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### Interview With Richard Eldridge

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## *Interview with Richard Eldridge*

*Desmond:* Talking to Richard on the way over, I proposed that our discussion would focus on the theme of autonomy and embeddedness or relatedness. This is a recurrent concern in all of Richard's writing. I thought it would be a good idea to look at this issue of autonomy and embeddedness in a variety of different forms, in relation to different philosophers that have influenced the work of Richard, but also in a variety of different domains such as ethics, aesthetics or literature, romanticism. In the latter the question of the interplay between art and religion also comes up as a very important consideration. Another central theme in Richard's work is the tension between aspiration and disappointment, between longing and the failure to reach a desired completion. Disappointment and the fact of failure are not, I would say, absolutized. Disappointment becomes the occasion of a possible renewal of striving or aspiration rather than marking a sceptical outcome in a merely negative sense. But perhaps the first question to be put today is: How might you describe your own philosophical background, the sources of your work, some of the dominant influences that have shaped it and perhaps some of the major concerns that have come to expression?

*Eldridge:* Perhaps I can say something useful about the sources and background by responding first to the thought that I became interested in the combination of autonomy and embeddedness. When I was in graduate school and as an undergraduate even, it was common to think of Kant as a deontological moral theorist and to draw a very strong distinction between deontological and teleological moral theories. Kant, I was taught, told us that the most important thing was duty and that besides duty there was a lot of stuff that was permissible. Duty or considerations of duty function as side constraints on the pursuit of worthwhile ends of human life. And there was

nothing particular, so I was taught, to be said about which ends it was worthwhile to pursue. So Kant was thought to have rationalized the modern liberal form of life in which we need side constraints on our actions for the sake of social peace but other than that we're pretty much on our own, with no end of human life appointed for us by reason or by anything else. The strongest form of this criticism of Kant came in MacIntyre's 1981 book *After Virtue* in which he charges modern liberal culture with having no account of the good and with failing to understand that the virtues are pursued only in textured detail within specific practices. MacIntyre argued that liberalism mistook the so-called secondary virtues of truthfulness, justice and courage for the primary ones, leaving us with no morality of aspiration or no sense of how to cultivate ourselves in human life at all. His thought was that we needed to go back to Aristotle for a morality of cultivation.

I was very sympathetic to this idea about the importance of aspiration and cultivation in human life. My sense of that, of the importance of that, comes I think from a much more primitive, less academic sense of the importance of art in human life. I found myself in the past, from adolescence on, identifying with artistic gestures in music, in painting, in poetry, feeling that works of music and painting and poetry and novels had a substantive moral communicative effect. They opened up for me ways of looking at things, so I thought that there must be something to this idea of moral cultivation, something to the dawning in oneself of a sense of orientation in life. As my studies of Kant and my interests in the arts came together, I found myself led to the *Critique of Judgment* and to the thought that actually in Kant's texts there's a far stronger and more articulate morality of aspiration than is indicated in the caricature picture of Kant that MacIntyre was attacking. So I focused from that point on the *Critique of Judgment* and on the so-called histori-



cal and anthropological essays, particularly the 'Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View' and the 'Conjectural Beginning of Human History.'

In the last ten years or so there's been enormously strong work on the connection between Kant's anthropology and philosophy of history on the one hand and his moral philosophy on the other. Numbers of commentators have looked at how in Kantian terms the work of human beings in culture is to create and sustain a moral life of freedom among themselves. So my work on the arts and on the role of art in the creating and sustaining of a culture draws its inspiration from this enriched Kantian background, from the thought that conscientiousness, self-consciousness, and duty do matter but that one must bring together with those concerns a strong morality of aspiration. As for other sources of influence, the importance of autonomy for me, of taking responsibility for one's own life and judgement in cognitive terms, has always been very strongly signaled for me by Descartes' *Meditations*. I found that a very powerful and persuasive and liberating work in a way. I think that Descartes' own notorious rejection of history and culture are quite suspect. In one preface to a dialogue called 'The Search After Truth,' he writes that 'a good man has no need to have read every book nor to have carefully learned all that which is taught in the schools,' when his own reason ought to teach him what he ought to do with himself. So there is a rejection of the idea that our aspirations are properly articulated, inherited and revised in the course of our cultural life. But the moment of contributing oneself originally to the articulation of an aspiration in Descartes' is very strong, and I think his claim to liberate the human subject in its orientation toward the world expresses a deep aspiration. What I'm interested in, then, is how that effort to achieve originality plays itself out against the background of culture.

D: Maybe we can come back again shortly to the

question of Kantian autonomy and also Descartes, an interesting coupling in relation to the theme of aspiration and autonomy. But I'd like to ask you first about Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein has been a major influence in your work and your most recent book *Leading a Human Life: Wittgenstein Intentionality and Romanticism* offers a very extended discussion relative to this afternoon's conversation, situating the theme in relation to German philosophy, German romanticism. But perhaps you might say something about Wittgenstein on that score. My first thought would not be to think of Wittgenstein as a philosopher that could be handled under the rubric of autonomy and embeddedness and the tension between them. Perhaps that's because Wittgenstein is so difficult to classify, so singular as a thinker that a more general thematic is somewhat hard to name. Does your own concern with our present theme find expression in how you read Wittgenstein?

E: Very much; there has been for a long time a tendency to read Wittgenstein as a kind of communitarian theorist of mind and language. This is the line on the later Wittgenstein of Saul Kripke's notorious little book. It is probably the clearest expression of this temptation.

D: You get very irritated with Kripke in your book!

E: I do. From very early on it seemed to me that this can not be right. I responded to the *Investigations* as an achievement of human voice in its agonies of aspiration and its difficulties of realization in culture. What I mean by this is that in the communitarian reading Wittgenstein's *Investigations* are held to offer us two voices: an epistemological voice, seeking certainties, seeking to know the nature of thought and the primitive objects of experience, whether these are metaphysical, material objects on the one hand or perhaps private sense-data on the other. And a correcting second voice which emphasizes that



we come to have a conceptual life only in so far as we share practices and rules within practices with others. The communitarian reading holds that this second voice stands in final authority or correction of the first voice. Very early on, and I should mention partly under the influence of Stanley Cavell who sees things in similar terms, it seemed to me that that is not right, not faithful to the achievement of the text as a piece of writing. For me, what was striking was the endlessness of the text, in a way that the second voice's corrections and chastisements of the first more epistemological voice never quite ended in closure, never yielded a doctrine about the nature of knowledge. There was no clear assertion of epistemic communitarianism anywhere in the text, I thought, so that I began to read the two voices as internal to Wittgenstein himself, that is, as two sides of his own wish to think out for himself how to lead an original life against the background of culture. It's worth noticing that there are some striking things to be said in favour of the standpoint of the first voice after all. Human beings develop language and thought and other beings, dogs and parakeets and chimpanzees, don't or at least not in the same way. There must be some kind of contribution to our cognitive life that comes from us, and it's a natural matter or cause for philosophical interest and curiosity to wonder what that contribution is, to try to nail it down, to figure out in what the essence of human mindedness consists. I see that curiosity as not admitting of being rooted out in favour of some image of pastoral domesticity without epistemic ambition once and for all. And so that's my sense of the interest of the text, of how it both voices that aspiration and its criticism at the same time, without ending in any definite moment of doctrinal conclusion.

