque's first collage, *Fruit Dish* [fig. 5], a bunch of grapes is rendered with such conventionally vivid sculptural effects [or at least effects sufficiently "sculptural"] as to lift it practically off the picture plane. The *trompe-l'oeil* illusion here is no longer enclosed within parallel flatnesses, but seems to thrust through the surface of the drawing paper and establish depth *on top* of it. Yet the violent immediacy of the wallpaper strips pasted to the paper, and the only lesser immediacy of the block capitals that simulate window lettering, manage somehow to push the grape cluster back into place on the picture plane so that it doesn't "jump." At the same time, the wallpaper strips themselves seem to be pushed into depth by the lines and patches of shading charcoaled upon them, and by *their* placing in relation to the block capitals; and these capitals seem in turn to be pushed back by their placing, and by contrast with the corporeality of the woodgraining. Thus every part and plane of the picture keeps changing place in relative depth with every other part and plane; and it is as if the only stable relation left among the different parts of the picture is the ambivalent and ambiguous one that each has with the surface. ("Collage," 76)

Greenberg's language in this passage is particularly compelling; it also signals a major turning point in his narrative. Over the course of the next several pages of his text, he will go on to claim that the papiers collés managed to achieve, at last, what the earlier works had not, namely, an overcoming of the opposition between literal and depicted flatnesses that, until that moment, had been presented as the insurmountable contradiction driving Cubism's development. The key to the reconciliation, according to Greenberg, was papier collé's peculiar illusionistic potential. In the pasted-paper works, he conceded, "flatness may monopolize everything, but it is a flatness become so ambiguous and expanded as to turn into illusion itself" ("Collage," 77). Mind you, the illusion at issue in these works is, for Greenberg,

no longer *pictorial*, achieved through perspective and sculptural modeling as in the works of the past. Rather, it is an *optical* illusionism, arising within formal configurations that openly declare their two-dimensionality, an illusionism capable of displacing surfaces so that they seem to hover in an imaginary (and decidedly non-physical) space. In the later papiers collés, according to Greenberg, the last vestiges of sculptural shading that still clung to Braque's *Fruit Dish* were progressively eliminated, thereby demonstrating that optical illusion could be produced without the aid of any pictorial illusion whatsoever—that the physical surface could be displaced and re-created out of shapes that were wholly and unimpeachably flat.

Admittedly, there are problems with this account of Cubism (including the reality that neither Picasso nor Braque ever *did* actually produce papiers collés devoid of all sculptural modeling). [8] Still, it seems to me that Greenberg's larger narrative, especially the part concerning the paintings of 1911 and 1912, is able to accommodate many of the eccentric features of those works—their stenciling, for example, and the addition of sand to their surfaces—that demand explanation yet that, prior to Greenberg's essay at least, had seemed particularly inexplicable. My own feeling (obviously enough) is that, because of this explanatory power, "Collage" deserves rather more attention than it has received, particularly over the last several decades.
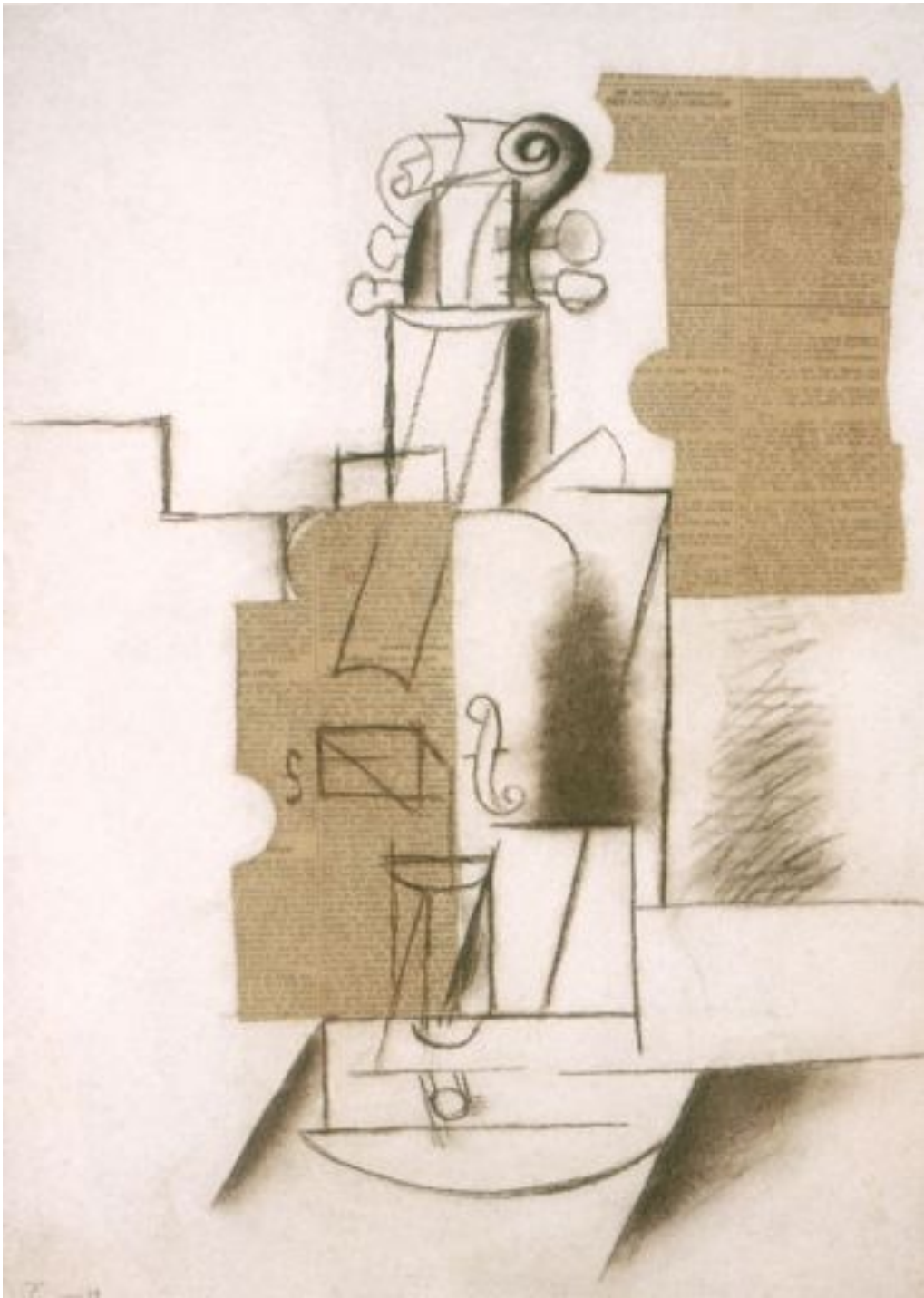
Fig. 6. Picasso, Violin (December 1912), Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

The essay's disregard or disfavor during that extended period is plainly the result of a kind of collective dissatisfaction over what we might call its "optical dénouement." Unhappy with the story's conclusion, scholars have tended to overlook or discount even its more promising

beginnings. Certainly one way to understand the several *semiotic* interpretations of Cubism that appeared in the 1970s, '80s, and early '90s—notably those by Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois—is as reactions to Greenberg's "opticality" (and, we might add, his tendency to measure all modern painting against that single standard).[9] Precisely at the moment where Greenberg saw the triumph of optical illusion—in Picasso's and Braque's papiers collés—Krauss and Bois would have us see instead Cubism's unprecedented engagement with quasi-linguistic signs. Indeed the very turn to papiers collés is to be understood, in their view, as driven by a desire to develop, if not for painting per se, at least for picturing, discrete signifying units analogous to the words or phonemes of written and spoken language. They regard each shard of paper in Picasso's *Violin* [fig. 6], for example, as just such a unit, neatly delimited, in contrast to the generally seamless continuity of an oil painting's surface. For Krauss especially it was also important that Picasso wasn't using just *any* kind of paper; his preferred material was newspaper, the printed text insinuating that an analogous process of signification was operating in the context of each individual collage.
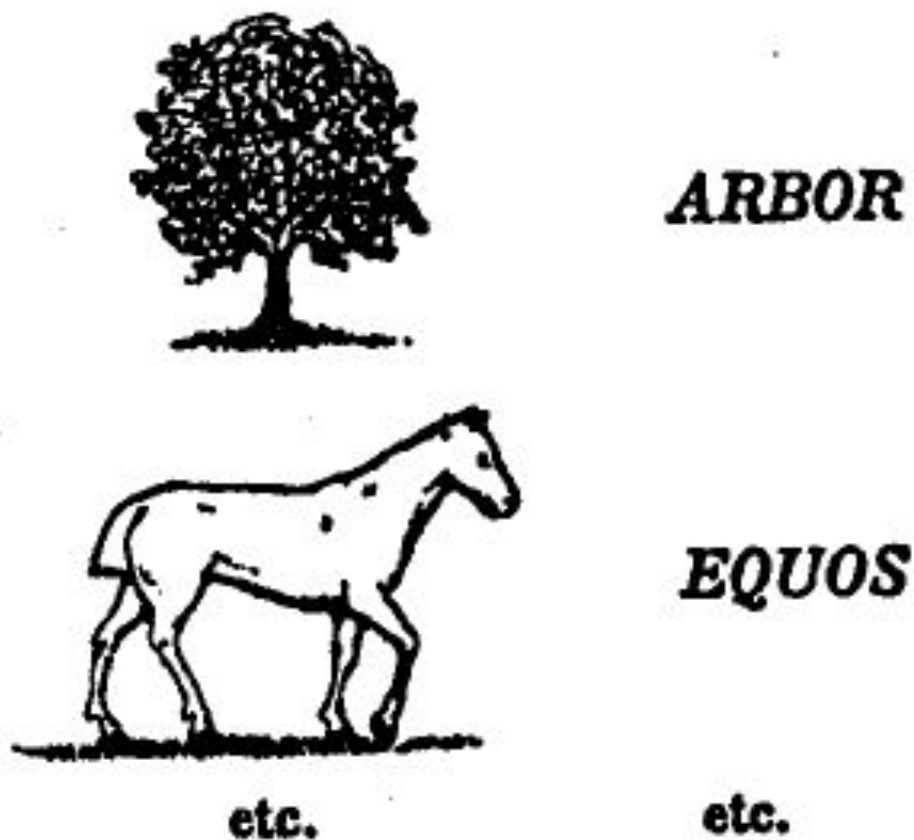
ARBOR

EQUOS

etc.   etc.

Fig. 7. Diagram from Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, p. 66

It seems to have been important, too, for both Bois and Krauss that Cubism's experiments with papiers collés were being conducted more or less concurrently with major developments in structural linguistics, notably in the work of Roman Jakobson and Ferdinand de Saussure. [10] Saussure's Course in General Linguistics, which was offered three times at the University of Geneva between 1907 and 1911 before its publication as a book in 1916, emphasized that language constituted at any particular moment a formal system, the elements of which drew their meaning only oppositionally, as a result of their differences from one another. [11] Language was not, then, the simple naming process it was commonly taken to be—not a matter of a simple one-to-one correlation between a word (the Latin word "arbor" or "equos," for example [see fig. 7]) and some thing in the world (i.e., the tree or the horse standing over there in the field). In actuality, things are more complicated than that. In his course [see fig. 8], Saussure distinguished, first, between the concept (designated as "arbor" in the lower left of his diagram) and the written or spoken word ("tree"); and, then (in the right-hand ellipse), between the concept (below) and its referent in the world (above). He also underscored the fact that different languages cut things up differently, as illustrated in the diagram reproduced here as fig. 9: "A" represents the undifferentiated field of possible concepts, "B" the range of signifiers (sounds) that might potentially be used to designate them. Again, different languages divide those streams differently. English, Saussure pointed out, has two separate words—"sheep" and "mutton"—for the living and cooked forms of the animal, whereas French has only one: *mouton*. (The other example everyone always trots out—although, factually, it stands on shaky ground—concerns Eskimo languages, which purportedly have many different signifiers for everything encompassed by our one word "snow." [12]) These linguistic differences occur because the relation between signifier and signified is wholly arbitrary, which is to say, the word "tree" (whether written or spoken) in no way resembles the maple outside on the lawn. Images, of course, are typically not of this order; they signify something precisely by resembling it. One of the upshots of that condition, however, is that images, no less than words, are often taken to have a one-to-one correspondence (in effect, a quasi-nominal relation) to the things that they denote. Patently enough, even Saussure, when he wanted to refer to a real tree rather than its linguistic signifier, used an *image* of a tree [fig. 8]. The metaphor of the painting-as-window, ubiquitous throughout the Western mimetic tradition, has similarly encouraged viewers' tendency to regard images as more or less transparent to the things that they portray.
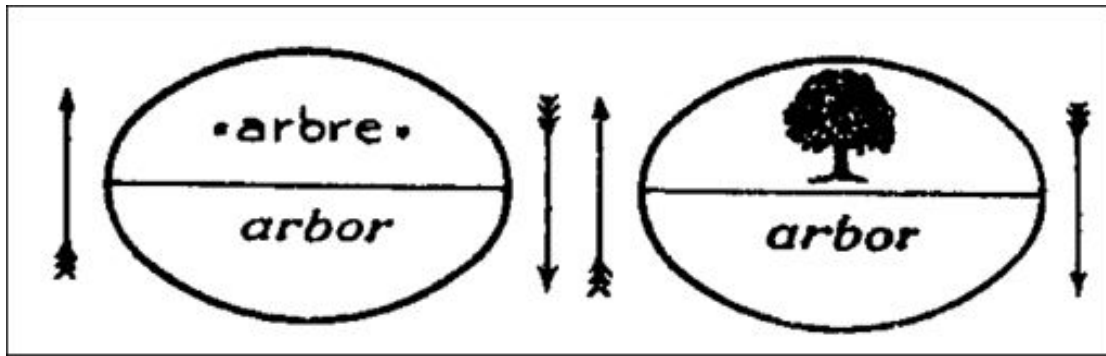
Fig. 8. Diagram from Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, p. 68
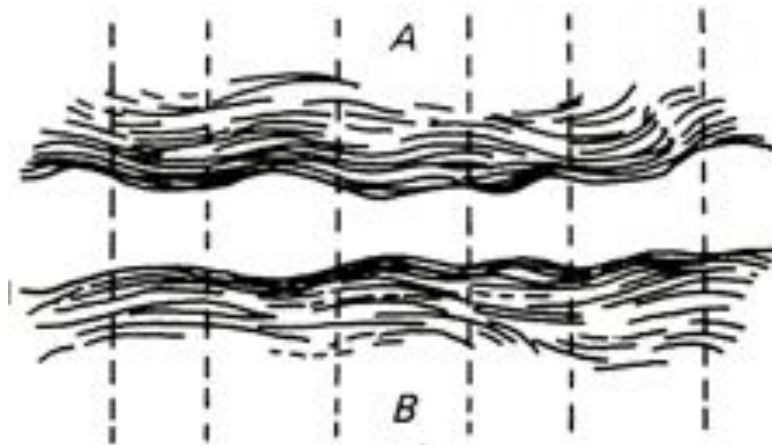
Fig. 9. Diagram from Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, p. 113

But is painting *necessarily* rooted in mimetic likeness? Might it be possible for painting to develop and make use of essentially "arbitrary" signs, signs that, like words, would be capable of referring to things in the world but in the absence of illusionism, perhaps even foregoing resemblance altogether? These questions are the ones explicitly raised, according to Krauss and Bois, by Picasso's papiers collés.[13] From one work to the next, Picasso often re-used nearly identical shapes but had them signify different things in their different contexts. Evidently enough, a shape such as the leftmost newspaper fragment in the *Violin* [fig. 6] could easily serve in another collage—were it re-positioned slightly rightward—not as the notched silhouette of a violin but rather as the front face and sound-hole of a *guitar*. In that case we would want to say that the pieces in their separate contexts function like homonyms, like words that sound alike but have distinctly different meanings. Historically, paintings and other works of visual art have not functioned in this manner, because mimetic resemblance precludes such multiple significations.[14] In fact, Picasso's *Violin* may represent the limit-case in Cubism's effort to create an arbitrary visual sign. As Krauss pointed out, the two newspaper fragments employed in the work evidently once belonged to the same sheet; we

are readily able to re-join them in our imagination. (Having scissored them apart, Picasso simply turned one over before pasting them both down onto the surface.) Again, the leftmost piece designates in the context of this collage the surface and silhouette of a violin. But what about the rightmost fragment? Krauss convincingly argued that we are meant to see its parallel lines of type as more or less continuous with the charcoaled hatchings below (an effect that was undoubtedly even stronger before the newspaper yellowed with age), and therefore as signifying the shadowy space alongside of the instrument. We have, then, two signifiers—materially indistinguishable in that they once belonged to the very same sheet of newspaper—but that in the context of this single work have been made to signify not just different things but *opposites*, objects and qualities essentially antithetical to one another: on the one hand, flat opaque surface and, on the other, shadowy, atmospheric depth.

