

M. Munro

The Map

92687

and the Territory



THE MAP AND THE TERRITORY



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Fig. 1. Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

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*spontaneous acts of scholarly combustion*



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*to so and so*



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Special thanks to Bryce (and Jana!); to my friends Annie and Freya; and to my family—those newly returned fully as much as those with whom I live.

Finally, by now it should go without saying, and yet I'm grateful for the opportunity once more to say it: My love and thanks, as always, to Eileen and to Vincent, and to everyone at punctum books. Here be monsters.



*“I didn’t even know that was a question I could ask.” That remark from a student in an introductory philosophy course of mine points to the primary body of knowledge philosophy produces: a detailed record of what we do not know. When we come to view a philosophical question as well-formed and worthwhile, it is a way of providing as specific a description as we can of something we do not know. The creation or discovery of such questions is like noting a landmark in a territory we’re exploring. When we identify reasonable, if conflicting, answers to this question, we are noting routes to and away from that landmark. And since proposed answers to philosophical questions often contain implied answers to other philosophical questions, those routes connect different landmarks.*

*The result is a kind of map: a map of the unknown.*

— Justin Weinberg



## Theologico-Political Fragment: On Messianism as Method

“World history is not the place for happiness,” Hegel writes. “Periods of happiness are empty pages (*leere Blätter*) in history.”<sup>1</sup> It’s a striking image — not least because it’s unclear how one’s to understand it. Empty pages are doubtless those on which nothing is written, nothing printed; and if history can be said to have “pages,” this suggests that history is grasped here, in its concept, and not excepting an elaborate theological heritage, on the model of “the book.”<sup>2</sup> It can therefore be asked: In what respect might (the book of) history be said to have “empty” pages, and how did those pages come to take their place “in” history? Where, in history, are history’s empty pages to be found?

“Radical hope,” as Jonathan Lear puts it, “anticipates a good for which those who have the hope as yet lack the appropriate

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- 1 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, ed. and trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1988), 29. Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 102: “History,” in sum, “is what hurts.”
  - 2 See, for example, Ernst Robert Curtius, “The Book as Symbol,” in *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 302–48.

concepts with which to understand it.”<sup>3</sup> One might be tempted to respond to Lear as Max Brod once did to Kafka: “Then there is hope outside this manifestation of the world that we know.” Kafka smiled, Brod recalled. “Oh, plenty of hope, an infinite amount of hope — but not for us.”<sup>4</sup> Kafka’s reply clarifies the stakes: Whatever “radical” hope is hope for, in other words, radical hope radically reconfigures “us” — and it does so, among “those who have the hope,” *equally*, since to “have” the hope is, equitably, and unequivocally, to lack concepts “appropriate” to the good this hope anticipates. So that while that for which one might hope may ultimately, in its full radicality, not be in any

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- 3 Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 103. Giorgio Agamben’s reading of the “absoluteness” of Bartleby’s enigmatic phrase could perhaps be said to articulate radical hope’s minimal consistency, its zero degree of intelligibility: “The final ‘to’ that ends Bartleby’s phrase has an anaphoric character, for it does not refer directly to a segment of reality but, rather, to a preceding term from which it draws its only meaning. But here it is as if this anaphora were absolutized to the point of losing all reference, now turning, so to speak, back toward the phrase itself — an absolute anaphora, spinning on itself, no longer referring either to a real object or to an anaphorized term: *I would prefer not to prefer not to.*” Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, ed. and trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 255. Author’s emphasis.
- 4 Max Brod, quoted and translated in Dagmar Barnouw, *Weimar Intellectuals and the Threat of Modernity* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), 187. “For centuries, political theorists have sought to explain power and its exercise via expositions of the duties and obligations, virtues and attributes of specific political figures. Machiavelli made the Prince famous (although he wasn’t alone in writing for or about princes). There are countless treatises on kings, monarchs, and tyrants. Political theorists have investigated the citizen and foreigner, neighbor and stranger, lord and vassal, friend and enemy. Their inquiries extend into the household: master and slave, husband and wife, parent and child, sister and brother. They include the workplace: schoolmaster and pupil, bourgeois and proletarian. Yet for all these figurations of power, its generation, exercise, and limits, there is no account of the comrade. The comrade does not appear.” Jodi Dean, “Four Theses on the Comrade,” *e-flux* 86, November 2017, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/160585/four-theses-on-the-comrade/>. See also Jodi Dean, *Comrade: An Essay in Political Belonging* (New York: Verso, 2019).

sense comprehensible or recognizable, in the face of it, *save for that equality*—and so for the first and perhaps most important of those “appropriate concepts with which to understand it” — neither are *we*.<sup>5</sup>

Happiness is history’s endpapers *in potentia*, the last pages handled as we close the book on it.

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5 Aimé Césaire, quoted and translated in George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 169: “Equality refuses to remain abstract.”



## “To Illustrate Every Point”: On Education and/as Cartography

A more adequate definition of cartography needs to express not just the presence of geographical knowledge but also cosmographical or biographical information, such as the soul flight of shamans or the passage and pathways of gods, heroes, and ancestors.<sup>1</sup>

With unfailing kindness, your life always presents what you need to learn.<sup>2</sup>

What will you let yourself know?<sup>3</sup>

This, in the end, may be a map.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 Neil L. Whitehead, quoted in Patricio González Vivo and Jen Lowe, “Guyupia,” *Territory* 4, <http://themapisnot.com/issue-iv-patricio-gonzalez-vivo-jen-lowecanvas>.
  - 2 Charlotte Joko Beck, quoted in Sean Murphy, *One Bird, One Stone: 108 American Zen Stories* (New York: Renaissance Books, 2002), 215.
  - 3 Alexander Chee, *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel: Essays* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2018), 202.
  - 4 Jonathan Basile, “On Exactitude in Maps,” *Territory* 1, <http://themapisnot.com/issue-i-jonathan-basile>.

“We have to search whether nature does not in its very being show itself as self-explanatory.”<sup>5</sup> Whitehead’s sentence is nothing short of stunning. There’s so much going on here it’s hard to know where to start. If nature in fact, on a first pass, “shows itself” to be “self-explanatory,” why do we “have” to search whether this is so? And why “search” as opposed to “ask”? Perhaps our “searching” is precisely what makes it self-explanatory? Even so: If, following Spinoza, “we” are not “a dominion within a dominion,”<sup>6</sup> and are instead wholly of a piece with nature, how’s one to understand this compulsion, and how might it be related (as Whitehead appears to suggest) to how nature “shows” itself—and “in its very being,” no less?