*D:* Could we pursue this point you made about the two voices of Wittgenstein, as internal to Wittgenstein. I think it's an interesting question. Again we return to our theme of autonomy and

embeddedness. I think what you're saying is correct about Wittgenstein: we have a number of voices here and Wittgenstein dramatizes their tension, their opposition, their potential resolutions, their failures to agree with each other and so forth. Indeed in your book you talk about problems connected to Wittgenstein's writerliness. But *Philosophical Investigations* has always struck me as, in a way, a man talking to *himself*. I mean: while there are a number of different voices, all of them in some regard are Wittgenstein's voice. Perhaps a different sense of embeddedness in a community of many voices seems to be an aspiration for Wittgenstein but as a reader one doesn't actually feel the robust presence of the voices of others. At least, this is part of my experience as a reader of the text. I'm supposed to be interviewing so I shouldn't go on too long, but when I read Cavell, for example, he makes me more interested about Wittgenstein's text. When I read you, you make me more interested in reading, in going back to Wittgenstein again. I am brought back to Wittgenstein by *another*. Just reading Wittgenstein cold, so to say, does not bring me into the passion of his own seeking, in the way that readers (like you and Cavell) help to do. My point would be something like this: in terms of the theme of autonomy and embeddedness, could you make it clear that for all the surface of the communitarian Wittgenstein, his very practice as a philosopher testifies, or at least makes one wonder, if this is a thinker bound up in his own solitude, arguing with his solitude, trying to get outside his solitude. There's a certain autonomy yes, but at a deeper level, a kind of tormented pathway that Wittgenstein is trying to draw for himself towards recommencement in a different embeddedness in community. His philosophical resources show a kind of dramatic model of thinking, but in a way that paradoxically gives the lie to a merely communitarian reading of Wittgenstein.

*E:* I think it's true that Wittgenstein will not be



to everyone's taste and to a considerable extent for the reasons you mentioned. His conversation with himself does sometimes seem perhaps too solipsistic, too little a part of the conversation of a wider community. I'm not without some appreciation of the force of that criticism for him. What I mean by his writerliness, however, is that he allows his conversation with himself to be free of guidance by any kind of method that yields results. He wishes to know how and why it is that I am minded and capable of an independent point of view on things. It doesn't count for him as an answer to say 'I just happen to be a human being born in a culture.' He wants a deeper answer than that, because he's concerned to try to sublime away the risks of repudiation and the fact of human responsibility, just as I think Descartes in his *Meditations* tried to sublime away human responsibility by offering us, in the clarity and distinctness rule, a rule for the acquisition of knowledge such that if we followed it, we could never make a mistake. That's a very, very strong claim.

Part of one's interest in Wittgenstein will probably depend on how deeply one feels that Cartesian temptation to be free of human risk and responsibility, by having on hand a method for controlling judgement absolutely, so that we never make a mistake. I have felt that temptation, perhaps in my sense of belatedness or difficulty in inheriting culture. I have wanted that kind of guidance that an epistemological criterion of absolute knowledge could give, and so I find myself drawn in to Wittgenstein's solipsism, or his conversation with himself.

There are numbers of attractions about this for me: one is its endlessness. I think that it's actually a very strong conversation with himself to the extent that there just is no definite moral or doctrine about the nature of mindedness that emerges. Second, and here again I've been very influenced by Stanley Cavell, once one sees this kind of conversation going on in Wittgenstein and sees him as caught up in this kind of concern to sub-

lime away risks and human responsibilities, one begins to see a concern something like that played out in many literary texts: for Cavell many of the texts of Shakespeare, particularly *Othello*; for me some texts of Romanticism. So it offers strong terms for entering into what's going on in the motivations of some of the characters in literature who are most significant in our cultural imagination. Third, I would say that Wittgenstein is to some extent an early 20th century figure. He writes as a modernist philosopher in an interesting sense. As Peter Burger has outlined the history of artistic culture, in a wonderful little book, what tends to happen in European culture in the 19th and 20th centuries is a movement away from Romanticism strictly so called, that is to say, from the idea that the poet or other artist shall function as a kind of prophet whose message shall be fully received socially, toward a sense of disappointment and repudiation by the public's failure of reception, thus motivating a kind of inward turn to art for art's sake or a kind of psychological turn. I think Wittgenstein, and certainly his own artistic taste confirms this, was himself very sceptical about the conditions of public taste and culture that he encountered and that, in addition to the general human wish to sublime away risk and responsibility, that cultural scepticism also motivated I think the somewhat inward looking character of his conversation with himself. I think there's nothing dishonourable about it. It has its cultural condition and its intrinsic interest alike

*D:* Maybe we can come back later to that question of art in the 19th century, into the 20th century. One of the questions I would hope to put concerns art's own desire to be autonomous; this produces precisely the result that art loses its embeddedness in a richer culture; in a certain sense there's a self-fulfilling dynamic by means of which the culture rejects what has already set itself apart, perhaps even in superiority from the general culture. So you could claim that Roman-



tic and post-Romantic art live the destiny of autonomous art which finds itself beached, so to say, devoid of relations. Then it goes on to blame the philistinism of modern culture for what is, in part, self-produced.

But first this: there's a word you used which I found very interesting: 'sublime away.' It's a very interesting term, but as you use 'sublime away,' it seems to indicate what I would call a desire for a certain univocity in which all the ambiguities of life are overcome. This is absolutely appropriate to our topic. But you could say that the sublime produces exactly the opposite of 'subliming away': it shows the very insecurity of the human being within the whole. The Romantic experiences the sublime in a very ambiguous way, not at all in the sense of 'subliming away' as you seem to use this term. I take the experience of the sublime precisely to rock us back upon our own lack of mastery of the situation, rather than conferring on us that control so sought after by Descartes and some other modern thinkers.

*E:* It's a very powerful and interesting line of thought.

*D:* Where does this idiom come from?

*E:* I think that this is also in Cavell, I think in an essay called 'Being Odd, Getting Even.' But what it carries to me is this sense of the lifting from our shoulders of a kind of burden of being open to the judgement of others and standing under their gaze. Now this want to be free of that burden has quite arguably two different contending sources. One is that it's a quite primitive wish that appears in childhood. Children are very dependent beings. They don't know how to do things, and their sense of what life is all about depends very much on the approval of other people. So it's a very natural wish in children to be told the rules for doing such-and-such: the rules for doing well on school examinations, the

rules for doing well at sport, as though if you just had the right rules you could be freed from that kind of dependency and enter into full adulthood. Put that way, the wish to have authoritative rules for cultural performance seems to be a wish that we should outgrow, seems to be something characteristic of childhood dependencies as opposed to maturity's acknowledgment that there are no such rules available to guide cultural performance. But there's a second source to this wish also, I think. In my most recent work I've been following out the source of this wish in the terms of Kant's discussion of the fact of reason. That is the thought in Kant that human beings are the kind of beings who are capable of asking about their own judgements and contemplated courses of action, 'Is this something I really ought to do?' If there is a perennial human possibility of asking that kind of question that's built into the structure of consciousness, then the effort to find the terms in which to answer that question is not going to be an effort that it is easy to give up. So I would point to the wish for rules that would absolutely guide us in our cultural performances, whether cognitive, practical or artistic, as having these two different sources. In my own work instead of trying to fill in in detail and absolutely the terms of the realization of that wish, I've pointed rather to its endlessness and to how the wish expresses both a sense of dependency and a sense of openness to the force of reason at the same time.