Fig. 10. Picasso, Three Women (autumn 1907-late 1908), The Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg

Krauss presented her reading of Picasso's *Violin* at a 1989 symposium held in conjunction with the Museum of Modern Art's blockbuster exhibition, *Picasso and Braque: Pioneering Cubism*.[15] As his contribution to that same symposium, Yve-Alain Bois provided an account of Cubism's development, from roughly 1908 through 1912, which also drew heavily on semiotics. (I should add that the more or less simultaneous presentation of those two papers contributed to the impression at the time that the semiotic angle was fast becoming

the reigning orthodoxy among interpreters of Cubism.) For his part, Bois wanted to show that, from the outset, Cubism had been working toward the development of a system of arbitrary signs, the discrete signifying units of papiers collés being but the culmination of that effort. What Bois designated the first phase of Cubism, represented by Picasso's *Three Women* [fig. 10], was characterized, he said, by the repeated subdividing of the painting's surface, the figures or other representational elements of the work seeming to emerge only as a *result* of that division. In the case of the figures in the *Three Women*, Bois argued, their anatomical features are patently a byproduct of the canvas's partitioning into multiple, triangular segments. That it was a matter of dividing a single, *continuous* surface is underscored not only in those places (e.g., in the area of the leftmost nude's upraised elbow) where the figures still seem attached to their background, but also by that odd, shared contour that serves simultaneously to delineate the breast and torso of the rightmost woman *and* the buttocks and thigh of her sister alongside. [16]

Fig. 11. Picasso, Still Life with Liqueur Bottle (August 1909), The Museum of Modern Art, New York

In what Bois called Cubism's "second semiological phase" the units became rectangular and, in certain instances, such as Picasso's *Still Life with Liqueur Bottle* [fig. 11], the artist selected objects that were particularly well suited to the new geometric paradigm. (That is, the cut-glass of the depicted bottle of liqueur was, in some sense, *already* Cubist.) Over the course of the next ten or twelve months, the rectangular units of these Cubist paintings increasingly took on the overall form of a grid [see fig. 12]. As a result, they took on too a kind of

double signification, simultaneously referring to the figure or objects represented (however elusively) and to the rectangular shape of the canvas itself, which the grid effectively replicated in miniature.

Fig. 12. Picasso, The Rower (summer 1910), Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

At this point, according to Bois—following the summer that Picasso and Braque spent together in Spain, in the town of Cadaqués—Cubism arrived at a crossroads. It could abandon representation altogether—stop figuring the world outside of the work—or somehow devise a means of signification that would allow painting to retain its representational function but without having to return to the illusionism of the past. Clearly

both Picasso and Braque felt that, were painting to renounce its traditional representational function, there would be neither any rules governing its production nor criteria by which to measure its success. Any decisions regarding the placement of this line or that color could only ever be arbitrary, now in the negative sense of "entirely random."

Fig. 13. Picasso, Portrait of D.-H. Kahnweiler (autumn 1910), The Art Institute of Chicago

It was at this point that Picasso and Braque both began introducing into their paintings small pictographic elements: in the case of Picasso's *Portrait of Kahnweiler* [fig. 13], for example, the black linear configurations denoting moustache, hair, watch chain, hands, etc. These "signs" or, better, signifying elements are all still "iconic," which is to say, they all represent something (a watch chain, for example) by resembling it; but they are doing so now in the conspicuous absence of sculptural modeling or any other form of illusionism. Bois designated this Cubism's "hieroglyphic" stage—precisely because, like hieroglyphs, the pictographic elements of these paintings seem to inhabit a territory in between illusionistic images and the arbitrary or unmotivated signs of writing.

Fig. 14. Picasso, Still-Life with Chair Caning (spring 1912), Musée Picasso, Paris

Again, like Krauss, Bois regards the papiers collés of the following year as being different in kind, in that, he says, they fully inhabit the territory of the arbitrary sign. But he sees Picasso's *Still-Life with Chair-Caning* [fig. 14]—a work of collage that preceded the papiers collés (indeed it was the very first collage ever produced)—as importantly transitional in this whole process. As Rosalind Krauss first noted, the *Still-Life with Chair-Caning* makes itself available to two contradictory readings. On the one hand, we can regard it as a more or less traditionally oriented still-life, a painting of so many objects (a glass, a newspaper, a pipe, a slice of quiche

or tart) arrayed on a table at some distance in front of us, the line of our gaze at those objects being, then, essentially perpendicular to our upright bodies. But it is also possible to see the painting otherwise. That is, we might instead regard the rope-encircled, oval-shaped canvas as referring to the *top* of the table, perhaps a glass table, with the collaged piece of caning-imprinted fabric suggesting the edge of the chair pushed underneath. In that case, we would not be looking *out* at the still-life objects but, rather, *down* at them, our line of sight now running more or less parallel to our upright bodies. Christine Poggi has aptly described this collage as offering itself as both table and *tableau*, that latter term implying precisely the vertical orientation of the works historically associated with easel painting. Bois, for his part, describes *Still-Life with Chair-Caning* as marking "the moment when something is about to topple, for in the collapse of the vertical and the horizontal, what Picasso is inscribing is the very possibility of the transformation of painting into writing—of the empirical and vertical space of vision, controlled by our own erect position on the ground, into the semiological, …horizontal space of reading" ("Semiology of Cubism," 186-87). Again, for Bois, that "horizontal" space of reading and writing is the one that the subsequent papiers collés would come to fully inhabit.

Bois's argument played an important role in shaping the last of the art-historical accounts of Cubism that I want to discuss, the one advanced by T.J. Clark in his essay "Cubism and Collectivity."[17] In a footnote to that essay, Clark explicitly credits Bois's work with having helped him to sort out "the strengths and weaknesses of the semiotic account of Cubism, and the ways it does and does not connect with previous 'modernist' [i.e. Greenbergian] descriptions" ("Cubism and Collectivity," 424, note 9). In contrast to either Bois's or Greenberg's narratives, a certain "disconnected quality" characterizes Clark's own, "precisely because," he says, "it is the opposite quality that I most distrust in the accounts…we already have: that is, the way they are driven by a basic commitment to narrative continuity, by a wish to see Picasso's works from 1907 to 1912 as possessing a logic or forming a sequence, as not being broken or interrupted in any important way—not, above all, encountering failure" ("Cubism and Collectivity," 175). If the Cubist works "are historical at all," Clark adds a bit later in his text, "it is only insofar as they constantly seem to be moving toward some declaration of epoch-making failure—painting at the end of its tether, so to say, or in an ether where its means are hopelessly clotted or more and more impalpable" ("Cubism and Collectivity," 187).

Clark actually agrees with Bois that in Cubism the pictorial signs become highly—unprecedentedly—arbitrary. But he insists that the works themselves suggest only a grudging acceptance of that arbitrariness, and do so always in a dark or sardonic mode. "The freer and freer play of the signifier is represented," he says, "at the same time as it is embraced,

as a mereness, a mechanizing or automatism of markmaking, an overall-ness which registers as the opposite of liberty or even 'autonomy'" ("Cubism and Collectivity," 185), Clark's basic claim is that Cubism never did achieve the status of a language, though, importantly, he says, it pretended to have done so. It was essentially the counterfeit of such a language, feigning to offer some truer or more accurate description of the phenomenal world but in fact being unable to deliver anything of the sort. [18]

Fig. 15. Picasso, Man with a Pipe (summer 1911), Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth

As Clark tells the story, in the summer of 1910, the one spent at Cadaqués, where Picasso's work in particular became as arbitrary or abstract as it ever would—where paintings such as *The Rower* [fig. 12] perched on the edge of a wholly "unverifiable" relation to the things they purported to describe—the artist came "face to face with the disenchantment of the world.

Which meant, in Picasso's case," Clark says, "the disenchantment of painting—the revealing of more and more, and deeper and deeper, structures of depiction as purely contingent, nothing but devices" ("Cubism and Collectivity," 220). Subsequently light (and not just the stale academic simulacrum of it that was present in the works from Cadaqués) would return to illuminate Picasso's paintings. The representation of specific objects or figures was also reasserted, via the introduction of Bois's "hieroglyphic" elements [see fig. 15]—all of those preposterous moustaches, cleft chins, and little beady eyes showing us quite explicitly, according to Clark, "what the pursuit of likeness looks like, in a situation where all versions of such a pursuit have proved impossible to sustain" ("Cubism and Collectivity," 221).

For all his care to separate himself from the so-called "semioticians," Clark's position here looks, at least from my vantage point, not so very distant from that of Rosalind Krauss. In her essay "The Motivation of the Sign," Krauss had presented Picasso turning to quasi-linguistic signifiers as a kind of last resort, a way of "writing" /depth/ on a field from which its illusionistic invocation had been effectively banished. If we're to grasp the full weight of her argument, it's extremely important we recognize that the only claims Krauss made for wholly arbitrary signification pertained to precisely those signifiers that indicated depth or the related notions of obliquity and luminosity. In "The Motivation of the Sign," she is very clear on this point:

This matter of motivating the sign, raised by my title does not, then, refer to the import of the semiological turn heralded by collage. Rather, it addresses the specific set of signifieds that Picasso seems most insistently to organize in the opening years of his exploration of collage. Those signifieds—/depth/ and /atmosphere/ or /light/—are in no way random, but are prepared for, motivated if you will, by the experience of the preceding five years. ("The Motivation of the Sign," 271-72) —She means *by the way that three-dimensionality had been progressively drained from the picture.* So, for example, when Krauss points to the two mismatched f-holes in Picasso's papier collé *Violin* [fig. 6] and suggests that they are arbitrary signs, it is emphatically not the case that they are arbitrary signs for *f-holes.* If they signify those holes, it is because they resemble them, however much the "typographic" quality of the rendering insinuates some connection to language and writing. The mismatched f-holes remain, then, iconic signs insofar as they refer to those particular features of the violin. In their *disparity,* however—in the mismatching designed to suggest the violin's oblique turn into space—they become fully arbitrary signs, but now signs specifically for /depth/. Together, the f-holes signify space or depth even as they assert its absence, even as they cannot or will not conjure it illusionistically for the composition.

Fig. 16. Picasso, Girl with a Mandolin (spring 1910), Museum of Modern Art, New York

In Krauss's account, Cubism's progressive flattening—and so also its recourse to a form of arbitrary signification—is accompanied by a profound sense of loss. Krauss would have us see that a distinctly melancholy air pervades works such as Picasso's *Girl with a Mandolin* [fig. 16], a melancholy made all the more poignant by those few places—in the area of the woman's right arm, for example, or along the curve of her breast—where the machinery of illusionism

is *not* malfunctioning, and so is yet able to conjure, miraculously, a palpably believable, tangibly present form.

Again, in Krauss's description of these passages, we are not so very far, it seems to me, from the "dark mood" that Clark sees coloring Cubism, particularly in those years from 1910 to 1911 that are the focus of his attention. In fact, I would argue that we are not on ground so very different, either, from that covered by Clement Greenberg in his essay on "Collage"—at least before "Collage" took its turn toward a triumphant "opticality." In all three cases it is a matter of a kind of negative dialectic within Cubism, the works increasingly forced into a position of grudgingly acknowledging that which they most fear or revile: Clark calls it an abstract "unverifiability"; in Greenberg's account, it is mere flatness; in Krauss's, a two-dimensionality devoid of any carnal connection to the world. In all three accounts, however, the works manage in such a way that both the acknowledgement and the antipathy are fully on view. The works' achievement—"triumph," we might even say—resides precisely in their ability to make both things simultaneously apparent. Admission or acknowledgement alone would have amounted to mere acceptance, resulting in something simply, flatly decorative, and detached from any engagement with the world. Conversely, antipathy or avoidance on *its* own would have been tantamount to a denial of how much painting (and the world around it) had changed in the first decade or so of the twentieth century. It is finally this doubledness, I would argue—the works' acknowledgement of loss *and* their stubborn refusal to be reconciled to it—that makes them the compelling, occasionally haunting, images they are. I tend to think that Krauss, Clark, and Greenberg might even all agree that it is also what makes them so wholly exemplary of modernity.

NOTES

1. The exhibition, which was curated by Eik Kahng and jointly organized by the Kimball Art Museum in Fort Worth and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, opened first in Texas before making its way to California. It will be on view in Santa Barbara through January 8, 2012. There is also a fine accompanying catalogue, *Picasso and Braque: The Cubist Experiment, 1910-1912* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), with essays by Eik Kahng, Charles Palermo, Harry Cooper, Annie Bourneuf, Christine Poggi, Claire Barry and Bart Devolder.

2. For a useful anthology of early writings on Cubism, see Edward F. Fry, *Cubism* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966).

3. Christine Poggi, "Frames of Reference: 'Table' and 'Tableau' in Picasso's Collages and Constructions," *Art Journal* 47, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 311-322, especially 311-312.

4. Carl Einstein, "Notes sur le Cubisme," *Documents*, no. 3 (1929), 154; cited by T.J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 186.

5. Greenberg, "Collage," *Art and Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 70-83; this particular passage comes from page 71. Italics added.

