

## City

My building is not a microcosm of the city; it is just a place where people live. The door opening and closing (two doors, actually, the outside one and the one that leads from the foyer to the hall) and then there's the third door, the one to each apartment. We live on top of each other (literally) in some cubist arrangement. Cantilevered blocks of space. Cantilevered stories. Replication. Difference.

There are certain advantages to living on top of each other. You conserve a lot of energy that way. You live in blocks, or cubes, stacked so high, mirroring each other or mimicking each other, acting out remembered or future scenes, conversations. I have friends who live in bigger buildings: twelve stories, ten or eleven apartments on each floor. Every Thanksgiving, I think about the fifty to seventy different turkeys being roasted in different ovens, all on top of the other, because bathrooms and kitchens have to be built on the same lines in most buildings. When one bathroom has a leak, there is a leak in every other bathroom, all the way down, all twelve floors.

We're all haunted by people, various family members, and we find traces of them in ourselves. We want to erase them, or wonder what we've added to the whole equation with our own gestures. Wittgenstein compares language evolving along the same lines as families. Language-games are related to other language-games, but are not the same, and certainly not identical. You may dislike your brother but you

can understand him, and you probably look like him, which makes it all the harder to understand why you two can't get along. Or your father's quirks, the ones that make you most crazy, are an inverse realization of your particular strengths of character. According to Wittgenstein you only understand language if you know how to use it. Is it the same with family members?

Largeness is a myth invented for the city, which is really a series of small towns with their various webs of social life sometimes intersecting. Do these replicate each other over certain periods of time? It is statistically impossible to do anything original in the city and yet people go about their daily routines as though they were completely independent of one another, addressing the fact of the close proximity of others only when stereophonic equipment or the smell of fish cooking cause some negative sensation or disturbance.

But the city is all man-made. There's nothing untouched, in the unbridled nature sense, to speak of. It is as if every bit of real nature is perpetually trimmed and shaped. There's no room for it otherwise. Even when it snows, the piles get dumped into the river, their presence adding mass that in constrained spaces there is no room for.