*D:* How do you respond to the line of thought that one of the characteristics of the modern quest for autonomy or definition of autonomy is deeply connected with a desire for rules that are as univocal as possible. Again I'm thinking of your remarks earlier on Descartes and the title of another one of his books *Rules for the Regulation of the Mind*. I see in Descartes certainly a desire for autonomy; but the usually unregulated use of the mind is not going to give us the autonomy we seek; we need the method and we need rules to



provide us with mathematical univocity in an otherwise equivocal universe; indeed our own equivocity as human beings has to be mastered. So the quest for autonomy guiding itself by rational rules might well be seen, not as conducive to a rich sense of social embeddedness but might generate rather something quite different. Why do I want the rules? I want the rules because I want to be master of my equivocal domain. Why do I want to be master of my equivocal domain? Because in the end I want power over it's equivocity. This fits in with your use of the term, or Cavell's use, 'subliming away.' In fact, it's not really subliming at all, it's reductive, if you think of the sublime as elevating us to something that is unmastered. 'Subliming away' in the Cavellian sense is actually the desire to reduce the rich matrix of equivocity to our rules, to what we rule. And is the modern quest for autonomy easy to disentangle from that quest for rules, not only the rules that stand over one, but rule over oneself?

*E:* It's certainly not easy to disentangle. I would enter first just as a cautionary reminder the thought that, while it's true that in modernity the quest for autonomy, exemplified at least in Descartes, takes the form of a search for rules, and epistemic rules in particular, very strongly, the quest for autonomy and for the full realization of openness to the force of reasons is not solely a modern preoccupation. There are certainly versions of it in Plato. So I think that it is a quest to which beings in many cultures, not just modern cultures, are open first of all. The substantive point is that I'm not myself clear in your terminology perhaps what a picture of living in equivocity and in acknowledgement of equivocity really looks like. One of the ways I can put my reserve about this and motivate the thought that the quest for autonomy, for the full realization of openness to the force of reasons, (which is perhaps expressed in a certain way in modern art's quest for autonomy from other forms of practice)

is by talking for a moment about Tolstoi. Tolstoi was a figure who, late in his life after writing his great novels, wrote not only 'What is Art?', but numbers of other short stories in which he tried to give expression to the shared religious sentiment of mankind. I think in most people's accounts, at least in mine, these late stories and the essay 'What is Art?' are much less interesting than Tolstoi's novels. I have in mind the quests in different ways in Anna Karenina of Levin to try to find a condition of human life in which he would be at peace, a condition that he imagines the Russian peasants might be living in, so he's continually tempted to try to work in the fields and eat black bread and sit in the sunshine and so forth. Or it's almost inversion and double at the same time: the quest of Anna to realize her passion, to break free of the constraints that a woman must suffer in 19th century Russian society, perhaps to give expression to what turns out to be her own wish for intense experience. I think we identify much more with figures like Levin and Anna than we do with the simpler pastoral figures that the later Tolstoi wished to enter as record of full human accomplishment. It's this — the real tornness of human being in being open to the appeal of the force of reasons, yet not knowing how to realize that appeal — that's what really interests me.

*Bart Pattyn:* It goes without saying that it is impossible for us to participate in tradition-bound societies without critical distance or to pretend that there is no such a thing as disenchantment. So we are indeed more interested in Levin's and Anna's wrestling with the conditions of their time, although it seems that we do not show our interest because their passions are more humane than those of the Russian serfs, but because their passions happen to be our own passions.

William's critique of the use of the term 'subliming away' for the attempt of the human individual to justify oneself in no way implies a plea to return to some pastoral naiveté. It simply



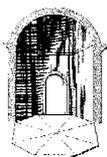
means that when people intend to justify their personal life as autonomous, they cannot argue from the complexity and ambivalence of existence and do not stand open to what Desmond could call 'grace'. It is no accident that I use this religious term, because, as you were discussing the 'sublime' character of the individual's attempt to take responsibility for shaping a courageous and autonomous life, I could not help thinking about what Paul wrote to the Romans about the law. Granted this letter concerns a difficult text with a variety of interpretations, but the basic idea which is expressed in this text (if we can believe Rudolf Bultmann) is that Paul is explaining that the use of the law to justify oneself has a 'sinful' character. *Autodikaiosis* demonstrates a lack of trust in God, a lack of faith. It implies a refusal to allow God to circumscribe one's heart, a refusal to place oneself trustfully in God's hands. And this implies therefore that one does not leave oneself open to the grace of God's Spirit. Have you yourself ever made a connection between your philosophical position and this theological explanation?

*E:* It's a very interesting question. I guess I think of Protestantism as in part the thought that leading our religious life is a continual problem of human conscientiousness, a continual problem of giving oneself over to the divine or of accepting its force. Here I think human beings find themselves caught between the need for standing rules or laws and cultural order on the one hand and possibilities of improvisatoriness on the other hand. So it's interesting that Jesus says two things. He says in one place that he comes not to abolish the law but to fulfil the law every jot and tittle. Of course the notion of the law's needing fulfilling is already a criticism perhaps of a kind of Jewish tradition. Still the idea that Jewish practice is to be fulfilled by Jesus is not, I think, off the mark. Yet when asked by the lawyer what we must do to save ourselves, he tells the parable of the Good Samaritan. That is a story of human

responsiveness to an ethical demand in a particular, immediate situation that is free of, even runs against the requirements of, a settled religious community. The Samaritan responds out of humanity to humanity. I'm interested very much in how religious traditions help us to negotiate those two needs: the need for rules, laws, settled cultural order on the one hand and the importance of original, improvisatory human responsiveness to the human on the other hand. The sort of Protestant stance that I'm prepared to affirm is less interested in what you might call theological doctrine, that is, the reality of the fact of the existence of God, as a being that's somehow like but also of course different from finite beings. I don't have that kind of theological interest, so much as an interest in the text of the Bible as a story of continual human efforts to negotiate those two needs. I find that story deeply revealing and important, and I accept the idea that we can hope, even rationally must hope, in the long run *Deo volente*, for the unity of the virtues in a unified culture. What I mean is that we can hope that the best things that human beings can be and do shall not leave them ultimately at odds with one another, but in a condition of social peace. That's what I take to be exemplified in the prayer that Thy Kingdom come, so there's a kind of deep religious aspiration there.

*B:* As you know the interpretation of justification by faith or by works led to the initial break between Protestants and Catholics. Whoever asserts that through regulations and moral judgements one can find a 'sublime way' to attempt to justify oneself in the midst of the ambivalence of existence, would seem to be taking a Catholic position. How do you react to this as a Protestant?

*E:* These are enormous generalizations and I don't know enough about the history of religion to be able to affirm a picture of what Catholicism as a whole holds. It's sometimes said to me by my Catholic friends that the great strength of



Catholicism is that at least it has social tradition and a picture of human community and the Protestant tradition does not. Well that never seemed to me to be quite right about the Protestant tradition, and I'm sure that the thought that the Catholics are trying too much simply through rules to engineer the inauguration of a moral religious culture is probably not quite right to Catholicism either. What interests me again are the terms of the effort, how it is that human beings are caught up in this. Paul is a very interesting figure, in that Paul is both the exemplar of the most striking kind of immediate human conversion to openness to the will of God and at the same time the man through whose letters the official church is by and large instituted. So he himself combines in his person as it were the notions of institutional authority and institutional order with his singular openness to God's call. That is a very tricky act. I'm interested in how human communities have tried to pull off that act themselves over the long course of human history.