Perhaps a clue may be found in the contrast between two stories. Why stories? “If every event which occurred could be given a name,” John Berger has written, “there would be no need for stories.”<sup>7</sup> Perhaps in inquiry, shy of answers in the guise of names, or that answer to them, what we have are “stories.” “A century ago,” begins the first tale, “a certain rabbi in eastern Europe was renowned for his facility at telling stories that were

to the point of any discussion and enlightened any problem.

One of his disciples asked him about this. “How do you manage, Rabbi, to find a story to illustrate every point?”

“Let me explain,” said the rabbi, “with a story. Once a certain landowner was riding through a small town, when he noticed that on a certain wooden fence, there were painted a dozen targets, and in the bull’s-eye of every single one there was a bullet hole. He had never seen such shooting and at once he stopped his conveyance and ordered his retainers

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5 Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 92.

6 Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (New York: Penguin, 1996), 68, III Pref.

7 John Berger, quoted in Meghan O’Rourke, “We Need to Talk,” *Bookforum* February/March 2020, <https://www.bookforum.com/print/2605/miranda-popkey-s-novel-complicates-reductive-stories-of-womanhood-23839>.

to find the marksman, for he badly needed people with that kind of talent to patrol his lands.

“A quivering tailor was brought before him. This, he was told, was the man who had shot at the targets.

“The landowner stared. ‘Did you shoot the bullets?’

“‘Yes, sir,’ said the tailor, ‘but I meant no harm.’

“‘But you are an expert marksman then?’

“‘No, sir, it was the first time I ever held a gun in my hands.’

“‘Why then, how did you hit the bull’s-eye every time?’

“‘I didn’t, sir,’ said the tailor. ‘I merely

“shot the gun a dozen times at the fence, and then painted targets around every bullet hole.’”<sup>8</sup> In contrast, another story has “a rabbi ask his disciple

why the letter peh (פ) was needed in the word “korah” (קֹרַח). When the disciple replied that the letter did not appear in that word, the rabbi persisted: “Let us assume for a moment that the letter is placed in this word.” “But why should it be needed there?” asked the disciple, to which the rabbi replied, “That is exactly what I asked you.”<sup>9</sup>

“Why should it be needed,” indeed. The letter, yes, but also the question. And in the first story no less than the second. What’s the “need” of the question, the “search,” here, what necessity does it insinuate and what might be said to be its aim?

It’s from within the complicated figure of this curious locus that these two tales show themselves to be symmetrical. The first

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8 Isaac Asimov, *Isaac Asimov’s Treasury of Humor* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1971), 275–76. See, however, and least for its brilliant, critical use of a Borges story, Alec Nevala-Lee, “Asimov’s Empire, Asimov’s Wall,” *Public Books*, January 7, 2020, <https://www.publicbooks.org/asimovs-empire-asimovs-wall/>. The story also recalls one of Lacan’s adages: The real is always in its place.

9 Cullen Murphy, “Jesuitical vs. Talmudic: Making Arguments, Splitting Hairs,” *Slate*, June 25, 1996, <https://slate.com/human-interest/1996/06/jesuitical-vs-talmudic.html>.

retrospectively stages a foregone conclusion; the second, whimsically, opens one. But in each case there's a lesson in store. In each case, resisting nomination, the same ("same") "lesson." Together, one after the other in turn, they sound a centerless depth of mutual imbrication — of question with story, story with question — situating the want of inquiry spot on.

One of the disciples is driven to despair when he learns that every question only leads to more questions. When he asks: then why should we begin? the Rabbi turns the joke back on him: "You see," said Reb Mendel, "at the end of an argument, there is always a decisive question unsettled."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Rosmarie Waldrop, *Lavish Absence: Recalling and Rereading Edmond Jabès* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 5.

## The Story with Story

Since a theoretical argument in literary studies is most often the lengthened shadow of an example, it is important to have good examples, be prepared to argue for their usefulness, and work out what exactly they exemplify.<sup>1</sup>

For example, truth. But is truth an example? What happens — and what is dispensed with — when a text, for example a so-called literary fiction — but is this still an example? — stages truth?<sup>2</sup>

We seek here to launch a reformulation, indeed, a first formulation, if not a first principle, of the issue of exemplarity

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- 1 Haun Saussy, *Translation as Citation: Zhuangzi Inside Out* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 5. Rachel Sagner Buurma, “Epigraph,” in *Book Parts*, eds. Dennis Duncan and Adam Smyth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 168: “The epigraph’s very existence raises questions of tradition, authority, and intentionality; we might even say that it creates” — this one, for example — “a structurally literary situation.”
  - 2 Jacques Derrida, “Le facteur de la vérité,” in *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 414. Trans. modified. See Jacques Derrida, “The Purveyor of Truth,” trans. Willis Domingo, James Hulbert, Moshe Ron, and M.-R. L., *Yale French Studies* 52 (1975): 32.

itself insofar as its structures exceed all hitherto formulated paradigms of analysis, explanation, and assumption.<sup>3</sup>

It would seem that we must do away with explanation. Perhaps, though, the injunction is too strong. We must do away with explanation in the sense that nothing which could be explained could possibly count as that into which we are trying to gain insight.<sup>4</sup>

Isn't this really explanation enough? — But isn't it too much?<sup>5</sup>

The story at first seems to make the answer clear.<sup>6</sup>

So what's the story with story? What makes story so fascinating, and how — by virtue of what — does story so exceed statement? Or, as “the great scholar known as the Vilna Gaon once asked the Preacher of Dubno, ‘Help me to understand. What makes a parable so influential? If I recite Torah, there's a small audience, but let me tell a parable

and the synagogue is full. Why is that?”

The *dubner maged* replied, “I'll explain it to you by means of a parable.

“Once upon a time Truth went about the streets as naked as the day he was born. As a result, no one would let him into their homes. Whenever people caught sight of him, they turned away or fled. One day when Truth was sadly wander-

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3 Irene E. Harvey, *Labyrinths of Exemplarity: At the Limits of Deconstruction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), x.