6. On this point, see my essay "The Flattening of 'Collage'," *October*, no. 102 (Autumn 2002): 59-86.

7. Art historians generally, and those interested in Cubism in particular, tend to draw a distinction between the practice of collage, which can involve all manner of materials, and papiers collés, whose elements are limited, as the name implies, to pieces of pasted paper.

8. Most of the criticism of the essay has been directed toward the fact that Greenberg refused or, at minimum, failed to acknowledge the pop- or mass-cultural nature of the collaged materials in the Cubist papiers collés. For an attempt to work out how Greenberg might have been able to make sense of those materials without abandoning the initial terms of his argument, see my essay, "The Flattening of 'Collage'," especially 59 and 74 ff.

9. In "The Cubist Epoch," a review essay for *Artforum,* 9, no. 6 (February 1971): 32-38, Rosalind Krauss first advanced an interpretation of Cubism informed by semiotics. "In the Name of Picasso," which appeared in Krauss's book *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 23-40, built on that argument, as did (more fully) her essay, "The Motivation of the Sign," in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, ed. William Rubin, Kirk Varnedoe, and Lynn Zelevansky (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 261-86. Bois's major statements on the subject are "Kahnweiler's Lesson," in Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 65-97; and "The Semiology of Cubism," in *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium*, 169-208.

10. I say that "it seems to be important," although it should be emphasized that neither Krauss nor Bois is claiming that Picasso had read Saussure, for example, or had even heard of his work. Rather, they treat Cubism and structural linguistics as cultural homologues, whose contemporaneity suggests *some* interconnection, but potentially quite diffuse. It is the case, however, that Roman Jakobson knew of Cubism and even claimed that it was instrumental in reorienting his own thinking about language. See Bois, "The Semiology of Cubism," 177-178.

11. Saussure's *Cours de linguistique générale* was first published in Paris (by Payot) in 1916. See also the critical edition of the English-language translation, by Wade Baskin, of Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics*, ed. Perry Meisel and Haun Saussy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

12. For a history of this dubious idea, see Geoffrey Pullum, *The Great Eskimo Vocabulary Hoax* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 159-171.

13. Significantly, both Bois and Krauss argue that only *Picasso's* papiers collés function this way; Braque's, they assert, do not operate in even a quasi-linguistic manner. See Bois, "The Semiology of Cubism," 191-194; and Krauss, "The Motivation of the Sign," 264-272.

14. The exceptions here—all of which postdate Cubism—are the double images produced by Salvador Dalí's "paranoiac-critical method." For illustrations and a pertinent discussion of those works, see Dawn Ades, ed., *Dali's Optical Illusions* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000).

15. The exhibition ran from September 24, 1989 through January 16, 1990. The symposium proceedings were subsequently published as Lynn Zelevansky, ed., *Picasso and Braque: A Symposium* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992). Krauss's essay, "The Motivation of the Sign," appears on pages 261-286; see also the transcript of the discussion following her talk, 287-304.

16. For an interpretation of the painting that makes much of these striking features, see Leo Steinberg's "Resisting Cezanne: Picasso's *Three Women*," *Art in America* 66.6 (November 1978): 114-33.

17. T.J. Clark, "Cubism and Collectivity," in *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes from a History of Modernism* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 169-223.

18. I should add, as Clark himself does at several points throughout his essay, that he sees this "failure" as not a weakness of the work but, in a sense, as its strength. In Clark's account Cubism remains the "classic moment of modernist painting" (213), but it occupies that position rather differently than others have claimed: it does so, he suggests, because its ambitions and shortcomings alike show us something crucial about what it meant to be modern.

RESPONSES

CHARLES ALTIERI ON JAMI BARTLETT, JENNIFER ASHTON, AND JOHN GIBSON

CHARLES ALTIERI

Editor's Note: In this article, Charles Altieri responds to Jami Bartlett, Jennifer Ashton, and John Gibson, whose essays can be found in Nonsite.org Issue #4.

I was asked to comment on essays by Bartlett, Ashton, and Gibson. I found it refreshing to see such ambitious and lively efforts to use philosophical concerns as a means of entry into the quite close reading of literary texts. Such a framework helps reduce the danger that close readings will be arbitrary or absorbed by intricate patterns whose significance is at best marginal. These three powerful and intense essays are nothing if not focused on important and timely claims, with orientations that demand careful attention to the steps of the argument. Moreover, their power is such that, in the first two essays at least, I came to doubt my own abilities as a thinker because I could not always keep up with the swift moves on which the essays turned. So in what follows I have to recognize that I may simply misunderstand some of the arguments, for which I apologize in advance, as I apologize for the aggressive defensiveness that tends to accompany my being forced into humility.

I will claim that Bartlett and Ashton seem mirror reversals of one another. Bartlett proposes that vagueness is a determining problematic for Stendhal's style, but she fails to provide any clear index of what counts as vagueness in a *literary* text. Ashton, by contrast, invokes definitional rigor in domains where she probably should admit a great deal more indeterminacy— or, at least, gradations in our vocabulary for relations between meaning and experience in works of literature. These polarities then seem to me to set off Gibson's terrific essay, since he has a powerful grasp of how philosophy might begin to talk about poetry while recognizing where language can only serve as an inadequate or partial index of what is available for experience in certain kinds of writing.

For two thirds of the way I felt Bartlett's lively and keen prose was presenting the most attractive and incisive account of Stendhal's fiction that I have encountered. She has a lively sense of how self-consciousness is idealized in his fiction. And she is stunningly precise on how his treatments of his fictional agents move "from character to soul and back again, oscillating between but also packing into each the ground that belongs to the other." Through her eyes, we see that control as inseparable from what might called an oxymoronic absolute, in which "unfinishable precisification could pin its openness on the promise of closure." As is evident simply in these quotations, Bartlett's prose is itself apt tribute to Stendhal's. Each sentence seems to provide something approaching an overdetermining precision. Yet these sentences produce a cumulative effect of an ideal of intensity gone slightly mad in its willingness to cultivate abstraction as a means of establishing significance for the details that fascinate her.

Since I can't be confident that I am following Bartlett's argument, I will have to make up my own case for what she sees as the role of vagueness in Stendhal, then hope that argument captures at least the bare outlines of what she is claiming. Because desire is so powerful a force in Stendhal's fictive worlds, the novels rely more than most novels on the technique of "circumscription" that enables fiction to play the desire for control against the various dynamic forces that resist control and make self-consciousness a domain for adventure. Circumscription is focused on mapping the constantly shifting border between the soul and its others. One location for these others is the capacity of the psyche to become absorbed by the energies in situations and conflicts that the agent cannot control; another is the presence of other persons who constantly threaten to violate any border self-consciousness tries to establish. By recognizing the force of such otherness, circumscription holds out two promises: that one can produce the maximum focus for self-consciousness in a given moment, and that characters can establish continuity among burning moments in their lives. Ultimately circumscription allows us to see character as a kind of geological structure from which we can separate the alien matter that accumulates around it. (I think Bartlett could use as an analogue

for Stendhal's geology of character the classical idea of character as *virtu* in tension with what allows it a place in social life.)

Vagueness matters because it provides the literal operation of what refuses to succumb to circumscription, and hence to any sense of character as that approximates mastery. The desire for stability of self-consciousness is challenged by a constant need to be as precise as possible about its situations. But "precisification" seems both necessary and doomed because the very effort to be precise creates further arenas of a vagueness consisting in the constant emergence of relations that in both their nature and their treatment turn out to provide only "indeterminate extension." That indeterminacy is ultimately the space of those others that the characters struggle to delimit. The desire to establish mastery continually encounters what is "peculiarly and positively deficient in semantic meaning." This deficiency is not all negative because it continually thrusts characters like Julien into situations that they cannot quite comprehend. Then they get to manifest what in character seems a force in nature as it struggles to grapple with cultural factors that may be only a mere screen for their passions.

Bartlett's engagement with vagueness comes to a climax in an appropriately very long paragraph. I cite first most of the first part of that paragraph:

> The Geology of Morals" describes approaching as a prediction of the circumstances under which the granite of a young man's character is made manifest. …Stendhal is in fact developing a theory of vagueness itself, of the nature and treatment of relations of predicates with indeterminate extensions. His diary is littered with them. After some under-specific descriptions of his brilliant achievement of perception he writes, "I was wearing a waistcoat, silk breeches and black stockings, with a cinnamon-bronze coat, a very well arranged cravat, a superb frill." The cinnamon-bronze coat pulls focus because it is strikingly overdeveloped and vague at the same time, and also because it marks a shift in Stendhal's descriptive process in the passage. The facts of his waistcoat are objective and declarative—the breeches are silk and the stockings are black—but neither description allows for nuance. By contrast, the "well arranged cravat" and "superb frill" contain highly subjective judgments, but judgments that are stabilized and communicated by convention. In-between, the cinnamon-bronze coat points to a kind of painstaking specificity, and at the same time the impossibility of combining terms in a coherent, repeatable or otherwise communicable way.

The paragraph goes on to specify why the description fails in its effort to precisify what tends toward vagueness, even if we can imagine a red coat washed so many times that it becomes "cinnamon-bronze":

> Theories of vagueness seem not merely to allow for, but to *depend* upon the kind of precisification that Stendhal seems to be encouraging us to perform. In this case, it is not quite the logic that is fuzzy, but the object. Insofar as Stendhal throws the cinnamon-bronze coat into a heap of clothes that are more or less sufficiently described, he seems to be trying to define something that is itself unclear, not being deliberately cagey about its description. Thanks to Stendhal's description, we can imagine a continuous gradation of colors, such that, on either side of a particular color lies a color that is distinct but not discriminably different from it, and thus, for any acceptable precisification of or a word like "cinnamon-bronze," there would be shades of cinnamon-bronze that were not discriminably different from shades that were not cinnamon-bronze.

One can always produce a standard by which any practical observation seems insufficiently precise. But because it is always possible, the attribution of vagueness does not seem to have much use as a concept for literary criticism, apart from dramatic situations where the vagueness is strategic and influences the plot or dominant emotion in a scene. Vagueness is devastating in practices where standards of precision have been developed so that one can resist ambiguity and establish extensional or logical relevance. But when we are concerned primarily not with empirical description but with dramatic conditions of enunciation, determinations of vagueness can only be based on practical judgments about what characters or readers might be doing or intending. And in such judgment situations, we learn to make do with vagueness so long as there is some sense of fit or mutual understanding that allows us to go on as if we and the text understood each other. There is no authority to determine what is vague beyond how the agents judge their mutual encounter. So we have to admit that in these practical cases vagueness is almost entirely a matter of pragmatics and not semantics per se. And as such there is no theory of vagueness possible in ordinary language; there is possible only pragmatic observations that something is lacking which some speaking or responding agent "should" have provided.

This pragmatic flexibility is evident in the way I think most of us would mark differences between Bartlett's first and third examples. And, more important, as we focus on these differences we also see the possible literary significance of emphasizing pragmatics rather than semantics in relation to vagueness. In the case of the "cinnamon-bronze" coat, I think the issue may be of interest to theorists of vagueness but not to readers and critics. Bartlett notes

that the characterization fixing the coat appears more precise than the rest of the passage if we let ourselves be governed by considerations of descriptive adequacy. The only way the instance could be significant in a novel, or even in Stendhal's own life, is if some character made a point of wanting further "precisification." Otherwise readers are likely to rest content with the level of description an author provides. They will try to see imaginatively into the world they are given. But the situation is quite different in her example of Julien's efforts in the seminar to embrace a "pure nothingness" that is simultaneously detachment and despair. This is Bartlett's description of the passage where Julien laments his retaining "the air of thinking" and so is worsted "by the coarsest peasants" in his group:

> Not-yet, nearness, and readiness are all vague, absent-center relations—they generate a passage as long as this one, not by negotiating between two bivalent polarities, but by describing the asymptotic haze of approach that seduces Julien ever toward indeterminacy. … This is a clear case of the generative powers of vagueness, and not simply as a characterological tool. Because Stendhal overgenerates conflicting representations of events and characters, he elicits different parts of a vague relation from his readers, a much more dynamic and intuitively "right" understanding of the role vagueness plays in language—from denoting and ostension to borderline relations—than Greenough's minimal theory. The ignorance that so clearly motivates Stendhal's descriptions stems from a series of investigations into the nature of perception as a kind of circumscription.

I just can't see Julien's problem as stemming from general ignorance or specific vagueness or, for that matter, from anything involving the perceptive order. Why not just accept Julien's own rationale—that the air of thinking makes it impossible to choose only one absolute form of life? Then we can see that Julien's "failure" is not because he cannot perceive precisely but because he cannot will the object of that precision. Julien's refusal to commit stems not from what Julien can't see but from what he does see—that there are alternatives to "pure nothingness" and that his fantasies require pursuing them. It is true that the way of pure nothingness fails to engage Julien's attention—not because it is vague but because it is not compelling. (Can you imagine a more precise version of Christian asceticism that would be compelling to Julien?) Julien is a great character in part because he exemplifies a condition of will increasingly aware that it cannot produce the heroism it imagines yet cannot return to the definite forms of life of the past because they seem so utterly limiting. For Stendhal the novel seems to play out of what happens to the romantic spirit within a realist sensibility. The world of semantics plays at best a very minor role in this historical drama.

Ashton offers a cultural critique of another kind of vagueness—that produced by the lines of thinking that culminate in post-modernist contrasts between meaning and experience. For once one seeks experience as one's goal in encounters with art, one is condemned to the privacy of what happens to one's own sensibility. There is no content to be shared; only effects to be fleshed out:

> As I have argued elsewhere, language poetry and postmodernism more generally have been marked by a tendency to conflate the meanings of poems with their effects, the post-language-poetry tendency we see in Armantrout transforms a poetics of indeterminacy into a Stevens-like poetics of uncertainty, although, as we'll see, it involves a more radical (and I would argue, a more implausible) skepticism than anything Stevens could have imagined.

She is witheringly right about how Steve McCaffrey's ideas about homolinguistic translation completely exemplify the desire to collapse meaning into experience. (Perhaps one could say that McCaffery seeks a version of meaning that is indistinguishable from experience–hence the desire for b to return to a). One might even say that the villain is the effort in the experimental tradition to correlate meaning with aesthetic force, so that Ashton can be seen as offering an important statement of why poetics has to return to the domain of rhetoric, which studies meanings and not experiences. But I don't think separating experience from meaning is a useful model even for much contemporary writing. And it does not help the return to rhetoric because rhetoric depends on the possibility of imagining that experience is partially a matter of meaning. Or, to put the case the other way around, certain kinds of meanings are as much aspects of what we experience as they are independent forces fixed by determinate intentions. Obviously there are significant differences between Armantrout's poetry of hesitant refusal of mastery and, say, Pound's utter faith in the capacity of language to produce significant extensions of the world of fact. But I think the difference lies in contrasting ways the poets envision the ways meanings might enable kinds of experience. Ashton's way of opposing experience and meaning seems to me way too sharp, too eager to impose versions of meaning derived from arguments about discrete intentionality that gives shape to a discreet utterance. She could profit from more tolerance for vagueness or at least blurred edges between concepts. One probably cannot limit "meaning" to determinate intentions because one also has to recognize conditions of meaningfulness that create questions about intentionality in the first place.