*D:* Maybe we can come back to that question of the religious again. I want to talk about Kantian autonomy but there is a connection with your reference to Tolstoi. Let us say this: when Tolstoi was a certain kind of artist, you might say that the images of life he offers us show a kind of open dwelling in the equivocality of human existence. When he becomes a preacher, his tolerance for that equivocality decreases dramatically, and he reformulates the Gospel along more rationalized lines, very much continuously with desires in the 19th century to make the Gospel more 'rational.' I was thinking of Shestov who despised Tolstoi: in the end he felt that behind Tolstoi's appeal to morality was a kind of a secret will to power; that the law of Tolstoi's 'gospel' becomes Tolstoi's law, it becomes his rule, it becomes his will to rule. We come to the question, related to Bart's: whether one's own sense of self-justification before the law not only may close one out from the aesthetic equivocality of life, but also

from the religious ambiguity of divine grace. So Tolstoi embodies a tale which can bring us back to Kant. Clearly you express more sympathy, I think, for the earlier Tolstoi, but you didn't want to renege on what comes to appearance in the later Tolstoi.

*E:* That's right, I do think that Shestov's criticism as you describe it seems to be largely right. There is a turn towards a kind of preacherliness in the later Tolstoi that does seem to function as a mask for will to power, in another language, as a way of embodying the claim on Tolstoi's part to have arrived at full and unambiguous authority over the courses of culture. This seems to me to be a way of both exempting himself from the human plight and claiming to have mastered it, a way of which I'm very suspicious. And yet the aspiration to something like a moral culture, an aspiration I said I was prepared to profess a kind of faith in — a faith in its realizability, *Deo volente*, in the fullness of time not through our own unaided efforts — is something I do take very seriously. What this has led me to more recently is the question: 'If we are so caught up in equivocality, in your language, or in my own peculiar terms so caught up in the quest of trying to bring our human powers to full realization and yet we are always faced with disappointment and frustration, or in your terms the persistence of equivocality, then how is it possible to come to any kind of peace with oneself, to any sense of what I following Heidegger call gratitude in one's life?' This is actually the topic on which my Wittgenstein book ends, the topic of gratitude.

*D:* I should say that the equivocality of life is absolutely fundamental as far as I'm concerned. But simply reasserting the equivocality as equivocality is not what I want to propose at all. It's more a way of listening to or reading what is communicated in and through equivocality, and not either a return to a fixed univocalizing stance, or contrariwise having a Hegelian dialectic which

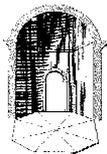


also does not do enough justice to the ambiguities of our situation. Gratitude is extremely fundamental in what I would like to pursue also, but it brings us, it seems to me, to the limits of autonomy. Gratitude also brings us into the neighbourhood of happenings like grace.

*E:* Just to read a few sentences from near the very end of my book: I think of gratitude as achievable and sustainable through an exercise of what I call remembrance, in German *Erinnerung* rather than *Gedächtnis*, in Greek *anamnesis* rather than *mneme*. That is, one recalls one's own life as an instance of a kind of human life in general, of the presence of human power in life in general, where the sun shines on the just and the unjust alike and continues to do so. When one remembers one's own particular life, as one among many human lives, there can arise what I call here toward the end of my book 'a sense of self-collection, of stillness or suspension within an open-ended process without clear beginning in the given, without obvious end, of the articulation and exercise of expressive ability. In its location as a moment of suspension or stillness within such an open process of leading a life, such a remembrance also involves a sense of its own situatedness and transitoriness. It is a moment of self-recollection of one's impersonal human identity as intentionally conscious, involving natural powers specifically articulated through engagement with public practice. Such a moment is achieved in partial withdrawal from such engagements, but only partial, and only passing, since they structurally enable one's articulate, expressive human life.' This kind of moment of recollection, culminating in gratitude for the fact of one's having had a human life, is exactly what I'll be talking about tonight, describing Hölderlin's thoughts as he stands on the bridge overlooking the river in Heidelberg.

*D:* I'm very sympathetic to what you're saying. But maybe we could shift over again to Kant in a

slightly different way. In your first book *On Moral Personhood*, you speak of your view as a kind of 'Hegelianized Kantianism,' partly to make a gesture towards embeddedness in the social ethos. If I'm not mistaken, and given our conversations, the Hegelianized aspect of the Kantianism is muted in your more recent work and a different Kant, especially of the essays on history, is more strongly asserted. But the other Kant, the Kant that fascinates and repels me, let's call it the Kant who in modernity reproduces a kind of Christian Stoicism, this Kant is becoming muted also. What I mean by that Christian Stoicism is: I think of Stoics as those who distinguish what is within our power, and what is not within our power; and what is within our power is what concerns us; the image of a certain self-sufficiency in one's moral being is central; but one of the implications of moral self-sufficiency is also the reluctance to be in debt to anything other than oneself. So I wend my way back to the issue of gratitude. As you know, classically Kant's definition of what is essentially moral does work with a very strong contrast between autonomy and heteronomy. Any kind of heteronomy runs the risk of corrupting the purity of the moral. Your Kant is clearly one in whom the autonomous and heteronomous interlink with each other. But one could point to many places in Kant, perhaps a more standard Kant, where to be self-governing, to be self-legislating is counterposed to (call it) any ethics of submission to others. Kant clearly thinks that any form of submission is incompatible with the moral dignity of the human being. Now again it is complicated because, of course, there is a certain obedience to the moral law; but it is within the domain of autonomy that obedience to the moral law seems to take form. We come back to the question of the law: Is there then room for something like gratitude; or the grace to be in relation to the other; and this not in the form of an abject debt, but as actually having been given something of oneself from the other, a gift which only recol-



lectively one recognizes as allowing one to be free. In other words, are you making up a Kant that is really running the edges of Kant - using certain suggestive parts in Kant's work but in a manner that really breaks with or moves beyond Kantianism?

*E:* There are a number of threads here I'd like to pick up: to begin with the thought that I was younger once. I probably have, I certainly have, less interest now in defending a Hegelianized Kantianism as a form of moral theory. The reason for that is that I've been trying to free myself of theory mongering, and offering Hegelianized Kantianism as one more solution to the problem of human life that just happens to be better than either utilitarianism or existentialism or Kantianism seems to me not to do much good. I mean the thought that one should walk around in the world carrying little signs saying 'I'm a Hegelianized Kantian' does not seem to me to be very helpful. So that's part of the reason for drifting away from the idea that Kantianism is a definite theory of the moral life to be defended. A second reason for the somewhat diminished presence of Hegel in my recent work is the fact that there is a much richer Kant available now as a result of scholarship. I don't think it's quite right that Kant is concerned only with the voice of stern duty. In fact in the *Religion* he explicitly criticizes the Stoics and defends Epicurus for cultivating a kind of cheerful enjoyment of life. Now Kant is certainly not an Epicurean. It's rather that for him cheerfulness in the doing of our duty and the realization of our human capacities is part of what it is to be open to the force of reason in one's life.

*D:* As you know yourself, he makes the distinction between what he calls anthropology on the one hand, and morality in the stricter sense.

*E:* He does indeed.

