How to Do (Radical)Things with Wittgenstein

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*Note: This paper is clearly written from the perspective of someone living in the US and in relation both to European and Euro-American philosophical traditions and, for the most part, to US and European-based challenges to those traditions. I am interested in how the issues I discuss look from various “elsewheres”.*

“I will set out on this journey, although I do not know the way.”

Jennifer Finney Boylan, “The First Time I Said, ‘I’m Trans’”, *New York Times* 23 January 2020, https://nyti.ms/3aHIaeS

Introduction

“The reason why methods which make us look at what we say, and bring the forms of language (hence our forms of life) to consciousness, can present themselves to one person as confining and to another as liberating, is, I think, understandable in this way: recognizing what we say, in the way that is relevant in philosophizing, is like recognizing our present commitments and their implications; to one person a sense of freedom will demand an escape from them, to another it will require their more total acceptance. Is it obvious that one of these positions must, in a given case, be right?”

Cavell, “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy” in *MWMWWS*, Updated ed’n, 2002, fn 7, p. 53

There is something odd about being a Wittgensteinian philosopher. The *Tractatus* explicitly claims to have completed the only task to which philosophy can properly lay claim, while the *Investigations* chastens the very framing of problems philosophers might attempt to solve. Since such attempts, on the part of non-Wittgensteinian philosophers, continue to proliferate, and the old ones continue to seduce, there is, of course, a continuing call for the critical, “therapeutic” project. But is there any other way a Wittgensteinian philosopher might go on, any way of proceeding that—while it might not immediately be seen as continuing in the same way—might both be true to the spirit of Wittgenstein’s later work and also contribute positively to thinking about (if not “solving”) problems that at least appear on their face to confront us with ordinary urgency? I want to suggest an affirmative answer to this question, specifically one borne out by work that brings a recognizably (and sometimes explicitly) Wittgensteinian approach to problems that emerge out of the experiences and struggles of Euro-modernity’s “others,” those who have been excluded from the generic, purportedly universal “we” that is the properly disciplined subject of the philosophical problems Wittgenstein problematizes.[[1]](#footnote-1)

While the problematic nature of philosophical problems is central to the *Investigations*, Wittgenstein’s alienation from Euro-modernity emerges mostly in posthumously published writing, such as *Culture and Value*. Bringing the two themes together can, I want to argue, point toward a diagnosis for philosophical dis-ease and a possible cure, though one that Wittgenstein himself was unprepared to take up. As he noted (in *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 57), “The sickness of a time is cured by an alteration in the mode of life of human beings, and the sickness of philosophical problems could be cured only through a changed mode of thought and of life, not through a medicine invented by an individual.”

What I want to suggest is that we historicize the illness of which philosophical problems are the symptoms, seeing them as the residue of the construction of a very particular form of subjectivity—that of the privileged-as-generic modern European man (*sic*)—and then look to the forms of life emerging among those who do not, in such terms, make sense, who—in situations more contentious than, say, counting by two’s—do not find themselves among those who “do what we do”. While philosophers engaged in—or sympathetic to—such struggles might be tempted to solve the problems inherent in making new sense, we ought, I would argue, to learn from Wittgenstein to chasten those impulses, though not by retreating to quietism. Rather, we do have a positive role to play, in articulating what is going on when—in embodied, social, political practice—people actively struggle to make new sense, and, crucially, in engaging in public discussions around such struggles, especially when resistance to them takes forms we are well-positioned to diagnose and combat.

I come to this project from a place outside of, or at best on the margins of, the world of Wittgenstein studies. But my hope is that the explicitly political lens through which I am viewing Wittgenstein will seem useful both to understanding his challenges to disciplined (especially analytic) philosophy as well as to suggesting a possible way of going on as a Wittgensteinian philosopher in the world we are living in. So while in a certain sense I am failing to “do what we do”, that is, failing to go on in the same way in reading and absorbing Wittgenstein’s work, my hope is that what I am doing can be taken as an intelligible way of going on.[[2]](#footnote-2) Most ambitiously, my hope is that this way of seeing Wittgenstein—this attitude toward his work, this way of going on with it—will help to make him both more challenging to present-day analytic philosophy as well as more useful for philosophical interventions into matters of social and political concern.