I am not sure why Ashton seems so insistent on meaning and experience being so sharply opposed. There is certainly a historical moment, some aspects of postmodernism, where experience is explicitly opposed to determinate meaning. But not all postmodernists make

this separation, and the reasoning that sustains the separation seems challenged in the dimension of its power to persuade. And Gibson shows how there can be general talk about poetry that breaks down those oppositions. Meaning and experience need not occupy the same plane because there can be experiences of meaning that brings force and pointedness to what one understands. One can also resist Ashton's binaries by simply looking at the practical consequences of her using them. Notice the contrast here between Armantrout's cautious and qualified statements and the conceptual assertiveness Ashton forces upon her. More important, Ashton seems bound to grant a certain kind of epistemic demand authority over poetry, since it seems that only empiricist philosophy and science would be so systematically suspicious of "experience." Experience becomes something that is opposed to "meaning" because meaning can be independently described while experience is a matter of how subjectivity is deployed. Experience in that sense is the undoing of meaning: it forces what might be objective entirely into the domain of subjective intensities. But I am by no means sure that experience is a matter only of subjectively appropriating meaning, except in the tautological sense that there must be a subject for there to be experience. This need not entail that experience is only subjective. And even in those cases where experience does not link one mind to another, there is no reason why states with different orientations need be seen as in opposition to each other. The two conditions do not occupy the same plane and so both can be present. Similarly, feeling and thinking are clearly distinct, but the distinction does not entail our having only one of these states.

Ashton's eagerness to make meaning objective and experience subjective ultimately invokes an epistemic framework for our uses of language: either they tend toward some form of objective verification or they just elicit subjective associations. This is probably what drives her essay toward Stevens, the poet whom many critics think obsessed with a divide between the fictive and the real. But I think this perspective imposes a uniformity on Stevens' career that is not sufficiently attentive to the changes in attitude it dramatizes during WW II, when Stevens devotes himself largely to exploring alternatives to the domination of epistemic inquiry in his society. The main alternatives involve the weaving of notions of experience into notions of meaning, hence the importance of separating Stevens from what were to become distinctive postmodern attitudes. Stevens' essays in particular try to show how there can be critiques of "truth" that do not result in idealizing subjectivity but in recasting what kinds of reality effects are possible as aspects of our shared imaginative lives.

I risk matching Ashton's assertiveness, so I will turn to what seems concretely problematic in her specific claims. The following paragraph summarizes her efforts to make McCaffery's ideal of homolinguistic translation stand for the Postmodernist sensibility (and in the process also absorbing all of Modernism into the critical shibboleth of the heresy of paraphrase):

We can see more clearly now what might be at stake in raising the question of paraphrase in this context. If the heresy of paraphrase is that by losing the form of the text you lose experiences that are crucial to the meaning of the text, then a paraphrase that could somehow keep all that experience of the text would look like a kind of solution. In the case of found poetry, you certainly have a way of keeping all the experience of the text because you keep all of the form of the text. The fantasy of the link between found poetry and translation seems to be the same fantasy as Higgins has for the allusive referential—that you can somehow keep the experience of *a* even when the movement to *b* involves a lot of "activity upon the source text." If I can always feel *a* when I'm reading *b*, with *b* I haven't lost, much less violated, the experience of the source text. If the heresy in the heresy of paraphrase was that the paraphrase gave you the meaning of the text without the experience of it, the triumph of the homolinguistic translation—basically also the triumph of found poetry—is that it gives you the experience of the text without the meaning of it.

First, I do not see how found poetry is in any way a paraphrase—it just is a piece of language that one asks to take as poetry. There is no effort to state something in a different way. In fact what claims to be found poetry does not alter the language of the object text, so I don't see where paraphrase could enter. Found poetry has an exact commitment to meaning, but then it absorbs the target meaning into another framework, a framework in which we experience that meaning as if we had to identify with the framing rather than the original assertion. Second, if one understands found poetry as I do, there can be no parallel between it and translation—inter-language or homolinguistic. Translation does not foreground an attitude toward found material but presents an effort to clarify what is going on in one text by providing another that claims the first as it target, or guide, or—for McCaffery—its inspiration.

Perhaps the source of my problem, if not of Ashton's, is the use of abstractions like "meaning" or "experience" as if they were isolated Platonic entities with only one cogent meaning.[1] I think it is much more reasonable and workable to imagine that there is little reward to isolating one kind of state as experience and another as meaning when we are talking about literature. The distinction may hold with some kinds of meaning that have to ward off all affects in order to preserve sheer unequivocal description. But in other domains meaning conditions experience: how Achilles is described as standing on the ramparts influences how we experience his status as hero. And experience conditions meaning whenever we allow affective states and expectations to quicken the pulse as we process

semantic information; especially when one wants to preserve the sense of a while rendering the subject's engagement with b. Indeed, one might say that it is because these two attributes so diversely condition one another that is dangerous to talk of each in isolation. Baroque experiences of how meanings take on force are very different from those in modernist ascetic art, so why isolate terms without being concerned for how they provide aspects under which one another appear?

Years of teaching Wallace Stevens in conjunction with Wittgenstein have taught me to try to posit an "as" in conjunction with abstract terms like "meaning" and "experience." "Experience" becomes "experience as" a certain kind of reader or as a certain kind of agent with specific orientations of consciousness. And meaning becomes "meaning as" a certain kind of statement in a certain kind of discourse. We just use different senses of meaning when we talk about propositions on the one hand and gestures and poems and suggestions or hints on the other. After all we submit certain kinds of meanings to empirical tests while with others we are concerned less with accuracy than with suggestiveness or sharpness of articulation. In some conditions—call them **avowals** like "I am in pain"—we recognize a sharp asymmetry between first person agency that we need to register to make sense of an expression and third person modes of inquiry that have to deal with what everyone can observe but only at a distance. In the first case, we typically process avowals by trying to sympathize so that we can approximate sharing the experience. In the case of third person meanings, we are likely to try to come to an agreement about what everyone in principle can observe.

I get most upset when Ashton's argument leads her to invoke Wallace Stevens as a skeptic suspicious of all meaning. Although she so cleverly contextualizes this view that I am not sure what she would assert on her own, she seems to align herself with the Stevens of supreme fictions:

> And although this new interest in Stevens has functioned not exactly to recruit him for metonymy, the critique of his commitment to metaphor (which can be found in the work of poets from Frank Bidart to Rae Armantrout to Jennifer Moxley) has, I'll argue in the second half of this paper, functioned to produce a skepticism that goes beyond the Language poets' enthusiasm for the explosion of meaning into an "unlimited freeplay of dissemination" and for systemic indeterminacy. It has been instead through something like a radicalization of metaphor rather than metonymy that meaning as such has come to be understood not as inherently indeterminate but inherently false, and that truth has come to inhere in the refusal of holding any beliefs at all.

Against this statement I invoke perhaps Stevens' keenest statement on the relation between experience and meaning. It occurs in a review of Paul Valery's *Eupaulinos*. There Stevens imagines Valery hearing "the voices of the speakers and" watching "the movements of the dancers at one and the same time." Notice now the use of "as" to bring together the experience of voice and movement with the work of understanding:

> … As his interest in what is being said grows greater as the discussion approaches
> its resolution, and as the absorption in the spectacle grows
> greater with his increased understanding of it and because of the momentum
> toward the ultimate climax, he realizes, for the first time, the excitement of a
> meaning as it is revealed at once in thought and in act. [2]

The work done by "as" here also suggests the importance to late Stevens not of metaphor, but of simile–because simile makes possible poetry's keeping the actual world open for imagination. Metaphor for Stevens after 1940 seemed too bound to image and so incapable of dramatizing the powers of mind not just to seek new names but to alter our understanding of names. Metaphor promised a stability of reference that threatened the desires of imagination to maintain the freedom to experience changes as it looked at things first one way then another. But this is not a general skepticism about meaning. Rather it is a specific sense that meaning in poetry can be open to shades of experience that cultivate mobility rather than stability. Stevens term was "resemblance" or what I call the aspectual dimension of our encounters with the world that honor the force of imagination as a continual possibility for modifying the shadings of phenomena—not because nothing is true but because so much is possible within experiences of meaningfulness.

It is not surprising that Stevens would appreciate how meanings work in poetic prose. It is surprising to me how thoroughly he brings that awareness to bear in his writing about the ways truth functions in philosophy and in poetry. One could cite several passages in Stevens' lecture "A Collect of Philosophy" [3] but this remark may be the most apposite for our discussion (as well as the best evidence for Stevens' skill in dealing precisely with how philosophers formulate concepts):

> It may be said that the philosopher probes the spheres or sphere of perception and
> that he moves about therein like someone intent on making sure of every foot of
> the way. If the poet moves about in the same sphere or spheres, and occasionally
> he may, he is light-footed. He is intent on what he sees and hears and the sense of
> the certainties about him is as nothing to the presences themselves. [4]

No trace of skepticism here. [5] Yet Ashton might say, "But that is only prose." We have to turn to the poetry where Stevens might put a little more distance between the work of imagination and the ideological needs for the poet to be a responsible inquirer into truth. And through *Parts of a World*, Stevens poetry flirts with disappointment if not skepticism with the ways his culture poses the role of Truth. But even by 1938 he uses this skepticism toward received models of truth not to claim that all is illusion, but that there are other aspects of meaningful experience that promise a different positive model for how meaningfulness can be experienced. These are some lines Ashton does not cite from "The Latest Freed Man," the concluding poem in her sequence:

> …Yet having just
> Escaped from the truth, the morning is color and mist,
> Which is enough: the moment's rain and sea,
> The moment's sun (the strong man vaguely seen),
> Overtaking the doctrine of this landscape. Of him
> And his works, I am sure. He bathes in the mist
> Like a man without a doctrine. The light he gives—
> It is how he gives this light. It is how he shines, …
>
> It was how he was free. It was how his freedom came.
> It was being without description, being an ox.
> It was the importance of the trees outdoors, …
> It was everything being more real, himself
> At the centre of reality, seeing it. [6]

I love the fact that vagueness itself becomes an aspect of celebrating what can be present. Stevens is not without irony here—in the title and in the concluding line of the poem—but this is an irony that qualifies the situation rather than dismissing it as illusion: others have also thought they were free, so one has to tread cautiously in celebrating this new focus on manner. Wariness cannot prevent the text from suggesting that it is wise to celebrate even how the actual world can seem continuous with the passions of the self.

I hate the fact that I so much prefer the tone and patience and modesty of Gibson to the work of two of our brightest literary critics. But I persist in my idealization because I want to provoke discussion of what I see as the problem that many of the best younger literary critics seem driven to prefer the display of intelligence to the testing of the validity of the ideas used for that display. Our critics move very quickly through vast ranges of material. This takes a great deal of intelligence. But it also risks wasting that intelligence because the work

tends to override the texts' capacities to make themselves heard on what might be considered something close to their own terms. Such work visibly claims more than it can establish, as if one aspect of the process were to make risk itself a mark of distinction for criticism, like Lowell's poet-skier. This judgment binds me rhetorically to treat Gibson's essay with considerable abjection. So I am very pleased that it seems to me to deserve that stance. The best I can do is isolate aspects of it for praise and then at the end suggest minor modifications.

I love most about Gibson's essay its clear sense that most lyric poetry involves a mode of meaningfulness that requires us to talk about the suggestiveness of situations rather than the pointedness of discreet assertion. By treating meaning as destination rather than beginning point, Gibson offers the most concise and elegant role for criticism that I have encountered: criticism is not an academic exercise but the full commitment to a mode of responsiveness that is aware of how to reconcile "the communicative force of poetry… with the unconventionality and sheer inventiveness of its language."Gibson proposes to honor what critics call the materiality of poetry, but as means and not end, as invitation to experience but not yet the judgment of how it attaches to meaningfulness.

Gibson bases his sense of meaning as destination on two basic principles which I think are brilliantly developed. First he makes a telling contrast between "sentence meaning" and "work meaning." This allows him to separate the "meaning-space" of poetry from the entire domain of decoding sentences and specifying how metaphors do their concrete work. (He does not address the ways in which poets project their works as extensions of the logic of metaphor in order to preserve the concreteness of lyric discourse.) There is the interpretation of sentence meaning, and there is the separate task of construing the meaning of what gives force and point to the relations between sentences. One could say that this model affords a rationale for the heresy of paraphrase that does not depend on any special condition of poetic language. It depends only on an established practice of seeking something beyond the capacity of sentences to convey descriptions or respond to practical situations. Gibson shows how critical imagination can elicit a world for these sentences to inhabit by interpreting their relation to each other as based on work meaning. The opposite of paraphrase is not quite sheer "experience" but attention to how this other level of meaning can take hold. Critics need not content themselves with decoding messages or characterizing intricate experiments in elaborating plays with textural features of language. They characterize possible worlds by expanding the space of an imagined situation. [7]

Gibson's second way of characterizing meaning space is distinctive to verbal art. He characterizes "semantic descent" as a series of steps in which each provides a little more of the world that language implicates, and a little less of language about language. I see the concept as kin to Richard Wollheim's idea of critical activity as "seeing in" to what paintings come to

represent. Thus "Juliet is the sun" becomes not just an example of the logic of metaphor but a statement asking us to imagine what Juliet and the sun might have in common: we ask how the sun can bear "a kind of meaning for us" that is other than simply "linguistic in nature." This level of meaning consists in the set of associations, connotations, resonances, values, and so on that any object that matters in our form of life will have. The metaphors of semantic ascent and descent capture nicely the structures of embedding characteristic of our language use, and it recognizes the range of experiences that this use can convey or make present. And this figure of descent beautifully explains how our expectations for coherence and clarity change at each level. When we turn to the worldliness of the metaphor, our "experience" need not be described by resolving it "into a *coherent* image of, or claim about" the tenor: "It is enough to place [Juliet] in the imaginative space created by the image of the sun and allow her to linger there for a moment, framing our thought of her in productive and, ultimately, meaningful ways." Because of this space of significance developed by semantic descent, criticism becomes largely a matter of tact in fleshing out how work-meaning frames the relations between these resonances and values. So the critic can embrace aesthetic attention to the specifics of "how" the work unfolds and still avoid any trace of formalism: art is a means of combining and re-orienting imaginative spaces that attach us to features of the world.

Perhaps Gibson's case could be even stronger if he were to modify his claims in two ways that I suggest would better meet the theoretical needs critics encounter in their practical work. First Gibson may occasionally celebrate too much the possible resonance of the worldliness of poetry without sufficiently attending to its demands not only for critical tact but also for critical precision. His critique of master-meanings by which we decode figures may make him too open to the sheer indefiniteness of possible imaginative elaboration of the space the poem establishes:

> We frequently experience poetic meaning as a far-off destination not because the meaning of a poem is so deeply hidden in its language but because the kind of communicative act in which a poem engages is extraordinarily complex, beginning with language and words but then soon passing from this into a richly, and at times bizarrely, textured imaginative space, the exploration of which is potentially interminable.