*D:* One of the issues concerning the stability of the Kantian system is how you get from one to the other. 'Anthropology' brings one down once again into the equivocal matrix, where cheerfulness has its ethical significance also

*E:* I think Kant is quite aware of all that. It is true that the moral law has objective and binding force, independently of any anthropological or empirical considerations. To that extent, what Kant calls pure moral philosophy is independent of anthropology or subjective or impure moral philosophy, but Kant never wavered in the thought that an account of the realizability of that pure moral philosophy in human life was desperately important to give. He lectured on anthropology every year for roughly 30 years, and he both wrote about and contributed to pedagogical debates in his time. Even the preface to the *Critique of Pure Reason* talks about the role of philosophy as critical self-discipline in a coming renovation of culture. So there's a very important sense in which Kant's own concerns as a philosopher were centred around the idea that it was his job to reform the culture from within, not only from without: that is to speak to the culture as it stands and to point the way to the proper exercise of reason within cultural life, not in absolute commanding authority over it. So I do think that the recent Kant scholarship that's brought out the essential interconnection between the pure moral philosophy and the impure moral philosophy has been very important, focusing as I said on the historical essays and the *Critique of Judgment*. One could note that in the *Critique of Teleological Judgment* there's actually a brief discussion — my reference here is Akademie 445 to 446 — of the naturalness of gratitude as a human feeling. Kant is even aware of things like that.

*D:* However, the notion of 'naturalness' is very ambiguous in Kant, because if it is natural, it is not moral, in the proper Kantian sense. There's a natural sympathy for a child crying; I feel sympa-



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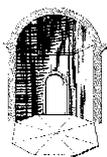
thy for their pain but that's 'pathological.' But there's also a practical sympathy which has its definition within the purity of the moral domain. So there is a natural gratitude, but a moral gratitude? Is there a moral gratitude?

*E:* He says that man needs a moral intelligence, a God, because man exists for an end, and this end and its realizability require a being that formed both him and the world with that end, his end, in view. It is a waste of labour to go behind these feelings for motives, for they are immediately connected with the purest moral sentiment: gratitude, obedience, and humility. So in Kant's understanding gratitude is a moral sentiment.

*D:* How would you respond to this line of argumentation that there is a God in Kant, but it's a God that comes in to the system at a certain point, because without this supersensible beyond the whole moral structure risks collapse. Consider his doctrine of the *summum bonum*; there is the need for a convergence between happiness and virtue; because the good are often not happy in this life, but they morally merit happiness, we have to project an idea of the convergence of happiness and virtue into the next life, and God has to be the ground that guarantees this projected unity of happiness and virtue. My point would not be to deny the rich suggestiveness of thinking about God via the moral way, but this: I suspect that the God Kant projects is in the image of the moral human being as Kant conceives him; hence we have a certain God of the law who will exactly proportions our merit to happiness, our happiness to merit. Kant is quite plain about this. You will only get happiness in exact proportion to your moral merit. I see here a kind of moralistic univocity in this claim of a one-to-one correspondence between happiness and moral merit, all administered by a God who does the transcendently legal bookkeeping in the Beyond. And why I'm putting this question is: such a God is a certain moral God but it's not a God of grace that

is given in unearned fashion. I often think of Kant and the parable of the vineyard. Everyone gets what's their due, but some get more than their due - and without working for it! When I read that, I often ask myself : Would Kant not be horrified at the idea that this Lord gives more than is due? Where is the one-to-one correspondence between reward and merit? Such a God, what I would call the agapeic God, evokes gratitude but in no merely abject sense. This seems to me to be very difficult to maintain within the economy of Kant's teaching, both his moral doctrines *per se*, but also his moral theology, his moralized sense of the divine.

*E:* I think that it is not the case that Kant's thoughts about religion are a mere late addition to his system, concerned to prop it up against certain objections that insist that human beings naturally and inevitably seek happiness. The sense of human being as created being, *geschöpfes Wesen*, is very strong in Kant from the very beginning on, I think. That is, we experience our lives as bearing the burden of the task of the realization of reason. The idea in the History essay that nature — and here by nature Kant means not physical nature but something more like rational nature in general; in his terminology this comes very close to being identified with the divine — has appointed for us a destiny is already an indication of the depth of his anti-naturalism. So the sense of human beings as created beings who bear a task is very strong throughout his work. Second, it is true that Kant conceives of God as that being who proportions happiness to merit. That's quite right. I think that there is a substantive point to conceiving of God in that way on Kant's part, and that is to resist both the grounding of ethics in empirical considerations of happiness and secondly to resist pictures of God as an inscrutable authority, pictures that risk supporting a form of fanaticism when we attempt to identify our purposes with His. So there is a good bit of this picture of what one might call a rationalized



God in Kant, but I think it's worth defending.

*D:* Would you be uncomfortable with a God that could not be so rationalized?

*E:* Yes, I would be uncomfortable with an in-principle inscrutable God — not that all God's ways can be made explicit either, however. The third point I want to make is that I think that this picture is compatible with a kind of moral egalitarianism. Kant does hold that different human beings have different talents in different measures, but possess pure practical reason or conscience in common. Some people can run faster than others, other people have a better ear. Some people can cook better than others, some people are actually sympathetic and better at hearing what small children are worried about. Nowhere does Kant deny that there are those divergences in talents, and he insists that the coming to fulfilment of reason's requirements will take the form ultimately of a moral community, not a single person. It will require each single person doing her or his work in order to bring this about. In that interesting sense, for Kant virtue cannot be taught. Any philosophical account of virtue must be fundamentally a piece of elucidatory criticism, must be revelatory, must open each individual to the exercise of the powers of conscience that are in us. But then as we achieve a moral community through conscientiousness we will lead textured different lives in detail, in which people will care about different practices and different forms of happiness. In that sense I think even the old image of Kant as opposed to an Aristotelian aristocratism, with its emphasis on the cultivation of the intellect, was right. All that emphasis on Kant's liberalism in a way was right from the very beginning. Kant sees human life as ultimately multiform.

Oh, I didn't say anything about the bit about grace. I think that having conscientiousness or having conscience for Kant is a gift of God. It's a gift of God that we must do something with, not

simply have. That would be a distinct Kantian spin on what grace is. It consists in God's having given us practical reason.

*D:* But are we not here talking about gifts of such a character that, if one follows through on the meaning of gift, any ethics of autonomy must be severely relativized, if not even given up entirely?

*E:* Severely relativized, yes, absolutely. My interest, as I said, is in the dramatics of the quest to lead an autonomous life and in the different ways those dramatics are played out; yes absolutely they must be relativized. As Kant says in the History essay, 'nature has revealed a little but only a very little' of the path towards a kingdom of ends. What nature has perhaps revealed is that a republic or a civil society of law is a necessary precondition for the ultimate cultivation of a moral culture. But how to go on from that kind of civil society of law to the substantive moral culture that is our task is hidden from us.

*D:* We can perhaps turn to another major aspect of your work, namely, your concern with literature and aesthetics. Some of your work is not dissimilar to the work that Martha Nussbaum has done, the effort to bring philosophy and literature into dialogue with each other and particularly in relation to the question of the ethical or moral significance of literature. Perhaps you might say something about your work on that score: the moral dimension of the aesthetic, or is that too simplistic a way to put it?

