

## Conversation Without Convergence: Becoming Political in Uncommon Schools

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### INHERITING THE DEWEYAN TASK OF CREATING DEMOCRACY FROM WITHIN

To cooperate by giving differences a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one's life experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life.<sup>1</sup>

Being weary of the “eclipse of the public” in the 1920s, Dewey warns against the crisis of American democracy as a moral issue that has a bearing on one's personal way of life. Dewey speaks of the loss of one's integrity as a crisis of democracy and calls for “creative democracy,” the rebuilding of the public from within. This is pursued daily by the common man in the ongoing process of growth, and hence the task is inseparable from education. One of its essential conditions is *communication*. The voice of self-criticism is tested and shared in “public open out-of-doors air and light of day” as social criticism.<sup>2</sup>

Dewey's idea of achieving creative democracy from within continues to have impact on the contemporary discussion of democracy and education. The so-called “Sandel boom” in Japan demonstrates precisely this. In May 2010, Michael Sandel's *Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?* was published in Japanese<sup>3</sup> and quickly became a bestseller. Not only has “*Seigi* (justice) suddenly become a vogue word, but the book has also, by foregrounding the notion of justice, created a real interest in philosophical discussion of politics and democracy amongst the wider public. After the March 2011 earthquake in Japan, Sandel was engaged in a debate entitled “How Should We Live?: A special lecture on the earthquake in Japan,” which was broadcast on NHK.<sup>4</sup> Reviving the Deweyan spirit of creative democracy, the Sandel boom gives us an occasion to reconsider what it means for us to become public and to be engaged in political life, and what “social communication” can and should be.

While acknowledging the fertility of Deweyan communication, typified by mutual learning, free discussion, and open-mindedness, this essay ponders what might be thought of as its dark side. What would guarantee the continuation of such discussion? What shall we do when we encounter its refusal or when the sources of its renewal dry up? To what an extent can Deweyan language inspire the common man from within? By showing its limits, I shall, through the lens of Stanley Cavell's ordinary language philosophy, reexamine Ralph Waldo Emerson's idea of conversation as a stronger and deeper way of creating democracy from within. I shall elucidate the public importance and political use of his idea as *conversation without convergence, conversion through conversation*. And I shall propose a route for becoming political in “uncommon” schools.

### THE LIMITS OF COMMUNICATION: DISAGREEMENT, REFUSAL, THE UNTRANSLATABLE

According to Dewey, communication “insures participation in a common understanding,” and “consensus demands communication.”<sup>5</sup> Dewey's idea of

communication is inseparable from the idea of community,<sup>6</sup> according to which one's moral life is shared with others as "friends" in mutual criticism and mutual learning from difference.<sup>7</sup> It implies also a cross-cultural horizon. After his visit to China and Japan, Dewey wrote that "[t]he more unlike the two [countries] are, the more opportunity there is for learning."<sup>8</sup> He proposes an understanding that might reach "the inner spirit and real life of a people"<sup>9</sup> as a "real means of education, a means of insight and understanding."<sup>10</sup>

