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The Importance of Being Alive

SANDRA LAUGIER

Remarks given at a memorial event, “Celebrating the Life and Work of Stanley Cavell,” convened in Emerson Hall 105, Harvard University, November 10, 2018.

LITTLE DID I KNOW, WHEN I ARRIVED as visiting student from the Ecole Normale Supérieure de Paris at the Department of Philosophy at Harvard University in 1984, in order to study what was beginning to become known as “analytic philosophy” (I was writing my PhD on Quine) that I would end up translating most of Stanley Cavell’s work into French, and dedicating (as I realize since Stanley’s passing) most of my work and life to understanding, presenting, and discussing his work. And loving it.

I just happened to walk into one of his classes, to hear his voice, and that was it. I had never read Cavell’s work before, and in order to make the moment last, I went to Robbins Library and began to read *The Claim of Reason*, then *Pursuits of Happiness*. It was a turning point: and at this important moment of my life, Cavell’s work became the most important thing in my intellectual life, giving it its continuity and strength. So all these years of work, from the publication of my dissertation on Quine under the too-obviously-Cavellian title *L’apprentissage de l’obvie* [*The Learning of the Obvious*], until the coming translation of *Little Did I Know*, built up to creating a scene, and a background, a context, in France, for this voice.

We have all noticed how Cavell’s autobiography *Little Did I Know* elicits the autobiographical drive in all of us, and makes you rethink the turning points, or the unexpected turns, in your life. *Little Did I Know*, as the title

registers, is about this unseen importance of moments in a life. The first teaching by Cavell: to understand what matters to you. The second: to make use of yourself to make it matter.

We are here today because—having encountered him, and his work—Stanley Cavell has had this kind of importance—a tremendous importance, not only in our work but also in our lives not in an abstract sense, but in our way of being alive, of “bearing” life.

Stanley taught us how to be an intellectual as a form of life in both senses, by teaching each of us (here in this room), what *importance* is, that is, what is important to us (to me, to you).

By making us understand how work, and writing, can bear on our lives, and how our lives get their significance from what we think and say and write. By teaching us a specific way of being alive and being a human being. This is what he meant by one of his discoveries, the sense of forms of life (in the Wittgensteinian “social” sense of understanding) as lifeform, ways of being alive, of “bearing” life.

He taught us and is still teaching us, by his life and his immense work, about learning from ourselves what is important to us. And by teaching each of us, what *importance* is, that is, what is important to us (to me, to you). In other words, he teaches us about learning from ourselves what is important to us. This is the core methodology of Cavell’s teaching: getting you to learn what is important to you, what matters (to you, hence to anyone). The revelation of one’s own relevance, of the possibility and the necessity of making use of who one is, is something that we all of Cavell’s readers and students owe him. As he said in his first book, about Socrates: “This discovery about himself is the same as the discovery of philosophy, when it is the effort to find answers, and to permit questions, which nobody knows the way to nor the answer to any better than yourself.”¹ And as he adds also about himself in the autobiography: “Austin’s philosophizing allowed me—demanded of me—the use of myself as the source of its evidence or the measure of its effect. Whatever philosophy’s pertinence to me, I felt for the first time my pertinence to philosophy.”²

Use of yourself, to be useful, you as source of evidence: this is a kind of radical empiricism. I think all of us have felt *useful* in this sense, *because* we loved Stanley’s work; he made us forever relevant to philosophy. Useful also in the sense that all work, though hard, was a sort of fun. Going to the movies was ... work. Watching television shows still is, thanks to Stanley, both fun and work. I am especially grateful to him for that.

Translating Cavell’s work was always hard work, but this difficulty pointed to the specificity and importance of his philosophy to the contemporary world. Like Emerson, Thoreau, but unlike the majority of contemporary Anglophone philosophers, Cavell used English as a *language*, a philosophical tongue, rather than as an international, dominant, and transferable medium. This meant that his writing was based on terms that

were “untranslatable” from English (i.e., from “American”—the cover of the translation of *The Claim of Reason* says “translated from the American”), as I came to see when I revisited them for Barbara Cassin’s *Dictionary of Untranslatables*. When Cassin undertook this dictionary project in the late twentieth century, the great philosophical languages, Greek and German, were well represented in it. What happened is that Cavell’s words (“claim,” “mean,” “acknowledgment”) instantiated English as an opaque tongue, as a medium in which the transformations of philosophy were operated, in particular those forced by Wittgenstein’s work.