Gibson sees poems as acts of composing imaginative space. But often the fleshing out of imaginative space for poetry requires not just indicating modes of relation but clarifying the specific terms of the performance by which this space takes on a concrete atmosphere or particular urgency to the passion of making. We have to avoid losing sight of the energies of the making in order to elicit the possible significance of the object created. For the best poets

typically want their audience to appreciate how the sheer act of articulation itself provides an imaginative order for that space. On one hand, I think of Keats elaborating why Psyche deserves to be a modern goddess; on the other I think of Eliot's *Four Quartets* laboring to show how Christian sentences can be meaningful in a world that thinks itself secular.

I suspect my modification simply comes down to a matter of emphasis rather than a theoretical dispute. But I worry because philosophers tend to prefer the sheer worldliness of texts, where they can make judgments, to the diverse and difficult to determine intentional states that govern interpretive hierarchies within that world. In one sense Gibson addresses my worry with his brilliant trope of using two paintings as possible characterizations of an agent's feeling for his or her own life. Here he enters fully into the expressive aspect of making poetry. But now I think he needs a modification of the theory at the opposite pole from my first suggestion. It is true that much lyric poetry offers "a very precise environment of thought and feeling into which we can place an otherwise formless, indeterminate conception of a life." Such work charges "aesthetic features with a kind of moral significance: they now come to represent 'ways of being in the world'; that is, they represent a life as tethered to very different kinds of value and forms of possible experience." But when I stop applauding this lovely precise generalization, I start worrying that in this aspect of his account lyric poetry becomes too much the affair of giving one's own life meaning rather than trying out ways to bring certain qualities of the world into an intense visibility that warrants various modes of desire. I think accounts of poetry have to keep making at the center—as the condition of the artifact and as the affirmation of second order states that offer plausible desires to change one's life:

> It was everything being more real, himself
> At the centre of reality, seeing it.

NOTES

1. Ashton finds some support for the division between experience and meaning in "recent affect theory": "Affect theory thus matches the post-language poetry of writers like Armantrout; where Armantrout gives us propositions without beliefs, affect theory gives us human expression without propositions." But this is by no means the case with all recent affect theory. She aligns with a particular vitalist tradition that Ruth Leys eviscerates in a recent essay in *Critical Inquiry*. And there are other current theories that pay much fealty to intentionality and interpretation as aspects of affective states. One could consult Jenefer Robinson, *Deeper than Reason* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005) for a summary of these views. And Armantrout does not give us propositions without beliefs. She offers statements that worry about the degree of belief the assertions can sustain.

2. Wallace Stevens, *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. Frank Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1997), 892.

3. Ibid., 856-862.

4. Ibid., 863.

5. Ibid., 684 for Stevens's explicit rejection of skepticism.

6. Ibid., 187.

7. Here I think Gibson misses an opportunity to extend work meaning to all expressive acts, and thereby situate poetry in relation to a much broader class of human practices that have the same needs to go beyond sentence meaning. If someone is characterizing how he suffers pain or has a strong feeling, we don't stop with the individual sentences but read their relation to each other as indices of the nature and the quality and degree of urgency in the feeling. More generally, I increasingly think that we ought replace the arrogant and vague terms "humanities" by a distinction that places the arts and the work of rhetoric within the larger class of expressive acts, with "expression" understood as having its center in display and avowal. This realm of expression would then be contrasted with language games devoted to providing frameworks for assessing descriptions.

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ROBERT PIPPIN ON OREN IZENBERG AND PAUL GRIMSTAD

ROBERT PIPPIN

Editor's Note: In this article, Robert Pippin responds to Oren Izenberg and Paul Grimstad, whose essays can be found in Nonsite.org Issue #4.

In "Confiance au Monde: or, The Poetry of Ease," Oren Izenberg brings to bear on a selection of poems several considerations raised by John McDowell in his book *Mind and World* that suggest a way of understanding what one could call the therapeutic effect of the poems, and this in ways of relevance for both philosophy and literature. In "On Going On: Rules Inferences and Literary Conditions, Paul Grimstad brings to bear on certain philosophical claims, especially on the "analytic pragmatism" of Robert Brandom, as explored in his book, *Making It Explicit*, considerations derived ultimately from Stanley Cavell's reflections on the "literary conditions" of philosophy, themselves indebted to Wittgenstein's famous rule-following discussions, and thereby suggests something about the philosophical availability of literature, and this again of relevance to both philosophy and to literature. [1]

Both Izenberg and Grimstad raise fundamental issues about the nature and import of reflexivity itself in philosophical and critical practice that are very difficult to get into focus in any economical way. I will try only to say what I take each to be saying, and to raise some questions for further discussion.

1.

By a "poetry of ease" Izenberg says he means not "just a relief from anxiety" but a "release into life," an "expression" of something like Horatian *otium*, or what he calls, in using Whitman as a foil (Whitman's self-affirmation is not what is meant by "ease"), a "confident consubstantiality." And Izenberg wants to delineate how concern with such an issue (perhaps most familiar in the pastoral tradition) gets a special grip on the "modern subject" and so "modern poetry," indeed imposes an unavoidable constraint or task on it, a necessary confrontation with the lack of a confident consubstantiality.

> As I see it, the ontological conception of 'discursive consciousness' as exterior to nature places upon poetry a limit of expressive variation. That limit is the poet's knowledge of the apparent requirement of subjective unease, borne into speech.

In the modern German literary and philosophical tradition since Hölderlin first started to characterize modernization as a loss of any confident place in both the natural and social world, this "condition" is best summarized in Nietzsche's brief characterization of the modern German temper: "homesickness." It is prominent in Hegel on modern "torn apartness" (*Zerissenheit*), Weber on disenchantment (*Entzauberung*), and Heidegger on the forgetting of being, (*Seinsvergessenheit*). In other words, it's everywhere, and not just among the Germans.

But Izenberg wants some "alternative to the infinite nuances of negativity," some answer to "the person whose occasions for speaking are instances of the world's failure either to accommodate her existence or to provide a justification for his desire to exist." To explain what he is looking for, and what he considers uniquely available in poetry, he turns to John McDowell's *Mind and World*. This appropriation involves three steps, the third of which is the most controversial. First, Izenberg summarizes McDowell on the unique "anxieties of modern philosophy": basically the problem of skepticism or the more general problem of understanding the possibility of perceptual knowledge of the world. This problem is understood as a putative gap between subjective representation and reality, and this issue is taken to be how to bridge that gap. Second, Izenberg follows McDowell in trying to show that there is no problem to be solved, there is no such gap to be bridged. Or there seems to be, but only on unnecessary assumptions about subjectivity and interiority, and on the assumption of an even broader gap between the unique discourse of human intelligibility (a normative discourse, the "space of reasons") and the causal regularities of the disenchanted natural world. We can show how both assumptions are avoidable if we are simply "reminded" that "nature is also second nature," that one of the natural capacities possessed by human

beings, once suitably socialized in a community (once formed by *Bildung*), is a responsiveness to reasons. At the perceptual level, this reminder (ultimately, but it takes an enormous amount of philosophical work to show how) bears on an extremely delicate philosophical claim that even McDowell has had to constantly explain, tinker with, reformulate, defend to critics and even revise to some degree[2]: that the deliverances of sensibility are always already conceptual, not the mere "matter" for the imposition of human conceptual form.

But, to come to the third and most controversial step, Izenberg is taken with the idea that this "exorcism" of such blinding and avoidable assumptions is to be achieved not by an argument but by a "reminder." And so he wants to turn to his issues with a disclaimer: "If this thin obviousness has contestable merits as a philosophical strategy, it [the reminder] has considerable promise as a poetic one." Or: "the idea of a reminder is the idea of a poetry of ease." So he imports McDowell exorcising reminders on the limited if crucial issues of perceptual mind-world relations into the context most famously expressed in the German tradition cited above, at once the ontological question of the status of human subjects in the natural world, and the modern historical experience of having ourselves, collectively over time, created a social world which is as much ours as it is alien. He then launches into a consideration of what he calls "Wordsworth's famous McDowllian argument" of the fittedness of world and mind, George Peele's lyric "A Summer Song," and Frank O'Hara's "Having a Coke with You." He denies that a sensibility like O'Hara's is a mere "form of exquisite sensibility," "but rather a way of judging and sorting the world," a claim that allows him to refer to "the philosophy of O'Hara's fun" and to claim that it contributes "rationally to a judgment of the world."

The question raised by this importation is whether the issues raised by McDowell about perceptual knowledge in *Mind and World* bear on the questions of existential alienation or the "world's failure" to provide someone with a "justification for his desire to exist." By asking such a question, I don't mean to start rebuilding fences between disciplines. What McDowell is saying has to do very generally with how material objects or the sensory interchanges with the physical world could so much as possibly bear meaning, and so his perspective is capacious enough to invite some of Izenberg's questions about, one could say, finding meaningful "ease."[3] And in some general sense, McDowell does want to find a way of claiming that "experience" can serve as a "tribunal" for perceptual knowledge claims without having to answer to skeptic's questions about bridging a gap. This could certainly suggest similar strategies elsewhere. But is this picture about perceptual knowledge importable in the way Izenberg proposes? If our erotic investment in "the world" begins to fail, if what I (or we) have to endure and suffer begins to seem pointless, if we begin to suffer what Izenberg wants to say is "metaphysical unease," is the response offered by the poems he cites rightly

thought of as a form of justification, a move in the space of reasons? It could only be if there is there some way equivalent or analogous to McDowell's to show the sufferer that he has misunderstood himself and his relation to the world, that the source of his experience, this failure of meaning, is an "illusion." Izenberg is rightly sensitive to the need not merely to dismiss the experience as some kind of pathology or mistake, and he is well aware of the need to grapple seriously with the powerful grip of the illusion and the reasons for such a grip, but the question is deeper: whether an illusion, on the order of some post-Cartesian misdirected agenda in epistemology, is a proper matrix for understanding the sort of suffering chronicled in the modern literature of loss, absurdity, alienation, meaninglessness and simple heartlessness. (For that matter, the larger question here: could McDowell be right that the Cartesian agenda is simply an illusion, to be recovered from, to be exorcised? Is not that image itself telling, as if it is something like possession, witchcraft? *Could* that be right?) And what about the "weight" of the poetic "evidence" adduced by Izenberg, that manifestation of possible ease. What are we to do with such a moment of "release" in the light of, say, what is so powerfully expressed by Beckett, much of Stevens, Philip Larkin? And I don't mean to point to other anxieties, but to poets on about just what Izenberg is, the "metaphysics of unease." If O'Hara's philosophy is a kind of "rational judgment," a move in the space of reasons that, having been understood, justifies, how is it to be weighed against, what should one call it? The "counter-evidence"? (And again, could the problem itself be one of "justification"? Would that not be like our ever so commercially successful "cognitive therapists" asking: "But do you have any real reason to be depressed?" Could there be a more irrelevant question?) Is there an appropriate set of scales on which such "disagreements" could be weighed? Again, it may be that something like being at home in a natural or social world is not the kind of relation that needs "justification," that the assumption that it does partly creates the problem, but this realization could leave us worse off, enduring a fate, not victims of a mistake or illusion.

The largest question (and I mean these not as rhetorical but as genuine questions provoked by Izenberg's thoughtful essay): could the possibly therapeutic effect of any modern literature be understood without, first, placing it in the context of modern and modernist aesthetics, especially the epochal turn from aesthetics to the philosophy of art begun by Kant, extended by Schiller and completed by Schelling and Hegel? (How much is left of an "aesthetic" dimension, in other words, in late modernity? If anything, what *is* it? What could allow us to consider *that* therapeutic?) And second, could that turn be understood without an ambitious account of the basic dynamic of modernization itself and the status of art within it, its new autonomy and not coincidentally its new doubts about itself, where that dynamic has to include (impossibly) everything from the new role of religion, industrialization, the rise of science to supreme cognitive authority, and so on? What makes a modern literature of ease

a response to a modern understanding or even a modern "metaphysics" of unease, especially if we bring these poems to bear on the Master of Massive Unease, Heidegger, who has given us a phenomenology of "unease" as necessary, unavoidable, "fundamental," hardly an "illusion"? [4]

2.

In "On Going On: Rules, Inferences and Literary Conditions," Paul Grimstad wants to sign on to the most important point about linguistic meaning in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) [5] – that meaning is use – but to distinguish the interpretation given the famous phrase by "analytic pragmatism," especially in the work of Robert Brandom, [6] from another that he derives from Stanley Cavell. This leads him to very interesting and very speculative reflections about the relation between philosophy and literature.

Grimstad explores Wittgenstein's idea by commenting on §293 of PI, the "beetle box" example, part of Wittgenstein's multi-front attempt to loosen the hold of the idea that what someone means by a word can be determined by being able to "check" what mental experience she is having when thinking the word. He is out to disabuse us of all such fantasies of peering inside the mind of another, as in "other minds skepticism" about whether others are human (or automata), or whether they feel what I feel when they feel and express pain, or even the more natural notion of peering into our own mind. Another good illustration occurs at PI, p.217, when someone is imagined wondering what another might mean by "At that word we both thought of him." Not even God, Wittgenstein points out, assuming his capacity to look inside what another is thinking, would thereby be able to determine the answer to such a question. ("If God had looked into our minds he would not have been able to see there whom we were speaking of.") And so, accordingly, learning the meaning of a word or coming to understand a concept is not to grasp some "thought" or a "meaning," but to acquire a kind of know-how, an ability to use the word in a variety of contexts, and this in a way acknowledged by others. [7] Brandom glosses this as understanding its inferential possibilities, understanding how saying p, being committed to the truth of p, also requires that one must be committed to q and to $\sim r$, and to much else, none of which is entertained in what one is at some punctuated moment aware of, and all of which (what one is actually committed to *de re*, not just *de dicto*), requires an understanding of the way normative attitudes work in a community, how we are held to account by such deontic score-keeping. Or, understanding an assertion is being able to understand how it could function as a premise or conclusion of an inference in what Brandom famously calls the "game of giving and asking for reasons."

This issue becomes much more complicated though when we try to explain these kinds of normative proprieties. Language use is constrained by norms; that is, rules. If people can't "check" their use against an internal standard or criterion of some sort, how do we know, how does the speaker know, that she is "going on the same way"? In Brandom's inferentialist position (and many others that follow Wittgenstein), the situation (whether a rule is being followed properly) is not helped by someone citing some further rule, defining correct application for this rule. That would obviously generate a regress. And so we come to a problem that was first posed as a dilemma or paradox by Kant (who was one of the first to understand concepts as rules, "predicates of possible judgments"). [8]

Here is where Grimstad wants to raise an objection to Brandom, contrasting his "inferentialism" with what he finds in Cavell. His basic question is, "But is Wittgenstein's idea of the criteria by which we take our talk to be meaningful a matter of 'inference?'" He finds in Cavell's notion of "literary conditions" of Wittgenstein's "philosophical aims" a less restrictive and so more adequate of what he calls an "alternate form of justification."