Some contemporary discussion of democracy and education by political philosophers demonstrates the significance of Dewey's idea. In *Justice*, Sandel writes that "morally engaged public discourse" involves "an attempt to reinvigorate political discourse and renew our civic life" (*JST*, 243). "[T]o achieve a just society," he claims, "we have to reason together about the meaning of the good life" (*JST*, 261). Naming this whole procedure a "politics of moral engagement" (*JST*, 269), he suggests that "moral disagreements" offer "a stronger, not a weaker, basis for mutual respect" (*JST*, 268). Sandel refers to Dewey's philosophy and appreciates the necessity of social communication, free inquiry and discussion for our democratic life.<sup>11</sup> Hence, *Justice* is a book that exemplifies a certain facet of Deweyan tradition of participatory democracy. It is filled with concrete examples of "hard moral questions," ("What would you do if...?") arising from realistic moral dilemmas (*JST*, 268). Furthermore, Sandel, like Dewey, expands the horizon of open-minded discussion beyond cultural and national borders to the end of cultivating global consciousness and a sense of global community. Such dialogue, he adds, should accommodate *both* reason *and* sympathetic understanding, and should be conducted openly in the public sphere.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly Martha Nussbaum, a proponent of cosmopolitan citizenship, praises Dewey in her most recent book, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*.<sup>13</sup> When she gave a lecture in London entitled, "Martha Nussbaum on Twenty-First Century Enlightenment,"<sup>14</sup> the occasion in itself, it might be said, and especially her passionate engagement in dialogue with the audience exemplified Deweyan communication for deliberative democracy. Nussbaum identifies Dewey as "the most influential and theoretically distinguished American practitioner of Socratic education" (*NFP*, 64) and of education for global citizenship (*NFP*, 85). Not "just an intellectual skill," his pedagogy is "an aspect of practical engagement, a stance toward problems in real life" (*NFP*, 85). At the heart of Nussbaum's view on "citizen-of-the-world education" (*NFP*, 91) is the cultivation of "inner eyes" — imaginatively sympathetic eyes directed to "the inner life of others" (*NFP*, 123). Understanding radically different others is at the heart of her political commitments to democratic inclusion and mutual respect, commitments exemplifying her Kantian cosmopolitanism (*NFP*, 141).

It is, however, the dark side of Deweyan participatory democracy that needs to be tested: *the limits of communication*. In response to the interview concerning the future of nuclear plants in Japan, Sandel advises the Japanese to continue and never give up "deliberative and careful discussion"; if people are engaged in public debate,

“democracy deepens.”<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Nussbaum proposes that “each person’s active voice” be contributed to the cultivation of “a culture of accountability” (*NFP*, 54). However, how would they respond to the *limits* in public discussion?

The first obvious limit is *disagreement*, especially in the face of moral dilemmas, though this is understood as a positive limit in facilitating mutual respect. There is, however, another layer of limit in communication: *refusal* of participation. Refusal can take various forms. If it takes the form of an active choice, the question arises of the extent to which one has the right to intrude upon those who can afford to lead apparently comfortable lives of withdrawal, who do not see any immediate need to learn from difference. But refusal can take the more subtle and negative form of resignation. Faced with refusal, one possible response would be to “respect” the choice of withdrawal.

But there is a more intractable, more radical limit to the idea of communication. This limit was disclosed in Dewey’s own cross-cultural experience in Japan, in 1919 and 1921. In the undemocratic culture of Japan at that time Dewey encountered radical difference — radical to such an extent that his humanitarian-democratic position was *incommunicable*.<sup>16</sup> Faced with the impenetrability and inscrutability of Japanese culture, his principle of sympathetic imagination toward the different was severely strained. His words became dead in the forms of life of Japan. And the episode is symbolic of the abyss that constantly jeopardizes communication between different cultures. Dewey was caught out by a real gap in cross-cultural communication in a foreign place, at a time when the emperor held sovereign power, and where the English word “democracy” was *untranslatable*.

Three limits in communication thus gradually expose points of impasse in both the problematization of limits and the attempt to overcome them. In the case of the first limit of disagreement, participants can recognize the difference in terms of disagreement as the absence of agreement. The second limit of refusal appears *before* the act of communication begins. The untranslatable as the third limit is different again: unlike the first, communication does not reach even to the point of disagreement; in contrast to the second, the problem arises *before* willingness of “engagement” is brought up. When we encounter the degree of impenetrability, unknowability, and incommunicability of a foreign culture that Dewey experienced in Japan, to repeat the mantra of open-minded, free, and public discussion will not help. “Inner eyes” will not be able to penetrate into “the inner spirit and real life of a people.”<sup>17</sup> Worse, in the discourse of mutual respect, the “inner” life of the other is in danger of being mystified as the unknown other. Of course, we can forget the untranslatable, blindfolding ourselves to this limit, and can remain involved in the healthy mode of public discussion. Does not this option, however, betray Dewey’s own quest for creative democracy?