It so happened that over the last decade I translated, consecutively, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (*Dire et vouloir dire* 1969, tr. 2011), Cavell’s first book, and his last book, *Little Did I Know* (littéralement *J’étais loin de me douter*—the title was ultimately rendered *Si j’avais su* (2004, tr. 2015). Even without being obsessed by the coherence and themes in Cavell’s work, one is constantly amazed by the continuities at forty years of distance. Unlike Wittgenstein, whose thinking mutated significantly over the years, Cavell’s thought was always consistent, even as it took on the most unexpected objects, which he allowed to transform it.

The question that strikes me as most persistent is “what is it to mean anything?”—not as would be given in a theory of meaning, but in terms of meaningfulness, of significance. To mean what we say is to know, or to tell, what matters, what we *mind*. So the question of what matters becomes the question of what it is to *tell* anything. Much has been written in the field of pragmatics, and since *Must We Mean What We Say?*, about relevance. Cavell, however, remains the only philosopher to have offered an actual theory of relevance, or pertinence, that takes into account “the total speech situation”—everything that is involved in speaking (especially the question: to whom?). Austin writes: “The total speech act in the total speech situation is the *only actual* phenomenon which, in the last resort, we are engaged in elucidating.”³

Cavell’s analyses of passionate utterance, as well as the writing of *Little Did I Know* (and its method, defined at the beginning), are the most recent actualizations of Cavell’s project in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, to define relevance, and find his own relevance, by understanding how *telling* is done, both in context and by giving a context. Austin tirelessly demanding the context (he would often call this the story) of an utterance, Wittgenstein repeatedly asking to whom an utterance is made, “How is *telling* done?” What it is to *Say Anything?* one of my favorite titles (and a movie I love especially because Cavell has written about it). Film turns out to be a modern technique for giving a context to words. If telling and recounting what is important is the task Cavell assigns to philosophy, the difficulty of the task, expressed blatantly and systematically in *Little Did I Know*, is that the unimportant (the trivial, the accessory, the detail) is sometimes, and maybe often, what is most important.

The obvious point in dating the times of writing was to keep separate the two necessary temporal registers in a narrative, the time of a depicted sequence of events and the time (or place/time) of depicting them. Formally this portrays the fundamental importance granted to the time and context of utterance in the work of Austin and of the later Wittgenstein that has meant so much to me. My stress on the time, or time and place, of depiction is meant to capture what Austin means in tirelessly demanding the context (he would often call this the story) of an utterance and what Wittgenstein means by repeatedly asking to whom an utterance is made. When Wittgenstein asks, “How is *telling* done?” he is in effect asking how it is that saying something, speaking, is done; how it is that someone is in a position to *be* told something. This turns out to be a good question.⁴

This descriptive project clarifies the idea, expressed in the title of chapter 3 of Cavell’s *Pursuits of Happiness*, of “The Importance of Importance.” The phrase comes, again, from Austin: “What, finally, is the importance of all this about pretending? I will answer this shortly, although I am not sure importance is important: truth is.”⁵

Focus, or attention, connects words to world—and film teaches us how to focus, how to *see* what matters or to understand what we have missed: “In this crosslight the capacities and salience of an individual are brought to attention and focus.”⁶ The connection between language and reality (words and world—maybe Cavell’s most basic pun, together with morning and mourning) rests on the *seeing* and *telling* of details, differences, bringing them into focus. Attention (to what we say) is then how we get to know the world. Or as Austin said, “We are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of the phenomena.”⁷ So how is importance important?

Cavell follows up, parenthetically, on an Austinian parenthetical point, again in *Pursuits of Happiness*. Austin, in his essay “Truth,” reflects on defining something, say an elephant: “[For defining an elephant is] a compendious description of an operation involving both word and animal (do we focus the image or the battleship?) and so speaking about ‘the fact that’ is a compendious way of speaking about a situation involving both words and world.”⁸ For Cavell, in order to define truth, we must examine what Austin calls in his essay a “compendious way of speaking about a situation involving both words and world.” Cavell writes: “(J. L. Austin was thinking about the internality of words and world to one another when he asked, parenthetically in his essay “Truth,” “do we focus the image or the battleship?”).⁹ This reciprocal internality of words and world is called by Cavell and Austin, *focus*. Focus, or attention, connects words to world—as film teaches us how to focus, how to *see* what matters. To matter is also to make a difference, and Cavell insists in *Little Did I Know* on Austin and

the elucidating power of differences, or distinctions, reminding us that “in this crosslight the capacities and salience of an individual are brought to attention and focus.”¹⁰