*E:* I can certainly say something about that. As I suggested in talking about my own experiences in growing up earlier on, my interest has always been more in art and its powers than in aesthetics. There's a great deal of philosophical aesthetics that's taken the form of trying to define art and to distinguish art and artistic practices from moral, religious, cognitive or other forms of practice. I have almost no interest in that enter-



prise whatsoever, so defining art is not something that's important to me at all. What is important to me, is to figure out what the best works of art, the exemplars, the ones that seem to show what art's powers are all about, to figure out what those works do. I think they provide a certain kind of expression and orienting guidance to human moral imagination in culture, not in the form of rules that we can follow to live well, but in the form of a sense of enlarged vision of the human condition and its possibilities. In seeing works of art as products of human imagination responding to a moral condition, yes, I think my work is very much like Martha Nussbaum's in this area. The difference is that where she looks more to Aristotle for the background set of moral terms that structure exercises of human imagination I look more to Kant. The difference I think is that Kant is here a post-Christian thinker and so some of the fundamental terms for him are conscientiousness, freedom and the moral equality of all persons before God. I think of the Aristotelian tradition as much less plausible on those topics, having very little to say about them, though certainly as I'm sure Martha Nussbaum would say perhaps a modernized and more contemporary Aristotelianism could make some room for those values. In general, the important point I think is that my work in the philosophy of art has not been so much oriented towards definition or establishing rules of criticism as instead to examining the cultural work that certain exemplars do, certain exemplars of the exercise of human imagination.

D: Do some of the tensions we looked at earlier reappear here? I mean: one way to look at Kant's aesthetics is at someone who perhaps was the first to treat art as something for itself, and to give it a domain of its own. And yet one reads further in the *Critique of Judgement*, finally the aesthetic is inseparable from the moral. I'm thinking of the notion of beauty as a symbol of the moral good. And some criticisms of Kantian

aesthetics have been precisely that the very autonomy of art, proclaimed in earlier pages, is retracted as the system develops. This seems to me totally consistent with Kant's overall project. But more Romantic autonomists of art (as we might call them) resent the moralization of art that seems to creep back in at the end. Where do you see yourself on that spectrum? If embeddedness is important, it brings you and art back to the ethos, to ethics. But if moral autonomy is the god presiding over the entire horizon, aren't you creating a situation full of radical tensions from the beginning?

E: Well, it will be no surprise to hear that I want to have it both ways in a way here. I do think Kant is quite correct early on in the *Critique of Judgement* to distinguish from one another pleasure in the good (in the morally good), pleasure in the agreeable (that which gratifies), and pleasure in the beautiful. I do think there is something different about our response to beauty, and Kant insofar as he draws those distinctions is a certain kind of autonomy theorist. As he goes on later in the *Critique of Judgement* to develop his conception of the work of art, it turns out that the work of art is both a beautiful work, so the kind of pleasure that we take in it involves in part pleasure in the beautiful, and it stems from a sublime power's originality, the power of genius. So in a sense the work of art, our experience of the work of art, fuses the experiences of the beautiful and the sublime. It still is different from the experience we have of either the morally good or the agreeable. That there are such experiences available to us and that there are cultural works that make available these experiences is itself a morally important thing, and much of my work on the philosophy of art has been to say in detail and with references to particular cases, how and why it is so important that they afford us a different kind of experience involving something like an enlarged vision or perspective on our condition that isn't available to us if we are working



only within the framework of the questions ‘What is the morally good thing to do? What is the prudential thing to do? Or, what can we know in this particular case?’ Art’s exploration of our condition is free from control by those kinds of questions I think. And in its very freedom from that kind of control, it’s morally significant. It opens up to us the possibility of angles of vision on things.

*D:* Maybe I could come here to the question of originality. Certainly in your most recent book the notion of spontaneity is central. You discuss it, not only in relation to Kant and other figures in German Romanticism, but also in relation to contemporary reductionistic theories of a more naturalistic variety. Spontaneity is connected also to the notion of genius. I mentioned Nussbaum and Cavell as figures with some proximity to you. Cavell is a more wayward voice than Nussbaum. I’m not using ‘wayward’ in a pejorative sense, but it brings to mind your remarks about the subject of control. I’m wondering about waywardness as somehow on the other side of completely rule-governed activity. I’m wondering if it is the Romantic in you that is finally more fundamental, or that side of Kant that leans more strongly towards Enlightenment ideals. Or is this a tension which continues in your work and which hasn’t been resolved on one side or the other. I could put it further again: Is it possible always to have a ‘both/and’ between more moderated rule-bond activity and an appeal to spontaneity, originality and the potential lawlessness that could go with it. You want to have it both ways: you want to walk on the wild side; and yet there is a certain conscientiousness in your vision which balks against wildness.

*E:* That’s quite correct. For me the question is less whether it’s possible always to have a “both/and” sort of attitude towards this, than whether it’s possible not to. I find the “both/and” attitude just unavoidable for me, so yes, I very

deeply endorse the Romantic wish, as it were, to fall in love with our own lives, I mean not just the details of my particular life but with human life as it is realized in me and in others. This will no doubt require a certain revolutionary transfiguration of human life as it is realized in me and in others in order that we become capable of falling in love with it. And yet at the same time, I think that the wish for that kind of revolutionary transfiguration can be dangerous politically. Later forms of Romanticism were accused of a kind of subjectivism and even a kind of political fascism. So respect for the civil society of law, for human rights, for settled ordered procedures of cognition in figuring out the surrounding material circumstances of our condition, all these are very important Enlightenment values to me as well. How is it that one seeks transfiguration of the human condition so as to fall in love with our lives and realize the task of humanity once and for all and yet does so without being premature and hubristic and untrustworthy? That seems to me to be a great deal of the trick, and I wouldn’t want to give way to sentimentalized, subjectivized, and individualized Romanticism at all.

*D:* But could you say: in order to be open to such a transfiguration, one thing you will have to give up is an insistence on your own autonomy. The dangers, of course, are something like hubris, or a certain fascism taking different forms. Suppose one argued that the ‘giving up,’ the surrender of autonomy in the genuine sense is not at all a hubristic lawlessness? It’s lawless but it’s not hubristic, because the transfiguration on giving up your autonomy is not another form of will to power, which is also another form of hanging on to your autonomy. Is there a different form of ‘creativity’ and ‘originality’ beyond autonomy? Could you make a case like that?

*E:* It depends on what one means by autonomy. If one has to give up any strong form of moral individualism, then yes I think that’s correct. If



one means by autonomy something closer to the Kantian sense, namely action motivated by reason's own commands where reason is impersonal and shared out among us, then I don't want to give up autonomy in that sense. I certainly want to give up any individual's claim to be the sole possessor of reason's law. So yes, moral individualism in any strong or interesting sense has to go by the boards, though it is also true that sometimes there can be conscientious people who can be as individuals out ahead of their culture. One wishes not to forget that there are the Frederick Douglasses of the world also.

*D:* But what if I made the case that, on your terms, there's a necessity that you're going to be perpetually caught between aspiration and disappointment. Why? Because if you don't give up autonomy, you won't open yourself to a release beyond autonomy; and the very insistence on reasons before surrender actually shortcircuits the possibility of that further release. I'm not arguing for madness, but one is brought closer to something like a notion of divine madness. This is in the same neighbourhood as the idea of the genius. But if one insists always on having reasons in advance or even justifying reasons after the fact, that very release may precisely not happen, because of that insistence.

*E:* I think that reason comes with, Kantian reason comes with, enormous abstractness at the level of the principle. There is a kind of released power in specific actions, in such a way that one's action comes from a reason that is beyond discursivity. This is after all Kant's picture of the genius who cannot explain why he does what he does. He does still respond to reason's commands but it's not the kind of calculative or discursive reason that we're most accustomed to thinking of as reason. Is it in Wordsworth that we're called upon in one place to reason with a deeper reason that involves precisely this kind of release, even a kind of sense of abandonment of oneself as a

particular individual possessed of possibilities of prudential calculation? That kind of abandonment or release seems to me to be extraordinarily important.