#### CONVERSATION OF JUSTICE: THE EMERSONIAN WAY OF TRANSCENDING THE LIMIT

Philosophical problems are not solved polemically, which etymologically says, not by taking sides ... philosophical arguments must not be won (philosophy does not conquer by victimization); political arguments must not be lost (the conversation of justice must not be lost, or else the political becomes a realm of victimization).<sup>18</sup>

To show an alternative way of addressing the limits in communication, we need to reappraise Dewey's theses of creative democracy. It is Cavell who responds to this call. His representation of the *Emersonian conversation of justice* indicates an alternative way of transcending the limit. Dewey once praised Emerson as "the philosopher of democracy."<sup>19</sup> Cavell also reclaims Emerson as an American *philosopher* and as the philosopher of democracy in his call for *Emersonian moral perfectionism* (EMP):<sup>20</sup> an anti-foundationalist notion of perfection without final perfectibility, reiterated in the idea of a democracy that in our everyday life is always still to be achieved.

Cavell's EMP is in some degree a response to John Rawls. The issue of perfectionism arises most clearly in *A Theory of Justice*, in which Rawls argues that Nietzsche's perfectionism is inherently elitist.<sup>21</sup> In response, and on the strength of ample evidence of Emerson's influence on Nietzsche, Cavell finds in their work a common spirit of perfectionism and argues that Rawls misreads Nietzsche (CTS, 248). In response to the question, "Is Moral Perfectionism inherently elitist?" (CDN, 1), Cavell says no: EMP is the "criticism of democracy *from within*" (CDN, 3, emphasis added). He attempts to revive the "public importance" of Emersonian "personal conversation" (CDN, 102). A major difference between Cavell and Rawls is that, for the former, conversation in the name of democracy begins "at the end of the conversation of justice, when moral justifications come to an end and something is to be shown" (CDN, 124). What happens after justifications come to an end casts its light back over the whole, and hence conditions the kind of deliberation that takes place in conversation. If not, the latter are worthless, just games. And he would say also that it casts its light back over our very acquisition of language.

According to Cavell, Thoreau and Emerson's transcendentalism underwrites ordinary language philosophy.<sup>22</sup> In EMP, the "moral force of perfectionism does not collect in judgments but is at stake in every word" (CDN, 32). Participation in the language community is an ingredient of our political life, where "the polis is the field within which I work out my personal identity and it is the creation of (political) freedom."<sup>23</sup> It is simultaneously a process of exploring whom, in my search for the "we," I should represent. For the creation of the *polis*, one's moral relationship with others is at stake in conversation.

In the moral task of Emersonian perfectionism, in encountering the limit of communication, respect does not bring us sufficiently close to the source of our despair and disappointment. To enter this uncertain, fragile, and unforeseen territory of the moral life is the point of beginning the conversation of justice. "When my reasons come to an end and I am thrown back upon myself, upon my nature as it has so far shown itself" (CLM, 124), my ground, in this moment of separation, is threatened. At such a "crossroads" (CLM, 19), "what then breaks down is not moral argument but moral relationship" (CLM, 326). What is at stake here is to confront another person, to take his or her position into account, and bear the consequences (CLM, 326). This Cavell calls a relationship of *acknowledgment* (as opposed to knowledge) (CLM, 428), involving the "ability to make oneself an other to oneself, to learn of oneself something one did not *already* know" (CLM, 459). The point of

Emerson's conversation of justice is not to justify one's position, but rather, in order to test it, to make it vulnerable to the eye of the other.

In the case of the second limit of refusal, Cavell shows an alternative, Emersonian and Thoreauvian way of addressing it. In describing the people in the Concord of his times, Thoreau calls them the "mass of men" who "lead lives of quiet desperation."<sup>24</sup> In a similar tone, Emerson describes the hidden "tragedy of limitation and inner death" as "a secret melancholy."<sup>25</sup> Even in the course of moral debate between the elevation of society and its misery, people in "*moderate* circumstances" can subside too easily into self-indulgent mediocrity and the "mendacity of public discourse" (CTS, 189). This is a debased state of conformity, a "shrinking participation in democracy" (CDN, 51).