The connection between language and reality (words and world) rests on the *telling* of differences, bringing to focus. Attention (to what we say; our care for the self) is then the way to get to know the world. Austin says: “We are using a sharpened awareness of words to sharpen our perception of the phenomena.” This awareness is the perception of what matters. Importance and truth are both important and internal to each other. This importance of mattering appears in *Little Did I Know*, at a quite painful moment of conversation with Austin when Cavell, to a question concerning whether something must be common to things sharing a common name, says something like: “If people want to say there are universals, let them. It doesn’t matter as long as they know the facts.” Cavell reports: “I was sitting next to Austin, and he turned toward me as if startled, and said hard, straight between the eyes, ‘It matters.’ I felt an utter, quite impersonal, shame—shame, and a kind of terror.”¹¹ In so many ways, *Little Did I Know* describes both this kind of terror (connected to the terror of an abusive father figure) of missing what matters and the methods found to overcome it, alternative ways of finding, and expressing, importance—methods that include human conversation, “being interesting,” finding your own voice.

Putting importance first means transforming our idea of what is important. Cavell follows Wittgenstein here: “Where does our investigation get its importance from, since it seems to destroy everything great and interesting?”¹²

We need a shift in our ideas of what is important, of what we are asked to let interest us.¹³ We have a “distorted sense of what is important (call it our values) that is distorting our lives.”¹⁴ In this way, *relocating importance* becomes the new task Cavell defines for philosophy, and this is where Cavell helps us to be feminists and activists—his aim is to show how the socially negligible actually matters, to give a voice to the voiceless, as in *Gaslight*.

Telling, as Cavell often reminds us throughout his writings, is counting (and knowing what counts). The identification of telling and counting, importance and truth, is claimed by the presence of pawnbroking in the depiction of Cavell’s early life, and his task in his father’s pawnshop—“counting up the monthly interest owed, upon redemption.”

The concepts of grace and of redeeming are only beginning suggestions of the poetry of pawn broking. Counting, especially counting up the monthly interest owed, upon redemption (I mean upon the pawner’s returning with his ticket to redeem his pledge), was another of my responsibilities. Here we encounter certain opening suggestions of the philosophy of the concepts of pawn broking. The concept of what we count, especially count as of interest or importance to us, is a matter fundamental to how

I think of a motive to philosophy, fundamental to what I want philosophy to be responsive to and to illuminate. Something like the poetry and philosophy caught intermittently in the ideas of redemption and grace and interest and importance (or mattering) was of explicit fascination to me before I stopped working in the pawn shop, the year I graduated high school. The first stories I tried writing were stabs at elaborations of such connections.¹⁵

In *Little Did I Know*, Cavell states for the first time a connection between these “ideas of redemption and grace and interest and importance (or mattering or counting).” The motif of counting as redemptive is important in Cavell’s work—the idea of a literary redemption of language by telling—in *Walden*, or his comments on the perfectionist moment in *It Happened One Night* when Clark Gable makes a very precise account of the sum Claudette Colbert has cost him, which Cavell correlates to the way Thoreau gives an accurate account of the cost of his cabin: “The purpose of these men in both cases is to distinguish themselves, with poker faces, from those who do not know what things cost, what life costs, who do not know what counts.”¹⁶ What counts is what matters to us. *Knowing what counts* defines importance and truth by accuracy, *exactness*—these words define Cavell’s autobiographical project. To tell things right, to find the right, relevant word (the pitch) is a task that articulates the search for importance, for perfection, and for the right tone as in the passage of *Little Did I Know* about the pieces of coal—“to determine the point at which, if I hit it just right, it would, instead of chipping or crumbling further, split apart cleanly into two intact pieces.”