4 Jonathan Lear, *Open Minded: Working Out the Logic of the Soul* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 275.

5 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte, eds. P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, rev. 4th edn. (West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd., 2009), 222.

6 Michael Wood, *The Road to Delphi: The Life and Afterlife of Oracles* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003), 138–39.

ing about, he came upon Parable. Now, Parable was dressed in splendid clothes of beautiful colors. And Parable, seeing Truth said, ‘Tell me, neighbor, what makes you look so sad?’ Truth replied bitterly, ‘Ah, brother, things are bad. Very bad. I’m old, very old, and no one wants to acknowledge me. No one wants anything to do with me.’

“Hearing that, Parable said, ‘People don’t run away from you because you’re old. I too am old. Very old. But the older I get, the better people like me. I’ll tell you a secret: Everyone likes things to be disguised and prettied up a bit. Let me lend you some splendid clothes like mine, and you’ll see that the very people who pushed you aside will invite you into their homes and be glad of your company.’

“Truth took Parable’s advice and put on the borrowed clothes. And from that time on, Truth and Parable have gone hand in hand together and everyone loves them. They make a happy pair.”<sup>7</sup>

In truth, the parable makes for a curious “explanation.” Despite appearances, it signally fails to settle the single question its presentation purports to answer: “What makes a parable so influential?” Instead, once Truth dons Parable’s “splendid clothes,” an unforeseen question comes into view, one which, once glimpsed, no resplendence can obscure: If Parable “clothes” Truth, if Parable is at one and the same time he who clothes Truth and the clothing itself, how do you picture Parable? Amid a flourish of “beautiful colors,” what figure does Parable cut?

Let me recount here — let me borrow — what else? — a story. “The most diverse legends circulate about the inexplicable. The most ingenious — which was found by the present guardians of the Temple while rifling through the ancient traditions — claims that, being inexplicable, it remains so in all the explanations which have been given and that will continue to

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7 “Naked Truth and Resplendent Parable,” in *Yiddish Folktales*, ed. Beatrice Silverman Weinreich, trans. Leonard Wolf (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1988), 7.

be given through the centuries. Indeed, precisely these explanations constitute the best guarantee of its inexplicability.”<sup>8</sup> “But at the point where explanations, by showing their emptiness, leave it be,” so our fable concludes, “the inexplicable itself is in jeopardy. Only the explanations were, in truth, inexplicable, and the legend was invented to explain them. What was not to be explained is perfectly contained” — ravishingly — “in what no longer explains anything.”<sup>9</sup>

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8 Giorgio Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, trans. Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 137.

9 *Ibid.*, 138.

## Not Even Wrong: Ethics, Andrea Long Chu, and Eternal Irony in the Logical Space of Reasons

I absolutely do court disagreement in that sense. But what I like even better are arguments that bring about a shift in terms along an axis that wasn't previously evident. So it's not just that other people are wrong; it's that their wrongness exists within a system of evaluation which itself is irrelevant.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel's view is that woman is the "eternal irony in the life of the community" and she brings it down by making it a "laughing-stock." We might say that from the perspective of the male master, the collapse of the community is tragic. But from an equally important perspective, the perspective of woman — the slave — the collapse is comic.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Thora Siemsen, "Andrea Long Chu Is Ready for Criticism," *The Nation*, November 4, 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/andrea-long-chu-females-interview/>.
  - 2 Philip J. Kain, "Hegel, Antigone, and Women," *Owl of Minerva* 33 (2002): 157–77. See the version at <https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/phi/51/>. The quotation is found on page 14 of the file.

At an academic event, I was once asked what I had meant by the term *ethics* as I'd used it in a publication. I hesitated and then I said, "I think I mean commitment to a bit." The audience laughed, but I meant it; they laughed *because* I meant it. In stand-up comedy, a bit is a comedic sequence or conceit, often involving a brief suspension of reality. To commit to a bit is to play it straight — that is, to take it seriously. A bit may be fantastical, but the seriousness required to commit to it is always real. This is the humorlessness that vegetates at the core of all humor. That's what makes the bit funny: the fact that, for the comic, it isn't.<sup>3</sup>

Andrea Long Chu's *Females* is — already — many things to many people, including, as Bryony White notes, "an exercise in logic, not what they were expecting."<sup>4</sup> In context, those two phrases are merely contiguous and otherwise disconnected ("confusing, a difficult read, an exercise in logic, not what they were expecting, controversial, offensive"), but I wonder whether it's not perhaps possible to read them together, one directly modifying the other. That is, might not one of the difficulties here reside in the question of whether there's a certain "logic," however unexpected, to what remains logically unexpected? In other words, what is the relationship between logic and expectation — and expectations of relevance, not least? In what sense, if any, might the unexpected comprise "a" logic of its own, and (more importantly) in what might its exercise consist?

Perhaps a clue — and the first lineaments of an answer — may be glimpsed in this commitment to a bit.

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3 Andrea Long Chu, *Females* (New York: Verso, 2019), 18–19.

4 Bryony White, "Everyone Is Female and Everyone Hates It': Andrea Long Chu's Theory of Desire," review of *Females* by Andrea Long Chu, *Frieze*, November 7, 2019, <https://frieze.com/article/everyone-female-and-everyone-hates-it-andrea-long-chus-theory-desire>.

A young man in his mid-twenties knocks on the door of the noted scholar Rabbi Shwartz. "My name is Sean Goldstein," he says. "I've come to you because I wish to study Talmud."

"Do you know Aramaic?" the rabbi asks.

"No," replies the young man.

"Hebrew?" asks the Rabbi.

"No," replies the young man again.

"Have you studied Torah?" asks the Rabbi, growing a bit irritated.

"No, Rabbi. But don't worry. I graduated Berkeley summa cum laude in philosophy, and just finished my doctoral dissertation at Harvard on Socratic logic. So now, I would just like to round out my education with a little study of the Talmud."

"I seriously doubt," the rabbi says, "that you are ready to study Talmud. It is the deepest book of our people. If you wish, however, I am willing to examine you in logic, and if you pass that test I will teach you Talmud."

The young man agrees.