I

As the idealization of the generic subject, the properly disciplined philosopher occupies a location I refer to as “Intelligibility Central”: making sense just means “making sense *to* *me*”. Thus, non-philosophers need to be warned that when properly disciplined philosophers say, “I don’t understand”, they are not making an autobiographical claim. Rather, it is a (supposedly) more polite way of saying, “You’re not making sense”, since if you were, the properly disciplined philosopher would, of course, understand you. This accusation—of failing to make sense—can seem like what Wittgenstein—both early and late—accused philosophers of: that is, using words supposedly to say something, but instead speaking (disguised) nonsense, not managing to make an actual claim. But there is a crucial difference, especially with what Wittgenstein had in mind in his later work, where the problem with what the philosopher says is its failure to play a role in any actual or even richly imagined practice: as “a wheel that can be turned though nothing else moves with it, [it} is not part of the mechanism.” (*PI* §271) As I will discuss below, particularly problematic accusations of failing to make sense do not take this form: rather, the statements against which the accusations are directed (for example, trans women’s claims to being women) are very much “part of a mechanism” and are being opposed precisely for that reason. The demand that those statements need to meet the accusers’ standards of sense-making is aimed precisely at gumming up the mechanism of social change that such statements actually help to put in motion. We need to understand “making sense” literally: sense is something we, collectively, *make*; and it takes resources and collaboration to make it. Efforts to craft those resources and bring together those collaborations can be stymied when sense is recognized only in the sedimented practices of the dominant social order and when accusations of a failure to make sense are taken to be a reason for bringing those efforts to a halt.

Related to taking on the role of Intelligibility Central is what Cora Diamond refers to as “the laying down of requirements”.[[3]](#footnote-3) Properly disciplined philosophers are much given to gate-keeping, imposing tests, for example, to determine which sorts of purported entities actually (“strictly speaking”, as they say, speaking strictly) exist. Historicizing this impulse connects it to the disciplining that grounds privileged-as-generic Euro-modern subjectivity. Drawing on Stanley Cavell’s discussion of *Othello* in relation to skepticism, I have previously argued that such subjectivity rests on replacing the vulnerability of acknowledging and being acknowledged (both by other people, as well as by the rest of the “external world”) with the relative invulnerability of the knowing subject vis-à-vis objects of knowledge.[[4]](#footnote-4) What I want to sketch in the remainder of this paper (following but diverging from Cavell) is a shift in attitude from such a knowledge-first approach to an approach that starts with acknowledgment—a shift that displaces the subject from the role of Intelligibility Central and places them as always already vulnerably entangled with a world of others, both acknowledging those others and in need of acknowledgment by them.

II

“The key thing is that for what I’ll call “ground-bound” philosophy, perplexity isn’t philosophical because it is exposed through philosophical critique but, rather, because it cries out for philosophical illumination.

Talia Mae Bettcher, “What Is Trans Philosophy?”

“. . . one human being can be a complete enigma to another. One learns this when one comes into a strange country with entirely strange traditions; and, what is more, even though one has mastered the country’s language. One does not *understand* the people. (And not because of not knowing what they are saying to themselves.) We can’t find our feet with them.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

Wittgenstein, *PI*, PPF §325

Trans women and men, as well as people who are non-binary or variously gender-queer, frequently meet with resistance from those who refuse to acknowledge their gender identity, or profess to be unable to understand it. One locus of this resistance is from self-described “gender-critical feminists”. There are philosophers among those contesting the identity claims of trans women, and such contestations frequently include challenges to the intelligibility of those claims: it is sometimes argued that trans women and their allies owe “us” what they have failed to provide, namely, a “coherent metaphysics of gender”.

Numerous trans philosophers and their allies have attempted to comply with the demand for a coherent metaphysics of gender that makes sense of trans experiences and identities.[[6]](#footnote-6) There is much to be learned from this work—not least from the differences among approaches and accounts—but I want to suggest that, rather than acceding to the demand for clarity and coherence, we would do better to resist it, taking seriously the *making* of sense and the conditions that throw that making into disarray. I would suggest, that is, that we resist the impulse to take on—however respectfully—the role of Intelligibility Central in order to act in solidarity with those who have been written out of sense by other, more traditionally dominant actors.