An unseen passage or detail that encapsulates Stanley’s method and life is as follows:

After the event of a coal delivery, I would sometimes go down to the basement to look at the new mound of this substance of mysterious origin some of whose black pieces would shine with particular brilliance just then before shoveling had dislodged some of them onto the dirt floor and thrown up recent dust. If, as generally was the case, near the foot of the mound a few isolated large pieces would have tumbled free as the coal was being delivered, I would take the ax standing next to the shovel against a short wooden wall, perhaps part of a small tool shed, and with the blunt end of the ax head, tap the side of a piece at first too lightly to affect it, but then strike with increasing force, to determine the point at which, if I hit it just right, it would, instead of chipping or crumbling further, split apart cleanly into two intact pieces. Evidently I had first seen this effect happen inadvertently. The satisfaction of the sound of the ax tapping the coal, rather as if to test its soundness, and then on lucky occasions the sight of the lump splitting open, perhaps one or both

of the halves falling over under its own newly discovered imbalance to rest on a new facet of itself, produced in me a primitive equivalent of the almost silent shout of appreciation with which my mother would greet a perfectly managed musical ornament or cadence, as during the Kreisler recital. In rehearsing the high school dance band I would quite often come up against the ingrained conviction of some of its members that to swing meant never to hit notes exactly on the beat but something like to syncopate perpetually and to bend notes at unpredictable moments, so that I might sometimes say to them roughly, “Don’t anticipate the beat here, and don’t be tempted to play louder when the notes increase in speed. Just split the notes cleanly and let them fall.” But I never confided in them about the larger pieces of coal.¹⁷

Cavell’s reminds us in *A Pitch of Philosophy*: “there is an internal connection between philosophy and autobiography, that each is a dimension of each other.”¹⁸ To tell things right, in context, to find the right, relevant word (the pitch) is a task that articulates the search for importance, and of truth, making awareness of importance part of the task of knowing the world. But it also transforms our ideas of importance. Wittgenstein’s point is also that the importance of the grammatical investigation is precisely in this, in “destroying everything great and interesting,” displacing our interests, our hierarchies. Here the “fervor” early identified and expressed in Cavell’s reading of Wittgenstein (as in *This New Yet Unapproachable America*), its specificity, may be seen, heard, as a refusal of a kind of male (or paternalistic) assertiveness in finding the right words, and the all-too-easy identification of the important with the masculine.

Stanley’s tone—with women and men—was never paternalistic, virilistic: he was just sweet and kind. The conversion required in putting aside competing ideas of the important, in destroying our ideas of the important, is the condition for the possibility of a place for women’s voice (accomplished in *Pursuits of Happiness* with the emergence of women’s voice in conversation, and in *Contesting Tears*). More deeply, Wittgenstein makes it possible to give up, or minimize the importance of, the male/heterosexual tone in language. Cavell was among the first philosophers to give and enforce appropriate attention to women’s voice, style, and subjectivity, to pursue “philosophy’s aspiration to exchange intimacy without taking it personally.”¹⁹ “I suppose that what I am expressing here in the fact that I am from time to time haunted—I rather take it for granted that thus is quite generally true of male heterosexual philosophers—by the origins of philosophy in an environment of homosexual intimacy.”²⁰ It is strange that compared to the clearly elegiac, even melodramatic tonality of the many autobiographical moments in Cavell’s earlier work—often, but I won’t pursue that, connected to the relation to the mother, as at the end of the *Stella Dallas* essay or at the end of *A Pitch of Philosophy*—and after being among

the very first philosophers to give and enforce the appropriate attention to the feminine voice, style, and subjectivity, Cavell finds in *Little Did I Know* (despite the total absence in the book of mention of homosexuality, except about Bette Davis and *Now Voyager*, an absence to be contrasted with its recurring focus on legendary friendships) this kind of *impersonal intimacy*, thus achieving a nonheterosexual tonality of language that may be sought after in Wittgenstein, and could be at stake in *ordinary* language philosophy. *Little Did I Know* acknowledges importance by pursuing the experience and reading of film in autobiographical writing. Cavell notes, about the ontology of film, that its “source of data” is: “The appearance and significance of just these objects and people that are in fact to be found in the succession of films, or passages of films, that matter to us.”²¹

The importance of film lies in its power to make what matters emerge: “to magnify the sensation and meaning of a moment.” Film cultivates in us a specific ability to see the too-often invisible importance of things and moments, and emphasizes the covering over of importance in ordinary life.