Rabbi Shwartz holds up two fingers. "Two men come down a chimney. One comes out with a clean face, the other comes out with a dirty face. Which one washes his face?"

The young man stares at the rabbi. "Is that the test in logic?"

The rabbi nods.

"The one with the dirty face washes his face," he answers wearily.

"Wrong. The one with the clean face washes his face. Examine the simple logic. The one with the dirty face looks at the one with the clean face and thinks his face is clean. The one with the clean face looks at the one with the dirty face and thinks his face is dirty. So the one with the clean face washes his face."

"Very clever," Goldstein says. "Give me another test."

The rabbi again holds up two fingers. "Two men come down a chimney. One comes out with a clean face, the other comes out with a dirty face. Which one washes his face?"

“We have already established that. The one with the clean face washes his face.”

“Wrong. Each one washes his face. Examine the simple logic. The one with the dirty face looks at the one with the clean face and thinks his face is clean. The one with the clean face looks at the one with the dirty face and thinks his face is dirty. So the one with the clean face washes his face. When the one with the dirty face sees the one with the clean face wash his face, he also washes his face. So each one washes his face.”

“I didn’t think of that,” says Goldstein. “It’s shocking to me that I could make an error in logic. Test me again.”

The rabbi holds up two fingers. “Two men come down a chimney. One comes out with a clean face, the other comes out with a dirty face. Which one washes his face?”

“Each one washes his face.”

“Wrong. Neither one washes his face. Examine the simple logic. The one with the dirty face looks at the one with the clean face and thinks his face is clean. The one with the clean face looks at the one with the dirty face and thinks his face is dirty. But when the one with the clean face sees the one with the dirty face doesn’t wash his face, he also doesn’t wash his face. So neither one washes his face.”

Goldstein is desperate. “I am qualified to study Talmud. Please give me one more test.”

He groans, though, when the rabbi lifts two fingers. “Two men come down a chimney. One comes out with a clean face, the other comes out with a dirty face. Which one washes his face?”

“Neither one washes his face.”

“Wrong. Do you now see, Sean, why Socratic logic is an insufficient basis for studying Talmud? Tell me, how is it possible for two men to come down the same chimney, and for one to come out with a clean face and the other with a dirty face? Don’t you see? The whole question

“is *narishkeit*, foolishness,” the rabbi concludes, “and if you spend your whole life trying to answer foolish questions, all your answers will be foolish, too.”<sup>5</sup>

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5 Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Humor: What the Best Jewish Jokes Say about the Jews* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1998), 47–48, <https://aleph.org/resources/the-rabbi-is-in-two-men-come-down-the-same-chimney>. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 37: “Philosophy does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather, it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure.”



## “The Mountain Path”: On a Lesson of Fred Moten’s

Blackness is the nonexcluded middle with a right to (refuse) philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

Across Fred Moten’s work—from his first monograph, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, up to and including the final volume of the trilogy *consent not to be a single being*, *The Universal Machine*—time and again one encounters a seemingly marginal detail, an examination of the recurrence of which might prove telling. No more than a few times in the course of each book, and each time in passing, Moten uses Edmund Husserl’s curious and striking phrase, “transcendental clue” (*Transzendentaler Leitfaden*).<sup>2</sup> Now, it may be true that the transcendental, following Kant, is not the transcendent:

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1 Fred Moten, *Stolen Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 108.

2 See Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 96, 97, 163. See also the three volumes of *consent not to be a single being*, as well as Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W.R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Routledge Classics, 2012), and, for the German, Jacob Rump, “Kant, Husserl, and the Case for Non-Conceptual Content,” in *Husserl and Classical German Philosophy*, eds. Faustino Fabbianelli and Sebastian Luft (Dordrecht: Springer, 2014), 293.

it is not what exceeds any (all) possible experience, but rather describes the boundary that shapes experience as its condition of possibility.<sup>3</sup> It may also be true, following Carlo Ginzburg, that a clue is a detail that, while “apparently insignificant,” suggests “a complex reality that could not be experienced directly.”<sup>4</sup> It nonetheless remains to be asked: How does “transcendental” modify “clue”? How does Moten modify Husserl? And according to what perspective, attendant on what perception, might these two questions be seen to be linked?

Ginzburg, after the definition of “clue” cited above, goes on in the next sentence to note that “the data,” curiously, “is always arranged by the observer in such a way as to produce a narrative.”<sup>5</sup> The narrative that follows is a Sufi teaching tale collected by Idries Shah. It recounts a journey made by way of a series of apposite crossings: truth with falsity, ease with difficulty, blindness with insight. But beneath these, or in addition to them, alongside them, perhaps another crossing may be discerned, if one altogether less certain. By what criterion — what demarcation — subsequent to what passage or pursuant to what possible experience can you tell a story apart from a clue — and the clue given (the lie) in or by the story from philosophy? “An intelligent man, a scholar with a trained mind, came one day to a village. He wanted to compare, as an exercise and a

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3 “If what is given with respect to the formation of any field is the strength of the forces involved in its production, then what is given is precisely the *producing* of that field, so that, once again, what is *given* determines the transcendental as the transcendental *of* what is given. What is *given* but never available is, in every case, what cannot be apperceptively reproduced because it exceeds this as its source. In this sense what is *given* is formless production.” Iain Hamilton Grant, “Movements of the World: The Sources of Transcendental Philosophy,” *Analecta Hermeneutica* 3 (2011), 16. All emphasis author’s. 17: “The transcendental,” in other words, “is the in itself formless form of all forms.”

4 Carlo Ginzburg, “Clues: Roots of an Evidential Paradigm,” in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 103.

5 *Ibid.*

study, the different points of view which might be represented there.

He went to the caravanserai and asked for the most truthful inhabitant and also the greatest liar of the village. The people who were there agreed unanimously that the man called Kazzab was their greatest liar; and that Rastgu was the truthful one. In turn he visited them, asking each a simple question: “What is the best way to the next village?”

Rastgu the Truthful said: “The mountain path.”

Kazzab the Liar also said: “The mountain path.”

Not unnaturally, this puzzled the traveller a great deal.

So he asked a few others, ordinary citizens.

Some said: “The river;” others: “Across the fields.”

And others again said: “The mountain path.”