> Could a tactful or artful (or beguiling or captivating or worrisome) ordering of words – what we might simply call a style – itself generate a criterion for claiming? How exactly can, as Cavell puts it, "an ordering of words [be] its own bottom line [and] to see its own ground."

This is a hard thought, not only that a "style" could be an alternate form of *justification*, but of a sort that could respond to some sort of anxiety about correctly going on in the right way.

A lot will depend on how one understands the "inference" in inferentialism and what one takes to be a "justification." As Grimstad notes, Brandom, following Wittgenstein, wants to explain the normative proprieties of rule-following ("going on in the right way") without either reducing such a notion to mere regularities in speech and behavior, and without any appeal to another rule which stipulates how some rule is supposed to be applied, which would generate the regress. But it is important to note, first, that Brandom does not confuse the theorist of such norms, and the theorist's "making it explicit" activity, with what goes on in the social negotiation that ensues among participants when there is a challenge to some claim of commitment or some disavowal of a commitment. (No participant, claiming that a belief that *p* does not at all commit him to the truth of *r* will appeal to the game of inferential articulation as such.) Moreover, second, it is even more important to note that Brandom does not at all want to restrict "inference" to anything like "formally valid" inference. In fact he wants vigorously to deny that inferential articulation should be understood simply as "logical articulation." That would disallow something crucial to Brandom's (and Sellars')

theory: material implication.⁹ ("Today is Wednesday" *materially* implies "Tomorrow will be Thursday.")

But if inference is not restricted to formally valid inference, and if it includes material implication (of a wide variety of sorts) then the "game of giving and asking for reasons" could not look like disputants setting out premises and conclusions in logical form, and certainly not appealing to "explicit" rules or to any theory. So what is so restrictive about it? Someone claiming to be a "citizen" claims, say, not to mean this or that that another or others do claim it to mean, and the dispute begins, appealing to the nation's history, famous examples, other similar cases, and so forth. A friend says, "this is what a friend does," and reveals a confidence, and another says that that is not friendship but "betrayal." Inferentialism and the reliance on normative attitudes, double-book score-keeping, and all of Brandom's apparatus is not meant to counter or replace or reduce in any way what is required by such a phenomenology.

But Grimstad appears not to be worried so much about the right presentation of Brandom's theory, but about the fact that he offers a theory at all— that he thinks we need a theory of "how norms are implicit in practice." This always, Grimstad thinks, diverges from Wittgenstein, and is an illusion captured well in many of Cavell's formulations, especially in the "Introductory Note" added to "The Investigations' Everyday Aesthetics of Itself."¹⁰ *Norms are implicit in practice* is this contrasting sense, in a way evident or "shown" by the "ordering of words" itself. Here is a crucial passage in Grimstad.

> A kind of literary tact – the sound of these words in this order – would then serve as the condition under which we are entitled to mean in our own and find meaning in another's words. The sort of perspicacity striven for here is not a matter of lining up reasons (it would not be formal in the way that a proof is formal), but of attunement to arrangements of words in specific contexts.

But who believes that the "perspicacity" in question is a "matter of lining up reasons" or that it must be "formal in the way a proof is formal"? Certainly not Brandom.

So what is the issue? If we are going to use terms like "alternate forms of *justification*" and terms like "*entitlement*," then it is also the case that we have to concede that any such claim to authority can be challenged (if in fact it is a claim to entitlement), and when challenged must be responded to in some way. The nature of the response depends on the nature and form of the claim. But claims are *claims* and they don't come for free. It can be difficult; reasons of all kinds can seem to give out, but nothing in Brandom's theory forecloses such difficulties. (He has no "theory" about substantive claims, no views on how negotiations and disputes

and challenges should go on. That depends on a community's practices at a time. And it is a pragmatic theory, not a formal one; ultimately a matter of what participants allow each other to say. Not for nothing is the book dedicated to Rorty.) Justly famous passages like this one from Cavell do not bypass such dialectical entanglements:

> We learn and teach words in certain contexts, and then we are expected, and expect others, to be able to project them into further contexts. Nothing insures that this projection will take place (in particular, not the grasping of universals nor the grasping of books of rules), just as nothing insures that we will make, and understand, the same projections. That on the whole we do is a matter of our sharing routes of significance and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor, and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation – all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls "forms of life." Human speech and activity, sanity and community, rest upon nothing more, but nothing less, than this. It is a vision as simple as it is difficult, and as difficult as it is (because it is) terrifying. [11]

I see nothing here that conflicts with any non-formalist inferentialism, and much that requires it, once we realize that in particular cases any such expectation of commonality can *fail*, what one takes to be an expression of forgiveness could be taken by others to be false, not credible. Leaping, at every such instance, to "well, this is just how I go on" is the wrong, because always potentially smug, response, especially since I have to realize *I* may be wrong; *they* may be right.

Sometimes the right response to such a breakdown is an attempt, perhaps a collective attempt, at what Grimstad calls a proper "attunement" to some propriety, assuming it has been somehow lost. We might have to help each other regain some common attunement to forgiveness or justice or fairness or vengeance or even to "male" and "female." And there is every reason to think that some intense attention to literature can be of great, indispensable, unique help in such an enterprise. [12] But to distinguish "literature" from "philosophy" in the way Grimstad does at the end of his piece, as if the former moves us away from any "giving of reasons" and towards some mute, you-either-see-it-or-you-don't "showing," at bottom seems to me to re-inscribe a very traditional division ("you guys take care of the reasons; I'll take care of the deep insights") that we would be better advised to reject. If we are rather being asked to think of "reasons" in some new way, then we must be shown how that new way can fulfill the minimal condition for their being reasons: being offered in a way that can be challenged and defended. [13]

NOTES

1. Besides McDowell and Brandom, the philosophical touchstones for the essays include Wittgenstein and Cavell, but both McDowell and Brandom have also expressed some sympathy for a Hegelian approach to philosophy, and that helps explain, in an interestingly indirect way (and in a way not addressed by either), the relevance of the literary themes, especially since Hegel's 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit* (the major text for both of them) frequently appealed to literature in advancing its argument (Sophocles, Diderot, Jacobi, Goether, Schiller), and in Hegel's systematic *Encyclopedia*, the fine arts in general belong with religion and philosophy as the most important modalities of "absolute" self-understanding. Both the essays under consideration here begin to show something unusual: that one place where the neo-pragmatic and the anti-Cartesian and Wittsensteinian approaches to Hegel might meet is on the (unavoidable) philosophical bearing of literature. See my "The Status of Literature in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*: On the Lives of Concepts," in I*nventions of the Imagination: Romanticism and Beyond*, ed. R.T. Gray, N. Halmi, G. Handwerk, M.A. Rosenthal, and K. Viehweg (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011), 102-120.

2. See especially "Avoiding the Myth of the Given," in *Having the World in View: Essays on Kant, Hegel, and Sellars* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 256-74.

3. Not that McDowell's account is really historical, as finally it must be if it is have a diagnostic force. The illusion he is interested in has a place in historical time, but that functions more as a chronological location, not as the result of a historical genealogy. See "Leaving Nature Behind, Or Two Cheers for Subjectivism: On John McDowell," in my *The Persistence of Subjectivity: On the Kantian Aftermath* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 180-222, and "McDowell's Germans," in *The European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 15, no. 3 (2007), 411-34.

4. Some of what interests Izenberg overlaps a bit with the interests of Richard Eldridge in his *Literature, Life, and Modernity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). For an account of that project, and some expressions of skepticism about it, see my review, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2009.01.13, http://ndpr.nd.edu/news/23881-literature-life-and-modernity/

5. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 3rd edition (first published 1953), translated by G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958).

6. Robert Brandom, *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing and Discursive Commitment* (MIE) (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994). I get the sense from the way Grimstad stages the issues and the way he concludes his piece that Brandom does duty for philosophy itself or at least for philosophical *theory*.

7. "Meaning is not a process which accompanies a word. For no process could have the consequences of meaning." PI, 218.

8. Kant's formulation of the regress problem occurs in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, at A133/B172. Actually the general issue stretches back to ancient philosophy. The problem in its most general form is the relation between non- or pre-discursive "insight" and discursive articulation, as, for example, between *noesis* and *dianoia* in Plato, between *phronesis* and *theoria* in Aristotle, between *l'espirit de finesse* and the l'*espirit géometrique* in Pascal. What is most interesting about Kant is that it was reflection on this problem that led him in the late 1780's and early 1790's to the distinction between determinative judgment (applying a rule) and reflective judgment (finding the right rule), and so to reflections on the beautiful and the nature of the subjective validity of aesthetic judgments that would lead to a revolutionary account of the aesthetic.

9. See MIE, and his criticism of Dennett, 98-99.

10. In *The Literary Wittgenstein*, eds. John Gibson and Wolfgang Hummer (London: Routledge, 2004).

11. Stanley Cavell, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy, " in *Must We Mean What We Say*, Updated Edition (first published 1969) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 52. For a very rich rumination on this passage, of relevance to this discussion, see J. McDowell, "Virtue and Reason" in *Mind, Value, and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 1998), 60 ff.

12. I have tried to show how this might work in *Henry James and Modern Moral Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.)

13. I don't mean to suggest that Grimstad has in any way foreclosed such an elaboration. I mean only to say: it is what we need.

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Westerns and American Myth (Yale University Press, 2010), *Nietzsche, Psychology and First Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), *Hegel on Self–Consciousness: Desire and Death in the Phenomenology of Spirit* (Princeton University Press, 2011) and *Fatalism in American Film Noir: Some Cinematic Philosophy* (University of Virginia Press, 2012).

REVIEWS

PICASSO AND THE VITAL ORDER

KEVIN CHUA

Christopher Green, *Life and Death in Picasso: Still Life/Figure, c. 1907-33* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009); originally published as *Objetos vivos: Figura y naturaleza muerta en Picasso* (exh. cat., Museu Picasso, Barcelona, November 20, 2008 to March 1, 2009).

* * *

We see two figures, entwined. What appears to be a woman, at left—tall and hulking, her right, striped pant leg forcefully set down—puts her arms around a smaller figure at right, probably a man, who responds with a kiss. Perhaps the kiss is joyous, enough to have the man raise what looks like his left foot, a kick in ecstasy. But something else is apparent. The man seems troubled by the woman's smothering embrace. Now that left foot braces against the left edge of the canvas, as though stabilizing for dear life. Any attempt at groundedness, at earthly stability, seems misguided, for what riles this man must surely be a tension that is altogether more psychic and sexual. Soon colors appear not to clothe but to seep out of these bodies, this body, as though revealing some primal disturbance underneath. The man's tablecloth suit has turned into a metallic netting of death.

Fig. 1 Pablo Picasso, The Kiss (Musée Picasso, Paris; 1925)

Christopher Green begins his long and fascinating essay *Life and Death in Picasso* with a strange motif that appears twice in this painting, *The Kiss* of 1925 (fig. 1)—once near the mouth, a second time at the anus. The motif reads as both sun and vagina, the solar and the sexual, the life-giving and the deathly. Green traces this motif to two drawings by Picasso of 1907 (reproduced on pages 52 and 53 of the catalogue), one of which enacts a similar transposition, but between head and leaf. In several short chapters, Green traces the appearance of this motif in Picasso's imagery within a larger problem of life and death, over the course of the years 1907 to 1933.

Green's central insight is that these moments of living-dead ambiguity remain, crucially, unresolved. He pauses before Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920)*,* which in the end gave up the dialectic between Eros and Thanatos, and says: "I shall not allow death a dominant role in my analysis. I am not concerned to uncover in Picasso's repeated invention of dead-alive objects and figures the symptoms of anxiety and thus a compulsive manifestation of the death drive. I want instead to bring out his images' openness to often unresolved, contradictory responses, where the dead and the live confront each other without a winner, and where, too, an invigorating wit often supervenes on the side of life and the pleasure principle"[1]. Green cautions against a too-easy assimilation of Picasso's work to Bataillean surrealism: any resemblance to Bataille's burning sun, for instance, needs to be tempered by a complementary attention to Apollinaire's life-giving sun. These judgments are altogether precise, and feel like they have been arrived at after a careful sifting-through of the visual evidence.

At a minimum, the essay does two things: first, it shows the enormous generativity of Picasso's art, especially of the 1920s, much of which is still being actively debated by art historians. Part of this has to do with the relation between the work of the 1920s—in all its diversity—and the phase of "analytic" or "hermetic" Cubism of 1910-12. It might be that the 1920s has been marked, above all, by the failure of that 1910-12 Cubist moment, for which the 1920s constitutes a long, but brilliant, aftermath. Second, it shows the startling unity of Picasso's art. For the life-death problem that Green raises cuts across the genres of figurative painting, still life, and landscape. We also see the artist moving quickly between two kinds of illusionism: one more literal and descriptive of reality, the other, more comic and playful, full of deceptive trickery. Many of the still lifes pose and pirouette like the best *trompe l'oeil.* But the question arises as to what lies beneath this "surface" illusionism, which we might call the motive force of Picasso's energetic art.

It is curious, given his sporadic use of the words "vital" and "vitality" (e.g., 40), that Green does not mention the long tradition of vitalism that underlies the period in question. Mention of vitalism in the early twentieth century is almost always accompanied by the name "Bergson," and is often associated with Salon Cubism (Gleizes, Metzinger, et al.). Yet vitalism was broader than Bergson, however influential and culture-bound his philosophy.[2] Art discourse of that period was suffused with the "mechanical-vital" or "mechanical-living" opposition—evidence of the deep permeation of the mechanist-vitalist debate into the culture.[3] Beginning in the modern era in the seventeenth century, vitalism rose to prominence in the eighteenth (with physician-philosophers such as Théophile Bordeu, Paul-Joseph Barthez, and Xavier Bichat), lingered into the nineteenth (Claude Bernard), and crested again in the early twentieth century (Hans Driesch, Constantin von Monakow, Kurt Goldstein, Henri Bergson).[4] Vitalism has often been accused of being insufficiently scientific—blasted

for its supposed incoherence and outright mysticism—mainly because it seemed to revive what the mechanical and mathematical philosophy of the seventeenth century had put asunder: the intrinsic animation and motility of matter. Mechanical philosophers like Robert Boyle chastised proponents of vitalism for indulging in this "occult quality," and placed their faith in the rigors of empirical experiment and inductive logic. Yet, as scholars like Georges Canguilhem have affirmed, vitalism was a powerful and coherent means of describing bodily function and organization, and for understanding the basic fundaments of biological "life"—against temptations of mechanistic reduction. Hence vitalists' search for deep (and non-reducible) principles of biological activity: Blumenbach's "*Bildungstrieb*" (or formative drive) and Barthez's "vital principle" were two exemplary instances. Both were attempts to relocate animation, from its source in an external force or agent, to its presence in the body itself—in and as the principle of animation. [5]

Green's life-death oscillation is, very much, this vital principle. The fact that Green laudably resists attempts to pin this principle down fits neatly within a vitalist resistance to mechanistic reduction. At a basic level, it reveals that Picasso's art was driven by a search for this in-between biological state, this life-death principle, in and through aesthetic form (aesthetic form, because of its ability to analogize bodily behavior in and as a kind of phenomenology, might be the key site to observe such imperceptible phenomena). In other words, the question "what would be a work of art that kept moving, on its own?" was also very much a question of the body, whose intrinsic functions were capable of resisting death. Green's account laudably avoids a narrower reading, which might have reduced the manifoldness of the visual—or indeed, the *visualizable* body—to verbal language, or might have drawn up a too-quick correlation between linguistic signs and politics.