Such resistance is in line with the critique María Lugones had of white feminist theorists who responded to feminists of color who accused them of ethnocentrism by revising their theories around the “problem of difference”. What Lugones pointed out was that this response—to think that what was called for was better theories—missed the point: the problem wasn’t in the first instance with the theories but with what the theorists were *doing*, or failing to do; and what was needed wasn’t better theories, but respectful engagement, what she calls “interactive acknowledgment,” which includes acknowledging that who the more privileged (in this case white feminist theorists) *are* is in part who they are perceived to be in the eyes of others (in this case women of color). As applied to the stance of the well-disciplined philosopher, the message is to turn attention away from providing a theory-fix, however genuinely and thoughtfully responsive to the needs of those who have been harmed by the dominant world of sense, and toward the sort of open-ended, on-going engagement that helps us all live with disorientation and discomfort as new worlds of sense take shape. It involves “turning our whole inquiry around . . ., but on the pivot of our real need” (*PI* §108)—while recognizing that real needs may well differ and, for any of us, be difficult to discern.

In a rich body of work addressing issues of gender from a trans perspective Talia Mae Bettcher has been puzzling over questions such as these. Inspired (as I have been) by the work of María Lugones, Bettcher urges us to think of different “worlds” of sense, different ways of constructing what it is to be a woman. In a trans-friendly “world” people have first-person authority over their gender identity, authority she explicates in explicitly ethical terms: it is not that I am in a better position to *know*, but rather that I have the right to say. Implicit in that account of ethical first person authority is the importance of the second, rather than third, person stance: the stance one takes toward an interlocutor, not toward an object of knowledge. At the heart of what matters is that I acknowledge you, as I need you to acknowledge me, a situation of mutual vulnerability and entanglement that is avoided by my turning it (however sympathetically) into a question of what I can or cannot know about him or her or of what precisely his or her claims mean or what makes them true or false. The question is not what our words mean, but rather what we are doing (even if unwittingly) in using them.

Shifting from knowledge to acknowledgment means shifting from a focus on one’s theories, one’s efforts to understand, to a focus on engagement and recognition—even, or especially, of those whom we find enigmatic, those in whom, as Wittgenstein puts it, we cannot find ourselves.[[7]](#footnote-7) That is, knowledge-based intelligibility means not just intelligibility *to me*, but intelligibility in my terms, as being relevantly (and I set the terms of relevance) *like me*. Even when I generously broaden the terms of likeness to include those I take to be wrongly excluded, I am still holding onto definitional authority—the right to say what we mean. It is, of course, central to Cavell’s conception of philosophy that we do this—that we speak for others—but he notes, in his discussion of the passage in the epigraph to this section**,[[8]](#footnote-8)** that in speaking *for* others we need to attend to what is involved in speaking *to* them, which I take it involves acknowledging them as part of the conversation whether or not we can understand what they are saying. Understanding may come (there are no guarantees) as we find ourselves in their “world”—learning both who we are in their eyes, what they make of us, as well as what we may make of ourselves in relation to them—and in so doing learning what they make of themselves.

III

“A philosophical problem has the form: ‘I don’t know my way about.’ ”

Wittgenstein, *PI* §49

*PI* §123

# “Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves, like locked rooms and like books that are now written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer.”

Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet*

“Complex communication thrives on recognition of opacity and on reading opacity, not through assimilating the texts of others to our own. Rather, it is enacted through a change in one’s own vocabulary, one’s sense of self, one’s way of living, in the extension of one’s collective memory, through developing forms of communication that signal disruption of the reduction attempted by the oppressor. Complex communication is creative. In complex communication we create and cement relational identities, meanings that did not precede the encounter, ways of life that transcend nationalisms, root identities, and other simplifications of our imaginations.”

María Lugones 2006,“On Complex Communication,” *Hypatia* 21(3): 75-85, p. 84

“One of the most important lessons I have learned from Cavell is that the pursuit of philosophical theories that leave *me* out—both in the sense that their sense is not supposed to implicate *me*, and in the sense that I am not expected to be able to recognize myself, and my experience, in their portrayal of us—would lead me nowhere, or anyway nowhere I wish to go.”

Avner Baz 2018, “Stanley Cavell’s Argument of the Ordinary,” *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* 7(2): 9-48, p. 45

# Sometimeswe don’t know our way about because we are headed out into uncharted territory, or because we have found the old maps and routes to be destructive of our own souls or the souls of those we care about, or because the landscape is changing. In such cases it ought not to be the job of the philosopher to clarify our conceptual tools or to make sense of the chaos. Our task is not to simplify, but rather to help to better understand, the complexities—to help us to “live our way into the answers”. What is called for is coalitional politics, a necessarily uncomfortable undertaking. Even if we can identify who it is that we need to be in coalition with—who is being harmed by the structures that are harming us, even if they might initially seem like the enemy—it can still turn out that our strategies of resistance and theirs are serving to undermine the ground under each other’s feet. Our survival rests not on accommodation with structures of power and privilege but rather on the difficult work of coalition-building that begins with acknowledging the ways in which we mutually disorient each other—and learning to live in, with, and through that disorientation.