He took the mountain path, but in addition to the matter of the goal of his journey, the problem of the truthful and the liars of the village troubled him.

When he got to the next village, and related his story at the rest-house, he ended: “I evidently made the basic logical mistake of asking the wrong people for the names of the Truthful and the Liar. I arrived here quite easily, by the mountain path.”

A wise man who was present spoke. “Logicians, it must be admitted, tend to be blind, and have to ask others to help them. But the matter here is otherwise. The facts are thus: The river is the easiest route, so the liar suggested the mountain. But the truthful man

“was not only truthful. He noticed that you had a donkey, which made the journey easy enough. The liar happened to be unobservant of the fact that you had no boat: otherwise he would have suggested the river.”<sup>6</sup>

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6 Idries Shah, “The Mountain Path,” in *Tales of the Dervishes: Teaching Stories of the Sufi Masters over the Past Thousand Years* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), 134. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 154: “We always have as much truth as we deserve in accordance with the sense of what we say.” 159: “A solution always has the truth it deserves according to the

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problem to which it is a response, and the problem always has the solution it deserves in proportion to *its own* truth or falsity — in other words, in proportion to its sense.”

## The Unconscious

The extraordinary efficiency of the fish as a swimming device is partly due, it now seems, to an evolved capacity to couple its swimming behaviors to the pools of external kinetic energy found as swirls, eddies and vortices in its watery environment (see Triantafyllou and G. Triantafyllou 1995). These vortices include both naturally occurring ones (e.g., where water hits a rock) and self-induced ones (created by well-timed tail flaps). The fish swims by building these externally occurring processes into the very heart of its locomotion routines. The fish and surrounding vortices together constitute a unified and remarkably efficient swimming machine.

Now consider a reliable feature of the human environment, such as the sea of words. This linguistic surround envelopes us from birth. Under such conditions, the plastic human brain will surely come to treat such structures as a reliable resource to be factored into the shaping of on-board cognitive routines. Where the fish flaps its tail to set up the eddies and vortices it subsequently exploits, we intervene in multiple linguistic media, creating local structures and disturbances whose reliable presence drives our ongoing internal processes. Words

and external symbols are thus paramount among the cognitive vortices which help constitute human thought.<sup>1</sup>

We must begin *somewhere where we are* [...] *Somewhere where we are*: in a text already where we believe we are.<sup>2</sup>

## On the Resonance among Things

Inconspicuous perceptions constitute the obscure dust of the world.<sup>3</sup>

From the inconspicuous he hits upon brightness.<sup>4</sup>

“Thinking,” Paul de Man is reported to have said, “is finding a good quotation.”<sup>5</sup> What makes de Man’s line a good quo-

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1 Andy Clark and David Chalmers, “The Extended Mind,” <http://consc.net/papers/extended.html>.

2 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 162. Author’s emphasis. Translation modified in accordance with that suggested in Geoffrey Bennington, *Legislations: The Politics of Deconstruction* (New York: Verso, 1994), 16.

3 Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 90.

4 Proverb, quoted and translated in Barry Allen, *Vanishing into Things: Knowledge in Chinese Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 2.

5 Paul de Man, quoted in Ian Balfour, “The Philosophy of Philology and the Crisis of Reading: Schlegel, Benjamin, de Man,” in *Philology and Its Histories*, ed. Sean Gurd (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2010), 210n40. Karen Olsson, *The Weil Conjectures: On Math and the Pursuit of the Unknown* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 113: “The Latin *cogito*, meaning ‘to think,’ derives from a prior meaning that is ‘to shake together,’ notes Hadamard in a footnote to his book. Augustine had observed as much, he writes, and also that *intelligo* means ‘to select among.’ Which is to say that cogitation is, at its verbal core, recombination and selection.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 111: “To think is to experiment, but experimentation is always that which is in the process of coming about — the new, remarkable, and interesting that replace the appearance of truth and are more demanding

tation? The questions it raises. To wit: What does—what might—thinking have to do with quotation? But also, and above all: What does it mean to “find” a good quotation? What is it one perceives, and how does one make it out?

“When the enemy first approaches,” writes Song dynasty military strategist Hsü Tung,

if the dust rises in streams but is dispersed, they are dragging brushwood. If it rises up like ears of grain and jumps about chaotically, chariots are coming. If the dust is thick and heavy, swirling and turbulent as it rises up, cavalry are coming. If it is low and broad, spreading and diffuse as it rises, infantry are advancing.

When the army is small and the dust is scattered and chaotic, it means the units are not closely ordered. If the troops

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than it is. What is in the process of coming about is no more what ends than what begins. History is not experimentation, it is only the set of almost negative conditions that make possible the experimentation of something that escapes history. Without history experimentation would remain indeterminate and unconditioned, but experimentation is not historical. It is philosophical.” Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 29: “Immanence is the unconscious itself, and the conquest of the unconscious”: “When ordinary people write, they begin from the outside and fight their way in; when I write, I start from the middle and fight my way out. I go straight for the enemy’s defenses and moat, eat his grain, and command his troops; then, when I level my attack, I leave him utterly shattered. In this way I do not expend so much as a whit of my own energy and naturally have powers to spare. This [strategy] applies to everything: why should writing be an isolated case?” Li Zhi, *A Book to Burn and A Book to Keep (Hidden): Selected Writings*, eds. and trans. Rivi Handler-Spitz, Pauline C. Lee, and Haun Saussy (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 245. Brackets translator’s. “The unconscious is not some darkened realm of forbidden items over which a brave reflective consciousness casts its beacon. Indeed, it often makes itself manifest most clearly in moments” — not unlike quotation — “when reflective consciousness is itself disrupted, thrown out of joint. By the time reflection can step back from this experience to consider it in its standard fashion, it has itself already been transformed by the disruption. [...] The question then becomes how to live well with this unusual form of self-development.” Jonathan Lear, *A Case for Irony* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 65–66.

are numerous but the dust clear, it means the units are well ordered and the general's commands systematic. If the dust rises to the front and the rear, left and right, it means they are employing their troops without any consistent method.