For importance is essentially what can be *missed*, what remains unseen until later, or possibly, forever. The pedagogy of film is that while it amplifies the significance of moments, it also reveals the “inherent concealment of significance,” teaching us:

It is part of the grain of film to magnify the feeling and meaning of a moment, it is equally part of it to counter this tendency, and instead to acknowledge the fateful fact of a human life that the significance of its moments is ordinarily not given with the moments as they are lived so that to determine the significant crossroads of a life may be the work of a lifetime.²²

What Cavell describes is something else than attention or inattentiveness—it is “an inherent concealment of significance, as much as its revelation.” Experience reveals itself as defined by our quasi-cinephilic capacity for seeing detail, reading expressions. The structure of expression articulates the concealment *and* the revelation of importance, and such is the texture of life (our life form). This is the difficulty that Cavell describes when he speaks of the temptation of inexpressiveness and of isolation, and shows the essential vulnerability of human experience (another name for skepticism). We experience “the appearance and significance” of things (places, faces, patterns, words), but only afterward, after words.

Knowing Stanley has been such a privilege; we all have the feeling that we spent incredibly important moments with him, conversing, or just hanging out. Now that he is gone, we understand the privilege was that we were perfectly aware that it was important; he taught us to be aware: “an inherent concealment of significance, as much as its revelation.” Here the structure

of expression articulates the concealment *and* the revelation of importance. Such is the texture of our life form.

This is the difficulty or reality that Cavell describes when he speaks of the temptation of inexpressiveness and of isolation, and shows the essential vulnerability of human experience (another name for skepticism, missing the subject): “[T]o persist in missing the subject, which may amount to missing the evanescence of the subject, is ascribable only to ourselves, to failures of our character.”²³ Failure to pay attention to importance, it turns out, is as much a moral failure as it is (in Austin’s words) a cognitive one. Yet we discover importance not only through accurate and refined perception, but through our suffering and misperception, in other words, through our failures to perceive. Because “missing the evanescence of the subject” is constitutive of our ordinary lives, it is also at the core of writing an autobiography—as well as being the ultimate truth of skepticism. Robert Chodat has analyzed beautifully the expression “Little did I know”:

The phrase suggests a moment of being startled by such understanding—a realization that our lives extend beyond us, into circumstances that are present all the time obscure to us, recognized only through gradual revelation or renewed attention. Little did I know that my colleague could be so witty; little did I know when talking to him that his son had died just last year; little did I know that my next-door neighbor held those political beliefs. And little did I know the range of affiliations, unrecognized commitments, forgotten influences, and obscure desires that have constituted my life.²⁴

What I don’t know (what I couldn’t possibly know) is also part of what I *mean*. It is possible now to reverse the brilliant move made in the opening of *The World Viewed*, where moviegoing is defined as autobiography. Just as in *Little Did I Know*, by telling and detailing scenes and details from his past life in the context of his present life, Cavell finds the words to break the blessing and curse film is the name of, to express the hidden importance of past moments of his life; and to express the hidden importance, or uncanniness, of moments of his life, past and present—“Like childhood memories whose treasure no one else appreciates, whose content is nothing compared to their unspeakable importance for me.”²⁵ The “unspeakable importance” is put before our eyes, reveals itself: “We involve the movies in us. They become further fragments of what happens to me, further cards in the shuffle of my memory, with no telling what place in the future. Like childhood memories whose treasure no one else appreciates, whose content is nothing compared to their unspeakable importance for me.”²⁶

Acknowledging this consequence of skepticism, this failure, would be “taking yourself seriously.” Stanley was serious (he says about his father: “He

was a serious man”). Again: we all remember being perfectly aware (at the time) of the importance of these moments with him. Because he took himself, and us, seriously. “I do not, I think, know what people mean when they accuse others, so often and easily, of taking themselves too seriously. Why in the world should one not take oneself with utmost seriousness?”²⁷ In which sense am I important to myself? *Little Did I Know* answers (finally) the question of *Must We Mean What We Say?*—the question of *my relevance* to myself is the question of “true importance” (if there is such thing as fake importance, and it is evoked in the same passage—obviously, yes). What sounds like dogmatism (e.g., in the ordinary language philosopher’s claims about the uses of language, or about film tastes) is a claim about a cause (such as race, or gender) having to be taken seriously. “I think that air of dogmatism is indeed present in such claims; but if that is intolerant, that is because tolerance could only mean, as in liberals it often does, that the kind of claim in question is not taken seriously. It is, after all, a claim about our lives.”²⁸

This relevance is something that the great filmwriter, Arnaud Desplechin, has perceived. He uses a passage from Stanley’s autobiography (on its last page) in a scene in his wonderful film *Les fantômes d’Ismaël* (2017), where the heroin Carlotta (Marion Cotillard) says farewell to her father (László Szabó) at the hospital. It’s not an adaptation; these are literally the words of the passage.