Perhaps the most pressing question to ask of Green's findings is whether any such life-death principle will always only be the *effect* of a bodily origin, an origin that is fundamentally obscure (by "origin" we mean not just the beating pulse, but the ultimate source of intrinsic movement and generation in and of the body). Bodily sensation, even as it was variously diced up in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, doggedly remained at a surface level of understanding. Leading terms like "uneasiness" and "irritability," though providing the solution to short-term dilemmas, proved ultimately provisional. Yet, bracketing this question of foundations, we might nevertheless ask of the exact nature of this "exchange" or "oscillation" between the living and the dead, the human and the inhuman, as described by Green: does the living-dead oscillation have its own intensive temporality, not only within but across several images? Indeed, this appears to be exactly what Green has done for the 1907-1933 period (though he is not explicit on this). To me, his real thesis is how and why the vagina-sun motif recurs and returns—gets called up from a range of available motifs—at particular moments, as

part of Picasso's archaeology of vision. Compared to other living-dead moments in Picasso's work, when that vagina-sun motif returns in 1925 in *The Kiss*, it seems to acquire a particular force and urgency, and turns away from its status as a piece of "dead" iconography—thus "vitalizing" his own process of production by tapping into something akin to Bergsonian duration.

One way, then, to productively read Green's essay, is to keep alive the differences between the various life-death motifs between 1907 and 1933. For, once we perceive this "ambivalence of the dead-alive" (50), there is a way that every other similar motif becomes leveled, flattened. We start seeing that ambivalence everywhere, a case of vision getting locked into a repetitive pattern, deadened. This tendency makes us less aware of the way that the living-dead motif (less a motif than a tension, actually) variously *appears* in these images. Is the tension the result of a search or working-through of a visual problem for Picasso, or does it have the character of an assumption? (The question seems particularly apt for the 1925 paintings *The Kiss* and *The Dance*—both major pictorial statements, done with a considerable degree of meditation, reflection, and reworking.) Does the motif or tension appear early or late in the genesis of a painting? One wants to know if the motif is more cancellation than easy conflation. Such an assessment of these images would provide us with evidence that the vagina-sun motif *reappeared* in 1925; some kind of urgency or deep anxiety haunts *The Kiss*—gleaned in part from the painting's colorful "exterior"—that differs from Picasso's smaller works. What to make of this? Is the painting a response to the environment closing in on the organism, the life-death principle finding expression because of exigencies in the socio-biological milieu? Possibly. In any case, the life-death principle will dive back inward, and lead to a new cycle of intensification—as though the body relies or paradoxically 'grounds' itself on repeated phases of expression-involution. We can conclude, at least, that while the life-death principle might be consistently undecidable or ambivalent between 1907 and 1933, it is not *unitary*.

Another question for Green's thesis: how does the living-dead tension square with other tropes of reversibility in Picasso's art—for example, the "reversible cube" on the head of *Woman with Pears (Fernande)* (1909), or his frequent reversals between figure and ground?[6] At some level, the life-death principle is none other than dynamism in Picasso's art as such. But let us close in on reversibility: when Green reads *The Dance* from left to right, with "sexualized life in motion turning into the dead geometry of the inanimate," he quite rightly states that the direction is then "reversed" (48). The right-most figure has us double back to the left. Yet, though similar to our vagina-sun motif, in that it seems to invoke an origin or terminus (the darkened profile head has often been explained as referring to Picasso's recently-deceased friend Ramon Pichot), this reversible turn seems like a more literal recoil from something deep and unknowable.[7] The reversible cubes of Picasso's 1910-12 period,

in contrast, came out of a concerted attempt to undo the classical system of perspectival representation[8]; reversibility was built into mind or vision, as it were (akin, perhaps, to Kant's "epigenesis of pure reason."[9]) As for *The Kiss*, it is difficult to tell if reversibility, notably in the vagina-sun motifs, is striving for something deeper: to dwell once more in the nether regions of matter, to return to that hazy realm of noumena. And what if we still don't know enough about reversibility as such in Picasso? Does the life-death oscillation help us understand this deeper generativity of Picasso's art? What if analytic cubism—the Cadaqués push—was just *one* line of flight out of a deeper, formative matrix?

There is a way that what looks like identity (vagina = sun) is actually a pair of aspects (vagina or sun): the different perception of a figure or face, even as the physical properties of the image have not changed.[10] In many ways, aspect seeing *is* perpetual reversibility—cyclical yet discontinuous. Green's weaker life-death motifs, I suspect, are non-aspective: for example, the particular turning or flipping that occurs between the guitar and grapes in Juan Gris' *Guitar and Fruit Bowl* (1919) that Green describes as "rhyming" ("the guitar seems to have *generated* the bunch of grapes…" [66; emphasis mine—notice the biological metaphor]). Because they are two separate and unconnected identities, it is not an aspect. In Gris' painting, we remain in empirical realism, however beguiling the oscillations. Aspect seeing, in contrast—what is present in Picasso's *The Kiss*—discloses something fundamental about ontology. (And isn't it the task of still life to bring us to this realm of ontological awareness?) The dawning of an aspect is ontological; we see an object differently, not necessarily but contingently. Aspect perception need not happen. Perhaps what this means is that we see not *degrees* of life and death in a particular organism, but life *or* death, aspectively.

Certain life-death analogies in Green's essay can be questioned. All mention of automata, for instance, have them exhibiting merely repetitive behavior (e.g. "clockwork movement of an automaton" [63]). Yet before the nineteenth century, before automata were Hoffmannesque scare objects, they were seen as potent *models* of human life, capable of analogizing the intricacies of organic behavior.[11] In the eighteenth century, automata were considered an advance over the rather static, mechanical devices of the seventeenth century. How might we rethink early twentieth-century automata in an age of accelerating technology and industry, with machines prosthetizing the body, and analogies made between machines and organisms that stressed the lifelike as much as the deathly? How do we think of the machine as trickster, as ruse? Picasso's strange dot-and-line drawings made at Juan-les-Pins in the summer of 1924 look differently in a reconfigured biomechanical, even cosmological, light.

Another instance of problematic metaphorization occurs in Green's discussion of crystals, where he writes of Picasso's "persistence in infusing even the most crystalline of tables, musical instruments […] with vitality again and again" (93). While this is enlivening as

description, it uses "vitality" in a weakly metaphorical manner, as though the artist were breathing spirit or energy into his works of art. What the history of vitalism makes clear, instead, is that the real problem in the work of art is not the exterior agent who gives it form, but the artist who is able to realize or reveal the autonomous, self-generative properties of the work itself. At its most compelling, vitalism was the search for generativity beneath the surface effects and behavior of an organism. Yet these few instances of ahistorical analogy and weak metaphor pale in the face of the rest of Green's essay, which derives its conclusions inductively, carefully doling out rich description to open up new avenues of thought.

Both formalism and semiotics, even as they powerfully opened up cubism as a pictorial language, tended to affirm a Kantian transcendental idealism, in the sense of the sharp divide that was marked between phenomena and noumena. [12] Cut off from nature, the transcendental a prioris were all we had. A whole realm of noumena became closed off to human knowledge and understanding. Both formalism and semiotics also enshrined a linear trajectory, from "analytic" to "synthetic" cubism [13]—originally Kantian terms, of course—that made a form of cognitive abstraction seem necessary to cubism. Semiotic thinking was seen as a higher and more elevated condition, by revealing the sophistication of Picasso's language. [14] One negative result, however, is that art historians have tended to look askance at the works of his synthetic phase and after (the papiers collés aside). The works of the 1920s have proven especially difficult to categorize, and have been negatively colored by the relative success of the works of the early, 1910-12 period. Even seminal works like *The Kiss* and *The Dance* appear like small sparks, occasional blips over the course of a long decline. Another result is that we have, because of the seeming imperative of cognitive abstraction, largely neglected the realm of temporality in cubism. In Bergson's terms, we have been caught up in space, to the detriment of time.

On the side of the historiography opposite from the Kantian, one could argue that many Salon Cubist paintings, such as Le Fauconnier's *Abundance* (1910-11), are not successfully vitalist (or successfully Bergsonian). In the way that they misunderstand, and literalize, the continuity of the vital order, these paintings might be instances of a "vulgar" Bergsonism. There tends to be a freezing of form, rather than an ongoing, yet indeterminate, sense of movement and genesis in such paintings. One of the errors of Salon Cubism was the way it clung to the old familiars of the rural, nature, and organic bodies—versus more complex pictorial accounts that could take into account city *and* country, nature and technology, organic and inorganic. All this matters as to how a vitalist philosophy might come to inflect Cubist painting of the 1920s—and allow us to arrive at Green's life-death principle, from another direction. It is not an insignificant fact that Bergson's thinking was still dominant in 1920s France.

What we do not need, of course, is a simple opposition that pits the "mechanism" of gallery Cubism (or analytic Cubism) against the "vitalism" of Salon Cubism (or synthetic Cubism). Rather, the mechanical-vital dialectic can (and should) be thought through all phases of Picasso's work, and across the gallery-Salon Cubism divide. For example, is the faceting of planes in the background of many a hermetic cubist painting actually a depiction of the landscape or environment endowed with vitality? Why were there descriptions of a "Rembrandtesque" inner light animating these figures? One reason to re-ask these questions is that it acknowledges the persistence of vitalism, with its central insight that the temporality of the vital order comes before—is analytically prior to—the Kantian noumenal-phenomenal dichotomy.

The stronger moments in Green's essay (for example, the careful pushing away of the Freudian death drive, in order to grasp the life-death oscillation in all its specificity) move beyond both formalist and semiotic methodologies. Analytic-synthetic or iconic-symbolic discontinuity is, however, not stressed (it is not a concern for the author). Green also does not engage the vitalism of Salon Cubism, perhaps because the connections do not seem obvious, or because of the constraint of the single artist focus in the context of this museum exhibition. One irony of these vitalist 1907-33 images is that Picasso might have been competing on the same quasi-Bergsonian ground as Denis or Delaunay. Perhaps he arrived at a different solution to what might have been a common problem (the intrication of the body, the motive or generative principle, etc.). What if Picasso, in the 1920s, dwelled deeply in nature and ontology, in an attempt to come up with a more powerful form of bioaesthetic regeneration? And yet Green's life-death principle does end up tinged with a certain formalism—the achieved result over the course of a wide array of images, but with no real relation to a *lived* history. While there is no need to have recourse to a simple biographical explanation (relationships with friends and family, events that occur at the surface level of consciousness), there is the possibility that family life in the 1920s served for Picasso as refuge and retreat from the socio-political world.

Overall, I think Green's analysis of the oscillation of life and death in Picasso's art takes us far in moving beyond, on the one hand, a Kantian skepticism—given the "inability of radical linguistic doubt to sustain the demands of the everyday"[15]—and on the other, in Green's sketch of what a vitalist pictoriality might be, efforts to reduce vitalism to some kind of weak, political conservatism.[16]

Perhaps the woman in *The Kiss* intends to deceive. This might explain why she is (or both of them are) so *ugly*—for is not beauty, as Darwin taught us, a biological ruse? John Richardson posits that the painting might have been a reply to Picabia's own painting of a man and woman kissing.[17] Yet Picasso also seems to have reached farther back in time and history: for

does not the smooch resemble the kiss given by Judas in Giotto's Arena Chapel fresco? A kiss of betrayal, but also a mark of death. Therein lies, I think, the picture's sense of doubt, fear, and anxiety. (The crude, reductive explanation is that Picasso was working out his then-negative feelings for his wife, Olga.) What the Giotto allusion allows is an intensification, a deepening of the vitalist self/structure of the painting. The aspect and aporia is that we do not know whether the kiss is producing life or death, ecstasy or annihilation. Knowledge gives way to ontology. We move beyond the barrier of the transcendental a priori, which—like realism—was both feint and ruse. Yet recognizing that it *is* a ruse allows us to perceive that irreducible crack in our being, and enter into a deeper ontological relatedness of things. Green's elegant and provocative essay allows us to look again at Picasso's art, with fresh eyes.

NOTES

1. Green, 49. Green could have cited Jean Laplanche's *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), the classic treatment of Freud's engagement with the vital order.

2. What has hindered a proper understanding of the relations between art and vitalism in the historiography of Cubism has been vitalism's frequent associations with forms of reactionary, political conservatism. For example, Maurice Denis' Barrèsian aesthetics, in statements such as: "What makes a renaissance is less the perfection of the models one chooses than the strength and the unity of purpose of a vigorous generation." Denis, "De Gauguin et de van Gogh au classicisme," in *Le Ciel et l'Arcadie: Textes réunis*, ed. Jean-Paul Bouillon (Paris: Hermann, 1993), 170; originally published in *L'Occident*, May 1909; cited in David Cottington, *Cubism and its Histories* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 33. For the various "Bergsonisms" in the early twentieth century—variously using Bergson's philosophy in more or less faithful ways—see Mark Antliff, *Inventing Bergson: Cultural Politics and the Parisian Avant Garde* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993). For the Neo-Kantian/Bergsonian antinomy from the 1890s to the 1930s, see Suzanne Guerlac, *Thinking in Time: An Introduction to Henri Bergson* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2006), 1-41. For Bergson and early twentieth-century painting, see also Todd Cronan, *Matisse, Bergson, and the Philosophical Temper of Modernism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

3. For example, in defense of his painting against that of the Futurists, Robert Delaunay asserted that his was "an art of simultaneous contrasts, *of forms of color… line is limitation. Colour gives depth* (not perspective, *not successive*, but *simultaneous*) *both its form and its movement.* The simultaneous vision of the futurists has a completely different meaning… Successive and mechanical dynamism in their painting, just as their manifesto makes plain. It is a mechanical, and not a living, movement [C'est une mouvement machiniste et non vivante]." Robert Delaunay, *Du Cubisme à l'Art abstrait. Documents inédits publiés par Pierre Francastel* (Paris: SEVPEN, 1957), 110; cited in Cottington, 101. Note that the "disegno-colore" opposition merges into the "mechanical-vital" binary by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

4. The best defense of vitalism is still Georges Canguilhem, "Aspects du vitalisme," in *La Connaissance de la vie* (Paris: Hachette, 1952; Vrin, 1980), 83-100; "Aspects of Vitalism," in *Knowledge of Life*, ed. Paola Marrati and Todd Meyers, trans. Stefanos Geroulanos and Daniela Ginsburg (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 59-74. For the history of vitalism, see also Roselyne Rey, *Naissance et développement du vitalisme en France de la deuxième moitie du 18e siècle à la fin du premier empire* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation, 2000); Peter Hanns Reill, *Vitalizing Nature in the Enlightenment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); also Osamu Kanamori, "The Problem of Vitalism Revisited: from Barthez to Bernard," *Angelaki* 10.2 (August 2005): 13-26.