Avner Baz in his discussion of Stanley Cavell’s rejection of Saul Kripke’s misguided and tone-deaf reconstruction of Wittgenstein takes seriously (as he argues that Cavell does) the “fragility of our mutual attunement” (Baz, p. 30): nothing guarantees that our interlocutor will go on in the same way, will share the orientations, inclinations, and responses that ground shared meaning. Cavell’s abiding concern with skepticism, which he refuses to read Wittgenstein as allaying, flows from an awareness of this fragility and of the circumstances that heighten its salience in our lives, that expose the instability of the ground under our feet, but also in our flight from recognizing our responsibility for maintaining that ground, for going on with the forms of life that are the background for the meanings of our words. Such recognition is, as Baz stresses, ethical, something that calls to us in relation to the others we include when we say “we.” But neither Cavell nor Baz explores the specific practical dilemmas that actually face people for whom failure to make sense is a feature of ordinary life, and thus miss the philosophical insights that emerge from engagement between those struggling for intelligibility and those who are more hermeneutically privileged. Such engagement and the articulation of those insights are among the most philosophically distinctive and practically useful tasks for the philosopher after Wittgenstein.

Philosophers are much given to placing philosophy in relation to other disciplines, typically either above (synthesizing, setting standards or conditions of possibility, abstracting, generalizing) or below (clarifying, humbly tidying or ground-clearing), but sometimes alongside. I’m drawn to alongside-ness, mostly because the above and below pictures strike me as each in their own way problematically arrogant, too intent on laying down requirements or disciplining: they are different ways of taking up the mantle of “Intelligibility Central”. But there are different ways of understanding what it means to be alongside. One way that has a certain currency these days is to see philosophy as engaged in much the same sort of explanatory project as the sciences, where part of what is characteristic of these modes of inquiry is that they penetrate beneath surface appearances to get at what is really going on, and what they reveal may well be a shock to common sense: There may, for example “strictly speaking” not actually be any tables, just “micro-particles arranged table-wise”.[[9]](#footnote-9) Such a shock, we are told, provides no more reason for rejecting what the philosopher argues for than it does for rejecting what the scientist discovers: “Why [Ted Sider asks] should the inherited prejudices of our forebears count for *anything*?”

But there’s an important difference between philosophy and the sciences. For most of us most of the time (actually, nearly all of us nearly all of the time) responsibly forming beliefs about scientific matters rests on judgments about which experts to trust. Those judgments can be relatively non-contentious or disputed, but in neither case are most of us in a position to ascertain the truth of the matter for ourselves. It is neither lazy nor in any other way doxastically irresponsible to rely on what others say without fully checking out their evidence and arguments. Certainly, especially in the case of contested claims, we can and should do a certain amount of vetting, but there is no getting beyond our needing at some point to accept the claims of experts, even if we can and should make thoughtful judgments about just *which* experts we should trust. I don’t think that even the most scientistically-minded philosophers would urge us to approach philosophical arguments in that spirit. While they might suggest that there is no reason for most people to have any beliefs at all when it comes to such matters as fundamental ontology, it’s surely the case that anyone who *does* hold such beliefs ought to do so not because someone else, no matter how brilliant or eminent, has said so, but because they have themselves been convinced by working through the arguments—a requirement that simply does not hold in the case of science (or, for that matter, history, which, even for the most expert of historians, is ineliminably dependent on what others have reported).

My own sense of philosophy’s being “alongside” other disciplines is better captured through the notion of fellow travelers. We are all trying to figure out the world and our places in it, our relationships to each other and to other things, and we go about this in a wide range of different ways. Philosophizing is a distinctive sort of activity, and part of what distinguishes it is its reliance on persuasion, on its taking seriously those who encounter it, being vulnerable to their rejection or incomprehension and committed to respectful engagement.[[10]](#footnote-10) One way of understanding this distinctiveness is through an image that frequently appears in both Wittgenstein and Cavell, that of creating paths with fellow travelers: Wittgenstein describes the *Philosophical Investigations* in the preface as, “a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and meandering journeys”. Philosophical writing is both a record of such a journey and an invitation to the reader to walk alongside.[[11]](#footnote-11) If, as a reader, you don’t “follow” the argument, you ought not to share the conclusion: you need to have reached it in the company, perhaps under the guidance, of the author, not been teleported to it by the power of their expertise.