When the army moves and the dust rises in streaks without dispersing, or when the army halts and the dust also stops, it is because the general's awesomeness and virtue have caused the units to be strictly ordered. If when they decamp or set out their deployments dust rises up and flies off, mount defenses against those places where it originated because enemy forces will certainly be approaching in ambush there.<sup>6</sup>

What the author of the *Hu-ling Ching* describes in the chapter titled "Analyzing Dust" is what he elsewhere calls "the acumen of strategists": "penetrating the subtle amid unfolding change and discerning the concordant and contrary."<sup>7</sup> Or, as one commentator has glossed it, "*Penetrating the subtle* — seeing a lot in little things. *Discerning the concordant and contrary* — knowing the resonance among things, and how to amplify or dampen emerging tendencies."<sup>8</sup> Or again, "It is only when I look at the text with a certain inattentiveness, or when somebody else points out a phrase to me, that I am stopped short — as I finally notice and recognize the brilliance."<sup>9</sup>

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6 Hsü Tung, quoted and translated in Ralph D. Sawyer, *The Tao of Spycraft: Intelligence Theory and Practice in Traditional China* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2004), 451–52.

7 Hsü, quoted and translated in *ibid.*, 454.

8 Allen, *Vanishing into Things*, 3. Author's emphasis. Beck, quoted in Sean Murphy, *One Bird, One Stone: 108 American Zen Stories* (New York: Renaissance Books, 2002), 215: "With unfailing kindness, your life always presents what you need to learn." The question is, "What will you let yourself know?" Alexander Chee, *How to Write an Autobiographical Novel: Essays* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2018), 202.

9 Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009), 161–62. In a stray remark, but one made more than in passing, Giorgio Agamben equates thought and politics. Giorgio Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, trans. Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 98: "Thought — that is,

## On the Bridge over the Hao River

An army or a herd, or a river full of fish.<sup>10</sup>

So in a river there are many fishes and the liquid in each fish is, in turn, a certain kind of river which contains, as it were [*in quâ velut*], other fishes [...] to infinity.<sup>11</sup>

In *Being Singular Plural*, Jean-Luc Nancy defines philosophy as “surprised thought.”<sup>12</sup> It’s a surprising definition. What might it be for thought to be surprised? What might it be for thought to be something susceptible to surprise? And what might that mean for philosophy?

“Zhuangzi and Huizi were strolling along the bridge over the Hao River,” begins a famous episode from the eponymous Taoist classic, one widely thought to have been composed some time after the work first began to circulate. “Zhuangzi said, ‘The minnows swim about so freely, following the openings wherever they take them. Such

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politics.” Elsewhere Agamben has elaborated: “Every line of thinking, however pure, general or abstract it might endeavor to be, is always marked by its historical place, by signs of its times, and thus always engaged in a strategy and motivated by a sense of urgency.” Giorgio Agamben, quoted and translated in Leland de la Durantaye, “The Paradigm of Colonialism,” in *Agamben and Colonialism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 231. One of Agamben’s most astute commentators discusses these remarks sensitively at some length before concluding: “If thought is politics, then the freedom and potentiality which are the highest values of thought are also the highest ones of politics. For Agamben, it is thus in the name of this idea of politics that a strategy is to be formed whose aim is an ‘ungovernability’ which is our first home and true heritage.” *Ibid.*, 237.

- 10 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Philosophical Essays*, eds. and trans. Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1989), 142. I have substituted “river” for “pond.”
- 11 *Ibid.*, 105. I have substituted “river” for “fish pond.” For the Latin, see A. Foucher de Careil, *Nouvelles lettres et opuscules inédits de Leibniz* (Paris, 1857), 322, <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k940672/f551.image>.
- 12 Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 165.

is the happiness of fish.”

Huizi said, “You are not a fish, so whence do you know the happiness of fish?”

Zhuangzi said, “You are not I, so whence do you know I don’t know the happiness of fish?”

Huizi said, “I am not you, to be sure, so I don’t know what it is to be you. But by the same token, since you are certainly not a fish, my point about your inability to know the happiness of fish stands intact.”

Zhuangzi said, “Let’s go back to the starting point. You said, ‘Whence do you know the happiness of fish?’ Since your question was premised on your knowing that I know it, I must have known it from here, up above the Hao River.”<sup>13</sup>

Whatever else might be said about the dialogue, Zhuangzi’s right: Everything turns on “the starting point,” and so on the question, in Brook Ziporyn’s translation, “Whence do you know the happiness of fish?” Lucas Klein has suggested an alternate translation, at once more colloquial and more concrete: “Where do you get that, that the fish are happy?”<sup>14</sup>

Where *does* Zhuangzi get that, that the fish are happy? Where might you get that philosophy is “surprised thought”?

Somewhere unexpected — somewhere no more expected, that is, than that ingeniously pointed out by Zhuangzi in answer to an incredulous Huizi, stopped short, as if by an eddy of inattention, there where the two no doubt believe they are. Somewhere, reliably, “here,” as it were (*in quâ velut*),<sup>15</sup> already on

13 Zhuangzi, *Zhuangzi: The Essential Writings with Selections from Traditional Commentaries*, trans. and ed. Brook Ziporyn (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2009), 76. Ziporyn’s emphasis.

14 Lucas Klein, “Anarchist Anthropology, Happy Fish, and Translation: Where do you get that?” *Paper Republic: Chinese Literature in Translation*, February 11, 2014, <https://paper-republic.org/lucasklein/anarchist-anthropology-happy-fish-and-translation/>.

15 Fred Moten, *Stolen Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 227: “Intellectuality is fugitivity.” William James, quoted in Jim Holt, *When Einstein Walked with Gödel: Excursions to the Edge of Thought* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018), 213: “The connecting is the thinking”:

the argument's lead: "following the openings," happily singular plural,<sup>16</sup> "wherever they take us."

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"Like fish swimming in a medium of which they are unaware but that allows them to dart nimbly from one spot to another in the vast briny depths, we human beings float, without being aware of it, in a sea of tiny, medium-sized, and large analogies, running the gamut from dull to dazzling. And as it is the case for fish, it's only thanks to this omnipresent, unfelt medium that we can dart nimbly from one spot to another in the vast ocean of ideas." Douglas Hofstadter and Emmanuel Sander, quoted in Noah Roderick, *The Being of Analogy* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2016), 252.