5. See Peter Hans Reill, "The Legacy of the 'Scientific Revolution': Science and the Enlightenment" in *The Cambridge History of Science*, vol. 4: Eighteenth-Century Science, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 23-43. These scientific debates impacted art and literature: think, for example, of the shared basis between Blumenbach's *Bildungstrieb* and the *Bildungsroman*. For a preliminary attempt to write an entwined history of vitalism and art, see Kevin Chua, "Painting Paralysis: Filial Piety in 1763" in *French Genre Painting in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Philip Conisbee, Studies in the History of Art 72, Center for Advanced Studies in the Visual Arts (Washington: National Gallery of Art, distributed by Yale University Press, 2007), 153-77.

6. For this notion of reversibility, see T. J. Clark, *Farewell to an Idea: Episodes in a History of Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 198-201; Margaret Iversen, "Review: Orthodox and Anamorphic Perspectives," *Oxford Art Journal* 18.2 (1995): 81-84.

7. It might be akin to the reversibility of mathematical equations, which served to uphold classical physics and its form of linear temporality.

8. As argued by T. J. Clark in "Cubism and Collectivity" in *Farewell to an Idea*, 169-224.

9. For elaboration of the phrase "epigenesis of pure reason," see Helmut Müller-Sievers, *Self-Generation: Biology, Philosophy, and Literature Around 1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), especially 48-64.

10. For aspect seeing, see Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 193c: "I contemplate a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently. I call this experience 'noticing an aspect.'" For discussion, see Stephen Mulhall, *On Being in the World: Wittgenstein and Heidegger on Seeing Aspects* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990).

11. See in this vein, Jessica Riskin, "Eighteenth-Century Wetware," *Representations* 83 (Summer 2003): 97-125. E. T. A. Hoffmann's short story *The Sandman* (1816) was the *locus classicus* for all late nineteenth-century versions of automata.

12. By formalism, I refer to the writings of Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler, Alfred Barr, and John Golding; by semiotics, Yve-Alain Bois and Rosalind Krauss. For references, and a full historiography of cubism, see Cottington's excellent *Cubism and its Histories*.

13. Cottington, 47.

14. One way to unthink the linearity of the discourse has been to try and pay more attention to the *discontinuities* in Cubism, especially in Picasso's career. Especially helpful in this vein is Clark's argument that that linguistic transition (from iconic to symbolic representation) remains fundamentally incomplete. As I see it, the originality of his chapter on cubism lies in its relocation of the *terms* of Cubism's failure. For him, the inability to fully purge iconicity from representation is analogous to the failure of the Picasso-Braque (social) collectivity. And, though phrases like "irredeemable obscurity" reinvoke the Kantian noumena, at some level Clark—intriguingly—seems to be ironizing Kant (e.g. "counterfeit of such a description" [215]).

15. Richard Neer, "Reaction and Response," *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 30, no. 2, Winter 2004, 476.

16. See also Green's longer book (which in many ways also pursues a dialectic without synthesis), *Picasso: Architecture and Vertigo*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005.

17. John Richardson, *A Life of Picasso: The Triumphant Years, 1917-1932*, New York: Knopf, 2010, 290.

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THE AESTHETIC POLITICS OF AFFECT

TODD CRONAN

Special thanks to the editors of *Radical Philosophy* for allowing me to reprint my review of the *Affect Theory Reader* from issue 172 (March/April 2012): 51-53.

The Affect Theory Reader, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

Affect theory emerged out a set of dissatisfactions with dominant modes of analysis in the humanities. Beginning in the mid-1990s there was increasingly consensus that the tools and principles of poststructuralism were unable to accommodate or even recognize central facts about human experience, those that did not rise (or fall) to the level of signification. The privilege granted to language in poststructuralism filtered out pre-cognitive modes of awareness that were felt to be more basic, even more real than the ideated forms of linguistic apprehension. Affects constitute a "level of experience [that] cannot be translated into words without doing violence," Anna Gibbs writes. Or as Patricia Clough suggests in her account of "The Affective Turn," citing Rei Terada, poststructuralism was "'truly glacial' in the pronouncement of the death of the subject and therefore had little to do with affect and emotion" (206). Clough's concern, of course, is not with a return to the subject, far from it, but rather to show how affect theory does "death of the author" better than semiotics.

"Affect and emotion," Clough writes, "point…to the subject's discontinuity with itself, a discontinuity of the subject's conscious experience with the non-intentionality of emotion and affect" (206). Affect theory does discontinuity with a difference. According to Clough, the challenge of affect theory, against every other form of inquiry, is to show how "bodily matter" bears "information." This bodily information overruns the information contained in any linguistic system. Affect "*organizes* itself," which means every other form of organization including perception, cognition, signification, meaning, language, representation, self, and other are not only entirely separable from affects but secondary to them (196). You can't get from one to the other: language, no matter how intensely one deconstructs it, will never open onto affect. Affects are of a different ontological order from linguistic representation, so that even the most advanced modes of poststructural analysis end up privileging language and the subjectivity it generates.

The Affect Theory Reader shows how affect can be deployed in a range of frameworks including the neurological, psychological, social, cultural, philosophical and political, and that there is room for debate among these various fields—above all between the Deleuze-inspired writings of Brian Massumi and his followers, and that of the more scientifically-minded followers of Eve Sedgwick, whose work was formulated in dialogue with affect psychologist Silvan Tomkins [1]—but there is much more room for agreement among the various camps. And the agreement hinges on a core claim. There is, Massumi declares, "duplicity of form": every form or image is received by an agent "spontaneously and simultaneously in two orders of reality, one local and learned or intentional, the other nonlocal and self-organizing" (203). In other words, humans apprehend the world along two separate *but not equal* tracks: intention and affect, meaning and sense, perception and experience co-exist but do not merge or comingle (the latter term in these binaries is always construed "outside consciousness" [200, see also 232]). According to Clough, affects are defined in terms of their "autonomy from conscious perception and language" (209). So despite persistent warnings throughout the *Reader* that "affect and cognition are never fully separable" (2-3), that there is "no boundary yet between the body…and the correlated sign" (66), body and sign are nonetheless functioning, and analyzable, on ontologically separate planes, as a matter of "parallel processing" (198). The *difference in kind* between affect and meaning, experience and representation, sense and significance, is a categorical assumption of affect theory and one I propose to interrogate here.

Part of the project of affect theory is to go back precisely to those poststructuralist masters—at least some of them, Lacan and Derrida, for instance, are conspicuously absent—but more often it is to seek an alternate genealogy in the deeper past. Marx in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, Freud's *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, C. S. Peirce's

pragmatism, Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, William James' radical empiricism, Walter Benjamin's writings on mimesis, Heidegger's *Being and Time*, George Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier*, Primo Levi's memoirs, Henri Lefebre's and Raymond Williams' sociology—I am citing both the usual suspects and some new arrivals—are redescribed as theories and theorists of affect. In their introduction to the *Reader* Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth cite Roland Barthes' late lectures, *The Neutral*, as evidence of an affective turn within the stale "semiotic paradigm" (234). Barthes calls for attention to the "shimmer" of an "affective minimum" (the title of the introduction is "An Inventory of Shimmers"). Affective states, Barthes writes, "outplay the paradigm" of dialectics by referring to something "unprecedented," something that slips through the net of dialectical analysis (10).

The fact that affects whatever they are, are "new" is a point raised by every author of the volume. Sara Ahmed characterizes a basic element of affectivity as being "more and less open to new things" (32); Lauren Berlant writes of a "new atmosphere of new objects" (106); Ben Highmore suggests that affects constitute "new sensual worlds" (135); Ben Anderson describes how affectivity offers a "promise of a new way to attend to the social or cultural in perpetual and unruly movement" (162); affects "open unsuspected possibilities for new ways of thinking, being, and acting" (187), they are for Gibbs "envisionings beyond the already known" (203); for Clough affects are "unexpected, new," contributing to the "forging of a new body" (207); while Steve D. Brown and Ian Tucker see affects as affording a "new space of liberty in the ineffable" (248). Characteristically, the word "new" appears no fewer than one hundred and ten times in the fourteen essays.

The relentless pursuit of newness emerges from the most cited source in the *Reader*, the collaborative writings of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Brown and Tucker cite Deleuze and Guattari's definition of philosophy as an imperative "always to extract an event from things and beings, to set up the new event from things and beings, always to give them a new event" (238). Lone Bertelsen and Andrew Murphie take their cue from Deleuze and Guattari in their philosophical reading of a political incident. In "An Ethics of Everyday Infinties and Powers: Félix Guattari on Affect and the Refrain" Bertelsen and Murphie consider the "*Tampa* affair" of August 2001, in which the Howard administration refused permission for a Norwegian freighter, the *MV Tampa*, carrying 438 rescued Afghans from a distressed fishing vessel floating in international waters, to enter Australian territory. A central fact of this "event," for Bertelsen and Murphie, one that far surpassed the "[o]pinions and arguments" around it in importance (144), was that the boat was painted red. They write:

> It becomes the mark, the possibility of a new *event* (a new *virtual potential* for things to happen differently), of a new set of *physical territories*…and of a new set of *existential territories* (these include…new modes of living, new laws, new sign systems,…new emotions and feelings, new powers to affect and be affected). In sum, a new field of expression arises. (142)

(The word "new" appears eight more times two paragraphs later.) Bertelsen and Murphie support Guattari's claim that "*affect is all there is*" which suggests an "*aesthetic* approach to politics" (140). It's an object of aesthetic experience—the red paint on the side of the boat—that both initiates the event and that transcends the "arguments" made about it. The arguments—about whether one should help the refugees or not, for instance—are always already an effort to "capture and control affect" (140). At the bottom of every interpretation, understanding, analysis, meaning, was red. The event meant many things but "*first* it was an uneasy and persistent redness sitting on the horizon" (143). Affects, that is, are not only ontologically parallel with cognition, they are *prior to it*. Cognition not only logically follows affect (although it is not connected with it), but that cognition doesn't affect affect. All thought is an afterthought. Gibbs simply calls this the "dependence of cognition on affect and the senses" (198). Perhaps the most revealing foundationalist claim emerges when Bertelsen and Murphie provide a brief footnote declaring "We are not, of course, saying this [red] image was solely responsible for the events surrounding the *Tampa*" (157). Indeed. While affect "subtends cognitively mediated representation," as Gibbs puts it, she similarly warns that affect does "not ever entirely replace or supersede it"! (193)

Even the skeptics of the affective reduction reiterate its terms. Lawrence Grossberg, for instance, wants to reject the aesthetic politics proposed by Bertelsen and Murphie (which he believes to originate with Massumi's work), citing the idea that "you flash these lights [of terror alerts] at people and there is some kind of bodily response." Massumi's example in the *Reader* is a fire alarm rather than a flashing light. Fire alarms, Massumi writes, citing Peirce, "act on the nerves of the person" yet they "*assert nothing*" (64). Grossberg's retort to Massumi's view of bodily response to lights and sounds is succinct: "Well there isn't [any bodily response]!" Grossberg further warns that affect is quickly becoming a formula for "everything that is non-representational or non-semantic" (316). And yet Grossberg goes on to describe affect as "excess," something "not captured by notions of signification and representation" (318), something that escapes "theories of representation, of meaning, of ideology" (310). And again, "if something has effects that are…non-representational then we can just describe it as 'affect'" (315). (It's unclear what kind of work the scare quotes are doing here?) As it turns out, Grossberg's real objection is not to the notion of affect at

all; rather, he believes we should be "specifying modalities and apparatuses of affect" (315) and discerning the difference between the "ontological and the 'empirical'" within affective experience. According to Grossberg, Massumi and Co. are too quick to conflate the empirical (psychology and culture) with the ontological (the physical body). What's at stake in this call for more "articulations" and the "refusal of any reduction" (328, 333)? And how does this square with his declaration that "in the end, it all comes back to affect" (337)?

Grossberg's critique of the Left's "elitist and vanguardist politics" (320), for instance, involves a critique of the Left's prioritizing of economics over (popular) culture. Rather than talking about the "changing status, presence, representation, forms, effectivities of the economy," rather than trying to "diagnose what is new about capitalism" (329-30), for Grossberg we should be seeing that "culture is…a condition of possibility of the economic" (323-24). What this looks like is explicitly stated in Seigworth's introductory discussion of Lefebrve. Rather than examine "institutions," Seigworth writes (he is citing Greil Marcus on Lefebvre), we should examine affective "moments of love, poetry…hate, desire" because in them lie "entirely new demands on the social order" (20). Fighting to change the current economic system, Seigworth and Grossberg contend, is simply to use "its own already defined assumptions," a denial of *virtual* realities—"the multiplicities and contradictions"—beyond or within capitalism (329-330). Once you recognize that culture (love, poetry, rock music, desire), and not economics, is the real problem, then your theory is fit for the unemployed and the CEO alike.

Guattari's "*aesthetic* approach to politics" (140) is further literalized in Berlant's study of "Cruel Optimism." Berlant's analysis focuses on the moment in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* in which Marx describes the "abolition of private property" as signaling the "*emancipation* of all human senses" (100). No longer seeing objects as fetishes and nature as a matter of use, the senses, Marx says, become "theoreticians" (100). Berlant draws on this passage in Marx to understand John Ashbery's untitled send-up of the American Dream. According to Berlant, "our senses are not yet theoreticians because they are bound up by the rule, the map, the inherited fantasy, and the hum of worker bees who fertilize materially the life we are moving through" (101). The problem, for Berlant, is the suburban fantasy "of the endless weekend," the "consumer's happy circulation in familiarity," and the "privilege of being bored with life" (99). (Gregg's essay similarly takes up the regressive "politics of the cubicle" [258].) As a reading of Ashbery this might be right, but as an account of Marx, it isn't. For Marx, of course, the problem is the privilege of private property, not the "privilege of being bored." One could safely eradicate boredom, without it bearing on the problem of capital. The anxious worker, after all, lacks (and perhaps looks forward to) the privilege of being bored. And affects, despite their "sensorium-shaking" transformation of the "bourgeois

senses" (103), begin to look a lot like the fetishized private property Marx scrutinized. Affects are, Berlant insists, "radically private, and pretty uncoded" (103), and like the fetishized commodity, they make their dazzling appearance with the labor behind them obscured. These private experiences are in fact beyond analysis—an affect, after all, "is just a fact" (103).

NOTES

[1.] For a brilliant critique of the claims of Tomkins and Sedgwick see Ruth Leys, *From Guilt to Shame: Auschwitz and After* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). More recently, Leys has analyzed the basic assumptions, and the evidence, behind both Massumi and Tomkins's claims about affect in "The Affective Turn: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37: 3 (Spring 2011): 434-72.

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