*D:* Again to come back to Kant: Isn't this Kant's piety: any release in its source must be rational, and also rational in its consequences? I'm thinking of someone we haven't talked about but very relevant to this issue — the power of art, its metaphysical power as well as ethical import — I mean Nietzsche. You could see Nietzsche's glorification of the artist as radicalizing Kant's doctrine of genius but in a direction that Kant would not endorse at all. The truly autonomous man, the higher autonomous man (Nietzsche suggests a higher autonomy in the *Genealogy of Morals*) is the one not defined by the struggle between master and slave but is higher again. But he's higher because he's gone deeper into the very source he calls will to power, Dionysus. In doing that, he runs the risk of a kind of madness at both extremes. And yet Nietzsche claims that there is a transfiguration possible at those extremes. We're in the middle of extremes but there are different ways of living between these extremes. Kant is extremely cautious about releasing these other energies. I find that you're less cautious but you still have a diffidence. The old Kant keeps you conscientious. Conscientiousness keeps drawing you back to the more moderate human middle.

*E:* I think that Kant underarticulates all that could be involved in accession to ecstasies, to reason's commands, or to release into the realm of human creativity. And there is an interesting sense in which Nietzsche does indeed articulate that. But I am a long way from being convinced by a great deal of Nietzsche. I do think that he runs the risk of subjectivizing the response to the Dionysian or installing a wild Dionysian sensibility as the most important cultural achievement much too much. I certainly cannot endorse Nietzsche's doctrine of the moral significance of the sovereign individual



as the late fruit of culture, as opposed to a moral culture, but my real heart here is probably with Wordsworth as doing better in articulating what it means and what it is like to be released into creativity, while yet still retaining a sense of the importance of common life and political structure as we have it as well. I'm thinking of the interesting interplay between Wordsworth's most powerful description of that release in book 6 of *The Prelude*, where Wordsworth describes how he saw the sounding cataract and the rugged cliffs as characters and types of a great apocalypse that made it clear to him that our home, he says, is with infinity, with expectation and desire and something evermore about to be. A sense of being given over to that is what comes over him. And yet at the same time he tries to connect that sense of being given over to that in himself and in other people to what he calls in another place the simple produce of the common day. I think of Nietzsche as lacking in a sense of respect for the simple produce of the common day.

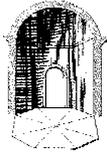
*D:* Yes, let us say that when Wordsworth invokes something infinite, is it not the case that the moral is being brought to the limits of the moral? Are we not also bringing the artistic to the limits of the artistic or the aesthetic? Why? Because aspirations and longings like that should more properly be called religious longings. Religion, of course, is a plurivocal phenomenon and religion doesn't necessarily have to be identified with monotheistic traditions. But I bring that question up here because of your interest in the German poetry of Hölderlin, who directly connects us with Nietzsche in another line of relation. Certainly here we have a certain pantheistic sense of nature. Given that sense of nature and the art that emerges from the longing for oneness, shouldn't that art properly be called religious art? 'Religious,' of course, is not here the devotional art of the Christian tradition. Yet this art is religious insofar as something beyond the power of the human being comes to be shown; the poet tries to

say something about that beyond, even though the beyond is here and now.

*E:* I entirely agree with that. I can't add anything to it. I think there is every reason to think of this kind of responsiveness as religious, yes.

*D:* But we come back to the question of the sublime. I think it's interesting to think of the 18th century concern with the sublime as having a religious source, related to dissatisfaction with the mechanistic nature of the Newtonian world-picture, and to a feeling for 'something more deeply interfused,' as Wordsworth put it, appearing in and through the very aesthetic happening of nature itself. Is the post-Kantian concern with art a kind of equivocal engagement with the religious that finds it difficult to name itself as such? Why do I ask that question? Because despite the critique of religion by Enlightenment reason — religion as priestcraft and superstition and bad heteronomy and tyrannical transcendence — the religious longing does not at all disappear, but it tends to migrate into art from its more traditional, ecclesiastical home. Is this something that is relevant to your work or have these questions occupied you?

*E:* Yes, I've been very influenced for many years by M. H. Abrams' wonderful book *Natural Supernaturalism* and by its picture of modern literature, exemplified above all by Wordsworth, as a literature of secularized prophecy as the poet tries to assume the role of the vates of the culture. There is certainly a religious impulse at the root of this; there is certainly a religious impulse that has trouble recognizing or naming itself as a religious impulse, because of the association I think of religion in the minds of these figures with its institutionalized forms that they cannot support. Hölderlin, for example, was in seminary destined for a career as a Lutheran minister. He gave it up. He could not support this religious form. Wordsworth had open to him at numbers of



stages of his early life the possibility of taking orders and becoming a parish priest in the Anglican church and he could not do it. So they do resist the authority of religion in its institutionalized forms very strongly. This resistance to religious institutionalized authority gives them trouble in naming their own impulses as religious, yes, but they are deeply religious impulses.

*D:* Does this bring again to this question of embeddedness? First of all, the notion of secular prophecy seems to be a very double-headed creature: if you say your prophecy is secular, you are having your cake and eating it; you have your prophetic mantle, but at the same time you keep your politically correct Enlightenment secularism. I'm not saying this about you. I'm saying this about this notion of secular prophecy. But is the religious longing doomed to become just a longing, if it is also not embedded in social practice. The rejection of tradition and of institutional forms may well be motivated by perceptions of a bad heteronomy. But longing as mere longing has usually the effect of vaporizing in its very expression. So the issue of social embeddedness must come back: you may free yourself from one form of embeddedness, but if one's aspiration for transcendence is not once more re-engaged in some form of community which is the social body of the religious, there follows almost an inevitable futility or emptiness to the aspiration.

*E:* Much of the history of both Jewish and Christian religion is I think intelligible as a kind of struggle or dialectic between the priests and the prophets. One of the things that that story in both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian Bible makes evident is that in a way both are needed. The visionaries, the prophets who would remind us of how we have betrayed the covenant and how we yet have possibilities of fulfilling it are wild, crazy, unpredictable, but very important. So is the effort on the part of the priests to give stable form to whatever religious understanding might

be, stable social form. In this respect you could think of the priests as the Ur-figures or predecessors perhaps of Enlightenment and of the prophets as the predecessors of Romanticism. So, just as I wish to walk a line between my interests in Enlightenment and in Romanticism, so too with the priests and prophets. I think for me the way to do this is not so clearly to return to religious institutions. In this I share the sense of Wordsworth and Hölderlin that the authority of religious institutions reposes on social facts and superstitions that may not be supportable, but instead to try to show as Wordsworth in particular tried to show, how prophetic authority could be shared out in all of us, among all of us in the course of common life. Maybe that pushes me a little bit toward the Romantic side again. But the idea here — and it's certainly now a more explicitly Christian idea than a Judaic idea — would be that conscientiousness is the route in each of us to the conduct of our own ordinary daily lives in prophetic terms. So the prophet is not simply a person apart who requires social situation; the prophet is a figure of the voice of conscience in each of us.

*B:* In the epistemological discussion we have, on one side, people who assign primacy to what is expressed and consider concrete vehicles of expression as secondary. This idea is found in the popular understanding that the meaning of what is said is ideally contained in what is intended. It is also contained in the belief that the relevance of a religious ritual should be derived from the religious truth which that ritual brings to expression or in the belief that the experience of beauty one finds in observing a natural landscape, for instance, refers back to some unmediated experience. In all these cases it seems to be taken for granted that the meaning of signs, institutions, norms, narratives and rituals refers back to something more original and more essential which in one or another non-articulated way exists in itself, independent of the way in which it is given con-



crete expression. On the other hand, there are many psychologists, linguists and philosophers who point to the inseparability of concrete language and the mental activity of grasping a meaning, or to the unbreakable bond between signifier and signified, or to the meaning-giving character of the place occupied within a structure by metaphorical and metonymical signs. This second approach makes it self-evident that religion cannot exist without traditional forms, without language, without being part of a community. I suspect that you are more inclined toward the first tendency?