Here Cavell is interested in what is behind the phenomenon of human refusal, what makes us blind to others' lives *and hence* to our own. When people end a conversation with an appeal to mutual respect, such supposedly morally sensitive language may in reality operate to mask their own complacency. Behind this blindness is our fear of inexpression toward what is beyond our control (CLM, 351). Philosophers deny "how real the practical difficulty is of coming to know another person, and how little we can reveal of ourselves to another's gaze, or bear of it" (CLM, 90). The evasion of the other's mind as the unknown is in effect the denial of the other, and our own denial of this denial, which Cavell calls the mark of being human (CLM, 207). In this mechanism of rejection, "we are led to speak 'outside language games'" (CLM, 207). In other words, our own use of ordinary language can prevent us from being fully human and makes us blind to the life of the other. In the very use of our *common* language, and by the fixation of the ordinary life by language — finding "my criteria to be dead, *mere words, word-shells?*" (CLM, 84, emphasis added) — we can refuse to become human. To accept this fact is to *live the truth of skepticism* (CLM, 47, 241, 437, and 454). If the *moral* relationship with the other is to be reclaimed in the ordinary, there is a need to save dead language out of the ordinary — to reclaim "the everyday as the locale of the sublime" (CLM, 463). We may already be outside even as we are within the community: our own otherness as the *unusual*, as the *uncommon*, cannot be excluded from our common life.

Cavell's Emersonian, perfectionist task is to broach the question of how to participate again starting from within the state of loss, silence, and blindness. We need to transcend the dichotomy of the private and the public. "The alternative to speaking for myself representatively (for *someone* else's consent) is not: speaking for myself privately. The alternative is having nothing to say, being voiceless, not even mute" (CLM, 28). The public needs to be redefined beyond its identification with publicity, visibility and accountability, while the "inner" needs to be more than the private to deserve the name of "from within." The inner is not a realm circumscribed by a clear border into which we can choose to enter or not, or something to know with a higher degree of certainty. Rather it is "*pervasive*, like atmosphere, or the action of the heart" (CLM, 99). In response to the inexpressive call of the other and the inaccurate urge of one's own, one must persevere on a precarious border between the inner and the outer, the visible and the invisible, and

keep searching for the best possible expression. In place of the philosopher's wrong-headed blindness to the other's mind — avoidance by "projecting this darkness upon the other" (*CLM*, 368) — Cavell proposes that we acquire a "correct blindness," for "to live in the face of doubt, eyes happily shut would be to fall in love with the world" (*CLM*, 431).

This fluid sense of the in-between is Cavell's alternative response to the third limit of the untranslatable. When we encounter the radically different, we are open to the endless potential of expressing the inexpressive, of finding the best possible point of encounter. In Emerson's conversation, language is not used to fill the gap in communication, but to respond to the untranslatable from within an abyss.<sup>26</sup> Confronting loss and uncertainty, however, is not the negation of reason or acquiescence in irrationality; rather, it requires an alternative sense of rationality, taking responsibility for the person one confronts (*CLM*, 323). Our reason, then, is at stake in "moral encounter" (*CDN*, 112, 117; *CTS*, 187). Such relationships exceed any choice between agreement and disagreement. The criterion here "is not that of making judgments more convenient or fairer or more rational or less private; nor are criteria 'open to revision' in the face of a few unsettled or untoward judgments" (*CLM*, 31). Rather the search for criteria is a matter of mutual attunement, evoking the idea of "perfect pitch,"<sup>27</sup> which might be understood in terms of "the astonishing fact of the astonishing extent to which we do agree in judgment" (*CLM*, 31). Sensitivity to our use of language is called for in resistance to our fated blindness to humanity, to the flattened sense of justice.