The paths Wittgenstein takes us on are meant to lead us back to our ordinary lives, to the homes that give meaning to our words, to the rough ground we have fled in search of something purer, more absolute. But there are people for whom the rough ground of common sense, of what all competent users of the language can be presumed to know, instead of providing traction that makes walking possible is rather strewn with roadblocks, trenches, and landmines. Such awareness could lead to a desire to escape, to tether one’s hopes to a skyhook of ultimate vindication, to give up on trying to make sense here and now; but instead, as Bettcher urges, and exemplifies, it can lead to setting out on a path with fellow travelers, to creating and inhabiting new worlds of sense, new forms of life. One might respond that the sorts of agreements that Wittgenstein is relying on—like counting by two’s—are not in this way tendentious or exclusionary and do provide sufficient genuinely shared ground for us—all, as human—to be mutually intelligible.[[12]](#footnote-12) There is something to this response, but it fails to capture the lived experience of people who do find themselves—in ordinary, everyday settings and interactions—failing to make sense to those around them, or else making terrible, deadly sense: as Bettcher says about being trans: “they want to kill us.” And it fails to capture what for Baz and Cavell is central to Wittgensteinian skepticism: “the fragility of our mutual attunement”. (Baz, p. 30) What can we learn from attention to—and acknowledgment of—those for whom that fragility is not a universal—and for the privileged among us an abstractly theoretical—possibility (even if confronting that possibility leads to genuine fear), but rather part of the texture of their everyday lives, forming the rough ground under their feet?

I started thinking more specifically about paths as the result of a conversation I had in 2015 with Fan Zhao, then a graduate student at Beijing Normal University, where I was giving a series of lectures on Wittgenstein in the present-day world. Fan Zhao told me of a frequently cited quote from the early twentieth-century left-wing writer Lu Xun:  “Hope cannot be said to exist, nor can it be said not to exist. It is just like paths across the earth. For actually the earth had no paths to begin with, but when many people pass one way, a path is made.”[[13]](#footnote-13) Lu Xun was making a point about hope, and paths were a useful way of making that point: it is presumably obvious that there are no paths prior to their being trodden, but they are no less real for that, and those who would lament pathlessness ought rather to start walking. But Fan Zhao told me this story not to make a point about hope but to note that the point about paths is interesting in its own right—as I have very much found it to be.

Learning—for example, about what gender is from those for whom “what we do” makes their lives unintelligible—has to begin with—it cannot be a precondition for—acknowledgment, responsive and responsible mutual engagement. And one way that engagement proceeds is by learning to speak differently—for example, using pronouns that might initially seem strange or awkward or ungrammatical. As Wittgenstein—and, following him, Cavell—have shown, learning a language is an initiation into a form of life: one learns what matters and how, how things are connected, what is similar to what and why and how some similariies matter, what’s important to notice, what is and is not funny. The important point about so-called “politically correct” language around race, sexuality, gender, etc. is not to just take up whatever “rules” relevant groups formulate, but rather to see word choices as ways of being initiated into a new form of life, learning one’s way around that “world”—learning that will initially feel formulaic, rote, and awkward, but that, if all goes well, will help one over time to become a “naturalized” citizen of that “world”, finding one’s feel on ground rough enough for friction but affording passage for fellow travelers forging paths.

The forms of life that spring up along new paths are, of course, not hermetically sealed, in part because those paths are not on the moon or in another galaxy: they are here, on this shared planet, and they alter everyone’s landscape. Marriage—despite the reassurances of many campaigners for same-sex marriage—will be changed for everyone when it ceases to be a deeply gendered affair; and, similarly, gender will not be for anyone as it was before variously transgendered people became visible and audible. (The secrecy that was a condition of access to gender confirming medical interventions was clearly designed precisely to minimize the disruption to normatively gendered forms of life, but it didn’t work.[[14]](#footnote-14)) That the new paths criss-cross old landscapes reflects how much we do all share, but the presence of new paths highlights the contingency—the fragility—of even what remains most settled, even as we rely on its holding beneath our feet.