*E:* I am much closer to the first, but I find little use for the term intuition. I think we are open to experiences of meaningfulness that are not, in any sense, entirely informed by already existent conventions or ways of thinking of things. There are certainly dramatically creative uses of language. Metaphors are minor miracles of this that express a responsiveness to things that is not built into linguistic convention already. At the same time the capability of this kind of responsiveness is part of the capability of language in general. I think we only have metaphors in part because we have an ordinary life with language. So there is a kind of ongoing dialectic or conversation between the conventional, social side of our existence and the improvisatory, visionary side of our existence. I don't think you can divide it neatly up into opposed sides and say that religious experiences and possibilities are to be identified only with one side of this rather than another. One of the major ideas of my Wittgenstein book is to talk about the roots of human mindedness as lying both in something mysteriously just given, something I identify with Kantian spontaneity there, which is in some sense prior to the linguistic, and yet mindedness comes really into actual existence only insofar as that spontaneity engages with a given linguistic order. There is no definite beginning. As Wordsworth once wrote, 'Hard task, vain hope to analyze the mind, /When each most

obvious and particular thought, /Not in a mystical or idle sense, /But in words of reason deeply weighed, /Hath no beginning.' We can't find the original wellsprings of our responsiveness to the divine or of our talk with one another. Responsiveness to the divine and our talk in life with one another are internally related to each other, always.

*B:* Truly, can there be, in terms of your position, something such as a non-mediated experience?

*E:* Well, I'm not sure about the word 'immediate' there. Openness to religious experience often comes I think, perhaps even typically comes, from having deeply internalized what people are already doing and thinking about themselves and human life, and then doing something different with it. It is for me an ongoing dialectic or conversation, and so not immediate but enabled. One of the most striking things about Jesus to me and about the Gospels generally is that virtually every remark of Jesus is an allusion to or transcription of some remark in the Hebrew Bible. What makes Him what He is in part is his having so deeply internalized Hebrew scriptures, and the Gospel writers in general showed Jesus not as just an historical person who happens to be special in some sense, but as someone in recounting whose life we always find ourselves using the terms of the Hebrew Bible. His responsiveness to the Hebrew Bible is what makes Him in some sense what He is, His original responsiveness to it.

*D:* Perhaps we might finish with one or two more questions. When you were talking earlier about Hölderlin in relation to tradition and institutional forms, I couldn't help but think that what you were suggesting was something like an *incognito* religious community that could not be identified with traditional Christian forms but nevertheless had a certain religiosity too. And then I thought of the notion of *Hen kai pan* - which you actually



cite in one of the epigrams to your new book. Of course, Hölderlin, Schelling and Hegel talked about *Hen kai pan* as the cry of what they named their 'new church invisible.' In your exchange with Bart, I was thinking of the invisibility of the church and its social manifestation. What of the issue of Kant and pantheism: in the latter the divine is imaged in terms of absolute wholeness; whereas earlier you were praising Kant for having a sense of the creature. As I understand the doctrine of creation, the difference between God and the world is not negotiable. So you cannot have simply one whole out of which human beings emerge as distinct. As I understand Kant, he was very much intent upon dissociating his own philosophy from any imputation of Spinozism and pantheism. Is there not some tension here, a tension that perhaps Hölderlin himself experienced. When he talked about Jesus as being one of the last brothers of Dionysus, the tension between Athens and Jerusalem, Greek philosophy and monotheistic revelation seems to reappear. My question: does not pursuing one direction lead you in the end to a different sense of home than the other? The sense of being at home in the world as creation is not actually the same as being at home in the original unity that divides itself into subject and object. Your current researches on Hölderlin seem to point in the second direction. But so much of your own moral commitments and your remarks here on the religious seem to point in the other direction. So I wonder if there's a deep tension here. Can you actually have both of those? Or must the meaning of creation be rethought (as I think it must), certainly not creation as the machine world of Newtonianism, but in a manner not void of some of the aesthetic resonances of pantheism. The glory of creation has been imaged in a long religious tradition, creation as ambiguously communicating signs of the divine to us; but there is not just simply one whole within which we are, but rather a plurality of wholes, including the divine whole which is not reducible to finite creation.

*E:* Yes, certainly the idea of a kind of church invisible or counter-institution is very important for me. In sheerly autobiographical terms it's worth noting that I am a child of the sixties in that respect, so the idea of a counterculture, in which there was an image purveyed of fully human relations rather than instrumental relations between people, was very important in my coming to consciousness. 'Bliss it was in that dawn to be alive, /And to be young was very heaven.' I do think of much of my work as a philosopher as contributing to the articulation of the idea of a counterculture or a church invisible of human responsiveness and non-instrumental relations, both articulating the general idea of such a thing and contributing through the teaching of and the writing about philosophy and literature to its realization in conversation. That is very, very important to me. About creation, I understand the relation 'x creates y' to be much more a logical relation than a temporal relation. It is to say that x is the ground of the being of y, part of the logos of y, that sustains y in its finite being. So it is possible I think to bring these two thoughts together by thinking of an artistic church invisible or counterculture as one of the ways of realizing the logos of our being that is involved in our created nature. That's the way I think of this, that the church invisible is an anticipation of fuller humanity as it were, of a fuller realization of our created nature.

*D:* One last question: Earlier you talked about Jesus internalizing the scriptures. As you spoke I was thinking: When Jesus prayed, he did not say something like 'Our scriptures that go back to father Abraham, etc., etc. He says 'Our Father, who art in heaven'. I am motivated to ask about that, given that you indicated a certain sympathy for the counterculture. One way to read the counterculture is precisely as having great difficulty in saying 'Our Father.' Fathers somehow have inherited the image of that tyrannous heteronomy that seems to me so widespread in modernity. I



was reading Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason* and there is a revealing footnote where he refers to 'Pfaffentum.' The English translation given is 'Clericalism.' Kant refers to the authority of a spiritual father *pappa* (given by Kant in the Greek). Kant is here also speaking of the invisible church, but he is very hostile to what he sees as the spiritual despotism of the *pappas*. He does not want any 'Papa' telling him what to do.

*E:* That was certainly a dominant impulse and a main problem with the counterculture of the Sixties, speaking in purely historical terms. I think the thought that the counterculture would achieve non-instrumental human relations simply by casting off the shackles associated with fathers was much of what it was about, and so it turned out to be a not very long lasting or deep form of church invisible. I think an artistic counterculture

where art involves discipline and precursors and attention to diverse forms of human life perhaps doesn't involve that sense of throwing off the shackles of the fathers quite so strongly. I have myself relatively little difficulty with saying 'my father' in various contexts, but I would trace this back not to Jesus's unique calling on Our Father or His Father but back also to the language of the Lord, of Yahweh in the Hebrew Bible, so there is an attitude of submissiveness to the logos that grounds our being. That is very important and that will play a role in any form of cultural life in which we seek non-instrumental human relations that will turn out to be lasting, will turn out not to suffer from the tendency just to collapse into selfishness that the Sixties counterculture did collapse in.

*D:* Good, thank you very much.

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