“Do you understand me?”

“You mean can I hear you? Yes.”

“No, I mean am I making sense to you right now? I know sometimes I get confused.”

“You are perfectly clear. Why do you ask?”

“I have to ask you something.”

“Ask me.”

“Why are these doctors and nurses and the family running in and out of my room as if there is an emergency?”

“You know they had to place a pacemaker for your heart.”

“That’s what I mean. How old am I?”

“About eighty-three.”

“It’s enough. It’s natural. What is the emergency? If a child is seriously ill, it is an emergency. To run in and out of the room because an eighty-three year old man may die is not an emergency. It is ugly to behave this way.”

“They are just doing their job. Placing a pacemaker has become a standard medical procedure.”

“You mean I don’t have a choice?”

“I don’t know.”

“Tell them to stop.”

“That’s not my job.”

I remember seeing this film in Stanley’s company in Paris two years ago. How lucky is that? Probably Desplechin has best understood what was at stake in *Little Did I Know*, namely, that:

1. “telling one’s life becomes a way of leaving it ... Because it is a *human life*.”
2. “*human death is not natural*, confirming the formulation I have come upon so often in my efforts to describe passages of the human life form, namely that the human is the unnatural animal.”

Short of that, I have, I find, now expecting the closing of this writing from memory, drawn to exemplify, still with some surprise, the condition that telling one’s life, the more completely, say without awkwardness, it becomes one’s life, becomes a way of leaving it. And now that seems to be as it should be, given that it is a human life under question. The news is that this awkwardness, or say self-consciousness, or lack of sophistication, stops asserting itself nowhere short of dying. (Which suggests that, as throughout the progression of human life, human death is not natural, confirming the formulation I have come upon so often in my efforts to describe passages of the human life form, namely that the human is the unnatural animal.)²⁹

Maybe because I saw Stanley quite frequently these past few years, including just two months before his death, at his house in Brookline, Massachusetts, his absence still feels like a painful anomaly. It is also certainly because he remained *himself*—gave meaning by his life to the phrase *being oneself*—through to the end, both attentive to detail and fun; and because he teaches us the human importance of being alive and of having a life, one’s life. The feeling of being alive, which the early Wittgenstein would have called a species of nonsense, is something Stanley Cavell exemplified so well, and this is why his absence is so unnatural.

Notes

- 1 Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), xxviii.
- 2 Stanley Cavell, *Little Did I Know: Excerpts from Memory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 323.

- 3 J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975; William James Lectures, 1955), 148. Italics in original.
- 4 Cavell, *Little Did I Know*, 60.
- 5 J. L. Austin, "Pretending," in *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), 271.
- 6 Cavell, "Austin at Criticism," in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 103.
- 7 Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, 130.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 124.
- 9 Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 204.
- 10 Cavell, "Austin at Criticism," 103.
- 11 Cavell, *Little Did I Know*, 325.
- 12 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1953), §118.
- 13 Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979/1999), xxi.
- 14 Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 40.
- 15 Cavell, *Little Did I Know*, 115–16.
- 16 Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 5–6.
- 17 Cavell, *Little Did I Know*, 134–5.
- 18 Stanley Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), vii.
- 19 Stanley Cavell, *Contesting Tears: The Hollywood Melodrama of the Unknown Woman* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 158.
- 20 Cavell, *Contesting Tears*, 159.
- 21 Stanley Cavell, "What Becomes of Things on Film?," in *Themes Out of School: Effects and Causes* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1984).
- 22 Cavell, "The Thought of Movies," in *Themes Out of School*.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 24 Robert Chodat, *The Matter of High Words: Naturalism, Normativity, and the Postwar Sage* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 212.
- 25 Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed: Reflections on the Ontology of Film* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971, enlarged edition, 1979), 154.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 Cavell, *Little Did I Know*, 297.
- 28 Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 96.
- 29 Cavell, *Little Did I Know*, 547.

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