CONVERSATION WITHOUT CONVERGENCE, CONVERSION THROUGH CONVERSATION:  
TUNING THE POLITICAL IN UNCOMMON SCHOOLS

Conversation is a game of circles. In conversation we pluck up the *termini* which bound the common of silence on every side .... When each new speaker strikes a new light, emancipates us from the oppression of the last speaker to oppress us with the greatness and exclusiveness of his own thought, then yields us to another redeemer, we seem to recover our rights, to become men. (*RWE*, 256)

Distinguishing this from a "social project" or "a field of fairness for individual projects" (*CTS*, 173), Cavell characterizes Emerson's expanding circles of conversation as always being on the way, never settling down in complacent convergence. The point, if any, of Emerson's conversation is not "respecting" difference itself; rather its disclosure matters to the extent that it sustains the space for what is yet to come beyond its limit — in Emerson's words, "a residuum unknown, unanalyzable" (*RWE*, 254), or in Cavell's, "the opacity, or non-transparence, of the present state of our interactions, cooperative or antagonistic" (*CTS*, 173). Hence, its virtues are "those of listening, the responsiveness to difference, the willingness for change" (*CTS*, 174). Resisting the "flattening of the self" (*CLM*, 386) behind the normalized and standardized measure of equality and fairness, it requires one's own standpoint to be found: "one to which I relate myself, one upon which I must take a stand, perhaps *an* average stand" (*CLM*, 386, emphasis added), instead of *the* average point measured in the scale of justice. This alternative sense of an average is a political implication of Emerson's *personal* conversation. What is at stake here is the kind of vulnerability the "I" exposes in confronting the other. There is no pre-existing



measure, independent of conversation, which assures you of your conviction about your moral standing. We are endlessly separate — more distant than the vocabulary of difference and disagreement can capture. It is from such precarious ground that each of us acquires an average point in mutual attunement. This is necessary if we are to keep searching for community without being merely assimilated, to resist the danger of “emotional imperialism” — a humanitarian wish, behind the language of fairness, “to view outcasts as beings different from oneself, about whose good they themselves did not require consulting” (*CLM*, 437). *Conversation without convergence* is an Emersonian political task of becoming human.

Cavell writes, “The philosophical appeal to what we say, and the search for our criteria on the basis of which we say what we say, are claims to community” (*CLM*, 20). Conversation is an occasion through which each of us discovers our voice as our own voice, as a right to be recovered. Becoming political is an educational task, and yet it cannot simply be an education of the common good as pre-given. The common things cannot simply be held in common as an *a priori* matter. Becoming human requires us to acknowledge the uncommon in our common life — to be receptive to what deviates from what we have so far perceived to be common. Becoming political is the process of the re-education of one’s relation to common language and, hence, to one’s common human nature. This is at the heart of the education inherent in Emerson’s emphasis on conversation; and it is there also in Thoreau’s “uncommon schools” (*WLD*, 74). Commonness cannot be equated with mundaneness as the average capacity for the use of common language. The common man needs to learn that he can become uncommon by being awakened from within his “moderate circumstances.” This is a vision of “liberal education,” one Thoreau wished to recreate in the ordinary, the common, “under the skies of Concord,” not in Paris or Oxford (*WLD*, 74).

The educational task of Emerson’s conversation is how to begin again, re-learning how to speak and to listen from within the state of resignation: silence gives momentum to one’s *desire to speak*. It seeks an alternative mode of speech beyond polemical debate in moral argument, beyond the language of *polemos* to which the language of sympathy has been added. This is what Cavell calls “passionate language” or the Emersonian language of the poet: a type of language that responds to the “political emotions” of depression, cynicism and irony (*CTS*, 185). Passion and desire are the sources of our “search for reason” (*CLM*, 20).