Critiques of foundationalism have too often been captured by a post-structuralist, post-modern rejection of any talk of ground or groundedness (or, relatedly, of truth or reality). By contrast, Wittgensteinian anti-foundationalism is far more radical in resisting the foundationalist’s insistence on the necessity of bedrock to meaningfully ground our practices, drawing our attention instead to the actual (literal and metaphorical) ground under our (literal and metaphorical) feet. “Back to the rough ground” is a radically anti-foundationalist slogan: the roughness of the ground is on the surface; it is where we move and live, and we are responsible for its contours. And when we forge paths across that surface, we change the physiognomy of the earth.

In a discussion of Black feminist science fiction author Octavia Butler’s “Parable of the Sower”, The Reverend Mariama White-Hammond referred to Harriet Tubman’s leading enslaved people to freedom along the Underground Railway: “I don’t know where I’m going, but I have to head out. Start walking, and sing.” In particular, sing “Follow the Drinking Gourd”, a reference to the constellation The Big Dipper, whose stars’ alignments point toward Polaris, the North Star, which, however, is not a destination—it’s hope. Actual movement toward freedom relied on on-the-ground connections, forged by chains of trust.

As we learn to find our feet with initially inscrutable others, creating coalitions through complex communication, starting not with knowledge but with acknowledgment, we, as fellow travellers, are creating paths toward destinations that will become clear only as we approach them, as we move together away from the forms of life that harm us.

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1. While I will not be discussing this work directly in this essay, some of the people I have in mind, and from whom I have learned—fellow resistors to being “properly disciplined”—include Linda MartínAlcoff, Talia Mae Bettcher, Kristie Dotson, Marilyn Frye, Cressida Heyes, Sarah Hoagland, Hilde Lindemann, María Lugones, and José Medina. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I am, of course, not alone in shaping specifically liberatory ways of thinking about and with Wittgenstein. When I put out the call for contributions to *Feminist Interpretations of Wittgenstein* in the early 1990’s I received about twice as many papers as I could eventually include, all of which “used” Wittgenstein, rather than, as with most of the volumes in the series, criticizing him, and most of which came with a cover note saying that the author thought they were the only one using Wittgenstein for feminist ends. Some of those who have been doing this work include Cressida Heyes, Hilde Lindemann, José Medina,Toril Moi, Peg O’Connor, Alesandra Tanesini, . . . [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cora Diamond, “Wittgenstein and Metaphysics,” Introduction II to *The Realistic Spirit*) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. My “Othello’s Doubt/Desdemona’s Death: The Engendering of Skepticism”; Cavell in *Claim of Reason* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cavell notes that the final sentence in German (“Wir können uns nicht in sie finden.”) is an idiom literally translated as: “We cannot find ourselves in them.” Cavell, “Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy” in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, p. 62 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Haslanger, Jenkins, Barnes, Asta [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Lugones, “Logic of Pluralist Feminism,” “Playfulness and ‘World’-Travel,” complex communication [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Cavell, “Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy” in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, p. 62 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. For a classic argument for this view, including for why it doesn’t matter that it defies common sense, see Ted Sider, “Against Parthood” in Karen Bennett and Dean. W. Zimmerman, eds., *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* (Oxford: OUP, 2013): 237-93. Sider actually resists the “strictly speaking” formulation, preferring to put it in terms of fundamentality: ordinary language, including talk of tables, is not suited to account for the fundamental structure of reality, and he takes it to be the task of ontology to do that. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Cf Longino on tempered intellectual authority in science, Austin and Cavell on first person plural authority, Baz on Cavell on being met with disagreement [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. See Cavell, “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy,” *MWMWWS*, p. 65. See also my discussion of writing in “Writers, Authors, and the Extraordinary Ordinary,” ….. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Cavell’s wondering if there are some—women?—who would resist being spoken for as he does: *Little Did I Know: Excerpts from Memory*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010*,* p. 6

    See my “Storied World” [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The aphorism is easily found on the internet, in multiple translated versions, though I could discover no citational information beyond the date: 1921. The version Fan Zhao gave me translated what is here ‘paths’ as ‘roads’, which doesn’t actually capture the meaning: the routes of roads are decided on in advance, and they are officially authorized and built all at once. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See my “Queering the Center by Centering the Queer” and “Looking Back on Q the C.” The latter essay includes a long discussion of the image of paths. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)