- 16 "Plato's Socrates bequeathed at least two compelling ideals to the Western philosophical tradition. On the one hand, there is the ideal of following the argument where it leads. On the other, there is the ideal of appreciating the extent of one's own ignorance, the respects in which one's current knowledge and understanding are subject to profound limitations. These two ideals can interact in interesting ways." Thomas Kelly, "Following the Argument Where It Leads," *Philosophical Studies* 154, no. 1 (2011): 115.



## “Not the Flag Flying”: Negations, or, Note on Hegel’s “Absolute Knowledge”

No agreement exists as to the possibility of defining negation, as to its logical status, function, and meaning, as to its field of applicability.<sup>1</sup>

“The mystery of negation: This is not how things are, and yet we can say *how* things are *not*.”<sup>2</sup> To Wittgenstein’s “mystery” of negation it is perhaps apposite to juxtapose an observation of Goethe’s: “We’re only really thinking when we can’t think out fully what we are thinking about.”<sup>3</sup> Goethe’s use of negation, in other words, illuminates negation’s mystery: Might it not be the case that we cannot, in fact, say how things are not when, in its midst, *how* things are not is precisely what’s *not* there to say?

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- 1 F.H. Heinemann, quoted in Laurence R. Horn, *A Natural History of Negation* (Stanford: CSLI Publications, 2001), 1. See Rebecca Comay and Frank Ruda, *The Dash — The Other Side of Absolute Knowing* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2018).
  - 2 Ludwig Wittgenstein, quoted in Irad Kimhi, *Thinking and Being* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 9.
  - 3 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, quoted in James Geary, *Geary’s Guide to the World’s Great Aphorists* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2007), 277.

Or, more simply, what we can (perhaps) say: What might “the mystery of negation” give us to think, “fully”?

Kōan number twenty-nine of the *Wu-men Kuan*, “Not Wind Not Flag,” unfolds under the sign — a sign — not uncomplicated — of negation.

The Sixth Patriarch came because the dharma-talk flag was up at the monastery gate, beating there in the wind. He found two monks arguing. One said: “It’s the flag flying.” And the other said: “It’s the wind flying.” They argued back and forth, but couldn’t find an inner principle to agree on.

“It’s not the wind flying,” observed the Sixth Patriarch, “and it’s not the flag flying. It’s mind flying.”

The two monks grew silent, and a little fearful.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever else might be said about this kōan, one thing is certain: everything transpires under the dharma-flag. The flag not only sets the scene, summoning Huineng, the sixth patriarch, but as David Hinton observes, an unsettling implication unfurls with it: the flag’s use in or for the monastery, and so no less in or for the kōan, is “to indicate that a dharma-talk is imminent. Hence, an image for enlightened talk and ideas, which are not to be trusted.”<sup>5</sup> Perhaps then it would be prudent not to take the kōan at face value, nor the Sixth Patriarch at his word. In other words, perhaps “mind flying” should be understood not for what it appears to be — an attempt to settle the conflict between the monks — but for what it does: definitively unsettle it. If the problem appears to be that the monks “couldn’t find an inner principle to agree on,” in yet other words, perhaps this suggests that the real problem arises there where they were, in fact, in accord: in seeking one. If an “inner” “principle” can be said to be “found” at all — and can be said to be “one” — *this is not how things are*: The Sixth Patriarch, standing beneath the dharma-

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4 *No-Gate Gateway: The Original Wu-men Kuan*, trans. David Hinton (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2018), 70.

5 *Ibid.*, 119.

flag’s steady flutter, can perhaps therefore be understood *not* to have said *this is not how things are* when *how* things are not is elusively, if precisely, what *is* there — is *there*, unfolding, unremarked — to say. Between the fabric and the wind, overshadowing them, curiously, a mysterious standard can thus be thought to recast the flap between the monks.



## Save the Name: On Philosophy and Silence

Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.<sup>1</sup>

If philosophy can be defined at all, it is an effort to express things one cannot speak about.<sup>2</sup>

“Philosophy undoubtedly has something to do with the experience of silence”<sup>3</sup> — that much is clear. What’s not at all clear, however, is nevertheless not what you might think. The question, that is, is not about what philosophy has to do with silence. Rather, the question here is one of discretion (and so one as to how philosophy might live up to its name, as it comes down from the Greek, “the love of wisdom”): How might one begin to delineate the relationship between philosophy and silence, in words, without attempting to say what that relationship is?

“One day Subhūti, in a mood of sublime emptiness, was sitting under a tree. Flowers began to fall about him.

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1 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C.K. Ogden (New York: Cosimo, 2007), 108.

2 Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 101.

3 Giorgio Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, trans. Michael Sullivan and Sam Whitsitt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995) 111.

“We are praising you

for your discourse on emptiness,” the gods whispered to him.

“But I have not spoken of emptiness,” said Subhūti.

“You have not spoken of emptiness, we have not heard emptiness,” responded the gods. “This is the true emptiness.” And blossoms showered upon Subhūti as rain.<sup>4</sup>

A “discourse,” then, neither spoken nor heard, yet indubitably delivered, one recollected in a brief written record of a no less brief exchange, began at a whisper, in “this,” the “true emptiness,” a clue perhaps: “Philosophy,” not wisdom itself, but the love of it, whose propositions accumulate like blossoms, may perhaps be said to “succeed” — to succeed silence, worthy of it, its “experience” — only on condition that it “endures the without-name, without finding in this its own name.”<sup>5</sup>

The sheikh of the Khalvati order in Istanbul, Sünbül Efendi, in looking for a successor, sent his disciples forth to get flowers to adorn the convent. All of them returned with large bunches of lovely flowers; only one of them — Merkez Efendi — came back with a small, withered plant. When asked why he did not bring anything worthy of his master, he answered: “I found all the flowers busy recollecting the Lord — how could I interrupt this constant prayer of theirs? I looked, and lo, one flower had finished its recollection. That one I brought.” It was he who became the successor of Sünbül Efendi, and one of the cemeteries along the Byzantine wall of Istanbul still bears his name.<sup>6</sup>

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4 Paul Reps and Nyogen Senzaki, *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings* (North Clarendon: Tuttle Press, 1985), 60.

5 Agamben, *Idea of Prose*, 111.

6 Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 46. Schimmel relates that the story was told to her by friends in Turkey.