In order that we love the outer world again, Emerson’s conversation of justice involves participants in the experience of *conversion through conversation*, transcending their own limits. When they learn how to possess themselves correctly, they realize that the “soul is impersonal” (*CLM*, 361). This is Emerson’s idea of the “Over-Soul,” a state of “a higher self-possession” (*RWE*, 241). As he says: “the deeper he dives into his privatest, secretest presentiment, to his wonder he finds this is the most acceptable, most public, and universally true” (*RWE*, 53). Emerson’s perfectionist task is how to achieve the common, the universal, as the “outmost,” without avoiding the undeniable sense of the “inmost,” the personal (*RWE*, 132). The educational “outmost” cannot be measured as the “outcome” of the degree of

certainty and accuracy; rather, its measure resides in the moment of conversion “from darkness to light” (*CLM*, 102), and from mourning to morning.<sup>28</sup>

How can a teacher create this moment of self-transcendence for students? “[P]ower,” Cavell suggests, “seems to be the result of rising, not the cause,” and Emerson’s answer is “abandonment.”<sup>29</sup> We cannot tell what our motive is until we learn to speak out, to *leave* “the oppression of the last speaker.” It is to be discovered *a posteriori* when each of us learns to strike “a new light.” The conversation of justice stops when a teacher forgets, under the oppression of common language, to trust a student’s voice and his own prophetic force of language.

1. John Dewey, “Creative Democracy — The Task Before Us,” in *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 14, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 228.
2. John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct*, in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 14, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 9.
3. Michael J. Sandel, *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* (London: Penguin Books, 2010). This work will be cited as *JST* in the text for all subsequent references.
4. Michael Sandel, *Special Lecture by Michael Sandel on the Earthquake in Japan: How Should We Live?* [Michael Sandel Daishinsai Tokubetu-Kogi: Watashitachi wa Do Ikirunoka] (Tokyo: NHK Publishers, 2011).
5. John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 9, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 7–8.
6. John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, in *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 2, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), 324.
7. Dewey, “Creative Democracy,” 228.
8. John Dewey, “Some Factors in Mutual National Understanding,” in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 13, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983), 262.
9. *Ibid.*, 267.
10. *Ibid.*, 263.
11. Michael J. Sandel, *Public Philosophy: Essays on Morality in Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).
12. Michael Sandel, “Sandel Kyoju Shinsai o Kataru” [Professor Sandel Talks about the Earthquake in Japan], *Asahi Newspaper*, April 24, 2011, 6; author’s translation.
13. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). This work will be cited as *NFP* in the text for all subsequent references.
14. Martha C. Nussbaum, “Martha Nussbaum on Twenty-First Century Enlightenment,” December 16, 2010, at RSA, London.
15. Sandel, “Professor Sandel Talks.”
16. John Dewey, “Liberalism in Japan,” in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 11, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982); and “Public Opinion in Japan,” in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 13, ed. Boydston.
17. Dewey, “Some Factors in Mutual National Understanding,” 267.
18. Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words: Pedagogical Letters of a Register of the Moral Life* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 185–186. This work will be cited as *CTS* in the text for all subsequent references.
19. Dewey, “Emerson – The Philosopher of Democracy” (1903), in *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 3, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977).



20. Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990). This work will be cited as *CDN* in the text for all subsequent references.
21. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 212.
22. Stanley Cavell, *Themes Out of School: Effects and Causes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 32.
23. Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 23. This work will be cited as *CLM* in the text for all subsequent references.
24. Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden*, in *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government*, ed. William Rossi (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 5. This text will be cited as *WLD* in the text for all subsequent references.
25. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 400–411. This work will be cited as *RWE* in the text for all subsequent references. See also Stanley Cavell, *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 19, 252 n12.
26. Paul Standish discusses the idea of the abyss in translation in connection with Derrida's reading of a letter from Gershom Scholem to Franz Rosenzweig. Standish refers to the abyss as the "archetypal image of danger and judgment," evoking a sense of "bottomlessness or absence of foundation" and "the darkness of the unknown" as an entrée into understanding Scholem's recourse to the term, which figures so prominently in Derrida's discussion. See Paul Standish, "One Language, One World: The Common Measure of Education," *Philosophy of Education 2010*, ed. Gert Biesta (Urbana, IL: Philosophy of Education Society, 2011), 360–368.
27. Stanley Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).
28. Cavell, *Themes Out of School*, 54.
29. Stanley Cavell, *The Senses of Walden* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 136.