## Making It Explicit

Even those scribes who regard grammar as a noble tradition learned the intricacies of English not via stuffy edicts but through living, reading, listening, talking, and, most important, writing. Any formalization of such learning came only afterward, once the foundations of grammatical convention had been osmotically absorbed. It's like falling in love with someone: You can say you love them for  $x$  and  $y$  traits, but those reasons only articulated themselves after the feelings had formed. It doesn't mean the explanations are false; it's just that they didn't create the love.<sup>1</sup>

It is like pointing out a person across the room and saying, "Someday you'll love him." No help at all. I have to find my own way to him and into love.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 Jonathan Russell Clark, "Against Style Guides — Sort Of," *Vulture*, July 18, 2019, <https://www.vulture.com/2019/07/style-and-grammar-guides-wont-help-you-write-better.html>. Inger Christensen, *The Condition of Secrecy: Selected Essays*, trans. Susanna Nied (New York: New Directions, 2018), 32: "Language can't be separated from the world without separating the world from itself." 33: "Which makes it possible simultaneously to differentiate and to not differentiate between what *is* in what."
  - 2 Natalie Goldberg, *The Great Spring: Writing, Zen, and This Zigzag Life* (Boulder: Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2016), 153.

Aristotle claims that what is distinctive of metaphor, in addition to its peculiar “clarity,” is its conjunction of “sweetness and strangeness.”<sup>3</sup> What could be at once “sweeter” and “stranger” than love? And so inevitably the question (our question): How, after what fact or fashion, might metaphor be related to love? In other words, how is “falling in love” akin to metaphor? What’s the implicit comparison here, and is this a comparison “like” any other?

One of Kafka’s posthumously published fragments concerns a philosopher whose sole activity, as a philosopher, consists in giving chase to a child’s toy. “He believed that the understanding of any detail, that of a spinning top, for instance, was sufficient for the understanding of all things. For this reason he did not busy himself with great problems, it seemed to him uneconomical. Once the smallest detail was understood, then everything was understood, which was why he busied himself only with the spinning top.”<sup>4</sup> One commentator has doubted Kafka’s philosopher is motivated by the prospect of understanding, whether “of all things” or “the smallest detail.” On the contrary, it is alleged, the auspices of philosophy furnish him only “pretexts for running after tops.”<sup>5</sup> What the commentator’s otherwise astute suggestion fails to take into account, however, is—a minor detail—how the fragment, and so the narrative, ends: “The screaming of the children, which hitherto he had not heard and

3 Aristotle, quoted in Heather Altfeld and Rebecca Diggs, “Sweetness and Strangeness,” *Aeon*, July 1, 2019, <https://aeon.co/essays/metaphors-grow-the-mind-and-feed-the-soul-dont-lose-them>.

4 Franz Kafka, “The Top,” in *The Complete Stories*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, trans. Willa Muir et al. (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 444. What is in what, indeed. This analysis, for example—and not only for example—“does not signify an operation of the intellect external to the thing, but an operation of the thing internal to the intellect.” That is, “Explication is always a self-explication, a development, an unfolding, a dynamism: the thing explains itself.” Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, trans. Robert Hurley (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1988), 68.

5 Anne Carson, quoted in Karen Olsson, “The Pursuit of the Unknown,” *Bookforum*, July 24, 2019, <https://www.bookforum.com/culture/an-excerpt-from-the-weil-conjectures-23574>.

which now suddenly pierced his ears, chased him away, and he tottered like a top under a clumsy whip.”<sup>6</sup>

How alike are these two comparisons (for clarity and sweetness and strangeness)—the fate of one who, as though entranced, of a sudden startles and totters “like” a top, and what it’s “like” to fall in love?

Or is that no help at all?

Too clumsy a whip?

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6 Kafka, “The Top,” 444. “It’s the tension between what’s inevitable and what’s random, the juxtaposition of what I know and don’t know — what I call thought — that decides my concept of reality. This, I imagine, is what allows the world to see what it’s imagining.

“It’s these spiraling conclusions, and the way they never conclude, that make me think what I ultimately want to express is this: human beings have no choice but to imagine something more or less indefinite, as an expression of something definite we can’t imagine.” Christensen, *The Condition of Secrecy*, 116.



## Index of Questions: Map, or Territory?

Here's another way to put it: maps describe places where people have already been in order to show others how to get there. Fiction is made of maps to places no one has ever seen, and when we all arrive at our destinations, none of us end up in the same place.<sup>1</sup>

SO WHAT'S THE STORY with story?

What makes story so fascinating, and how—by virtue of what—does story so exceed statement?

If Parable “clothes” Truth, if Parable is at one and the same time s/he who clothes Truth and the clothing itself, how do you picture Parable?

Amid a flourish of “beautiful colors,” what figure does Parable cut?

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Russell Clark, “Here Be Dragons: On Literary Cartography,” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, October 20, 2015, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/here-be-dragons-on-literary-cartography/>.

That is, might not one of the difficulties here reside in the question of whether there's a certain "logic," however unexpected, to what remains logically unexpected?

In other words, what is the relationship between logic and expectation — and expectations of relevance, not least?

In what sense, if any, might the unexpected comprise "a" logic of its own, and (more importantly) in what might its exercise consist?

What might it be for thought to be surprised?

What might it be for thought to be something susceptible to surprise?

How does "transcendental" modify "clue"?

And what might that mean for philosophy?

The question here is therefore one of discretion (and so one as to how philosophy might live up to its name, as it comes down from the Greek, "the love of wisdom"): How might one begin to delineate the relationship between the map (or "map," a kind of map) of the unknown and the territory, in words, without attempting to say in what that relationship consists?

And so inevitably the question (our question): How, after what fact or fashion, might metaphor be related to love?

In other words, how is "falling in love" akin to metaphor? What's the implicit comparison here, and is this a comparison "like" any other?

How alike are these two comparisons (for clarity and sweetness and strangeness) — the fate of one who, as though entranced, of

a sudden startles and totters “like” a top, and what it’s “like” to fall in love?

By what criterion — what demarcation — subsequent to what passage or pursuant to what possible experience can you tell a story apart from a clue — and the clue given (the lie) in or by the story from philosophy?

Or is that no help at all?

Too clumsy a map?



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