Ethics and Communication for Technological Innovation

Week 6 Course Readings

Pre-Readings on INTENTIONALITY

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Guidelines for Pre-Readings

- Kindly read this entire document before coming to class
- Take notes as you read for your understanding
- The sessions for this week will be based on these readings
- Reach out to the TAs for any doubts or clarifications

Academic Sources

1. Brentano, Franz. (1995). *Psychology from an empirical standpoint*. New York: Routledge.
2. Husserl, Edmund. 1982. *Cartesian Meditations.* Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
3. AG, Peter Lang. 2010. 'Generating Wonder and Curiosity. Einstein & Zen: Learning to Learn'. 384 : 107-123.
4. Ingold, Tim. 2022. 'On not knowing and paying attention: How to walk in a possible world'. Irish Journal of Sociology. https://doi.org/10.1177/07916035221088546
5. Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2007. *Listening*. New York: Fordham University Press.
6. Plato. 1876. The Dialogues of Plato (428/27 - 348/47 BCE). Tr. Lewitt, Benjamin. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Brentano, Franz. (1995). *Psychology from an empirical standpoint*. New York: Routledge.

It is obvious that in this respect psychology appears to be at a great disadvantage compared with the other general sciences. Although many of these sciences are unable to perform experiments, astronomy in particular, none of them is incapable of making observations. In truth, psychology would become impossible if there were no way to make up for this deficiency. We can make up for it, however, at least to a certain extent, through the observation of earlier mental states in memory. It has often been claimed that this is the best means of attaining knowledge of mental facts, and philosophers of entirely different orientations are in agreement on this point.

Herbart has made explicit reference to it; and John Stuart Mill points out in his essay on Comte that it is possible to study a mental phenomenon by means of memory immediately following its manifestation. "And this is," he adds, "really the mode in which our best knowledge of intellectual acts is generally acquired. We reflect on what we have been doing, when the act is past, but when its impression in the memory is still fresh." If the attempt to observe the anger which stirs us becomes impossible because the phenomenon disappears, it is clear that an earlier state of excitement can no longer be interfered with in this way. And we really can focus our attention on a past mental phenomenon just as we can upon a present physical phenomenon, and in this way we can, so to speak, observe it. Furthermore, we could say that it is even possible to undertake experimentation on our own mental phenomena in this manner. For we can, by various means, arouse certain mental phenomena in ourselves intentionally, in order to find out whether this or that other phenomenon occurs as a result. We can then contemplate the result of the experiment calmly and attentively in our memory. (26)

Every mental phenomenon is characterised by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object (which is not to be understood here as meaning a thing), or immanent objectivity. Every mental phenomenon includes something as an object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. This intentional in-existence is characteristic exclusively of mental phenomena. No physical phenomenon exhibits anything like it. We can, therefore, define mental phenomena by saying that they are those phenomena which contain an object intentionally within themselves (68).

Husserl, Edmund. 1982. *Cartesian Meditations.* Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

We now shift the weight of transcendental evidence of the ego cogito (this word taken in the broadest Cartesian sense) from the identical ego to the manifold cogitationes, the flowing conscious life in which the identical Ego (mine, the meditator's) lives no matter what may define these expressions more particularly. (Meanwhile we understand questions about the range of the apodicticity of this evidence to be set aside.) To his conscious life for example, his sensuously perceiving and imagining life, or his asserting, valuing, or willing life the Ego can at any time direct his reflective regard ; he can contemplate it and, in respect of its contents, explicate and describe it. It would be much too great a mistake, if one said that to follow this line of research is nothing else than to make psychological descriptions based on purely internal experience, experience of one's own conscious life, and that naturally, to keep such descriptions pure, one must disregard everything psychophysical. A great mistake, because a purely

descriptive psychology of consciousness (though its true method has become understandable and available only by virtue of the new phenomenology) is not itself transcendental phenomenology as we have defined the latter, in terms of the transcendental phenomenological reduction.

To be sure, pure psychology of consciousness is a precise parallel to transcendental phenomenology of consciousness. Nevertheless the two must at first be kept strictly separate, since failure to distinguish them, which is characteristic of transcendental psychologism, makes a genuine philosophy impossible. We have here one of those seemingly trivial nuances / that make a decisive difference between right and wrong paths of philosophy. It must be continually borne in mind that all transcendental phenomenological research is inseparable from undeviating observance of the transcendental reduction, which must not be confounded with the abstractive restricting of anthropological research to purely psychic life. Accordingly the difference between the sense of a psychological, and that of a transcendental phenomenological, exploration of consciousness is immeasurably profound, though the contents to be described on the one hand and on the other can correspond. In the one case we have data belonging to the world, which is presupposed as existing, that is to say, data taken as psychic components of a man. In the other case the parallel data, with their like contents, are not taken in this manner, because the whole world, when one is in the phenomenological attitude, is not accepted as actuality, but only as an actuality-phenomenon.

If this psychologistic confusion is avoided, there remains another point of decisive importance (which moreover, with a corresponding change of attitude, is decisive also, in the realm of natural experience, for a genuine psychology of consciousness) . It must not be overlooked that epocb6 with respect to all worldly being does not at all change the fact that the manifold cogitationes relating to what is worldly bear this relation within themselves, that, e.g. the perception of this table still is, as it was before, precisely a perception of this table. In this manner, without exception, every conscious process is, in itself, consciousness of such and such, regardless of what the rightful actuality status of this objective such-and-such may be, and regardless of the circumstance that I, as standing in the transcendental attitude, abstain from acceptance of this object as well as from all my other natural acceptances. The transcendental heading, ego cogito, must therefore be broadened by adding one more member. Each cogito, each conscious process, we may also say, “means" *something or other and bears in itself,* in this manner peculiar to the *meant,* its particular cogitatum. Each does this, moreover, in its own fashion. The house-perception means a house more precisely, as this individual house and means it in the fashion peculiar to perception ; a house-memory means a house in the fashion peculiar to memory; a house-phantasy, in the fashion peculiar to phantasy. A predicative judging about a house, which perhaps is "there" perceptually, means it in just the fashion peculiar to judging; a / valuing that supervenes means it in yet another fashion; and so forth. Conscious processes are also called intentional; but then the word intentionality signifies nothing else than this universal fundamental property of consciousness: to be consciousness of something; as a cogito, to bear within itself its cogitatum. (71-73)

AG, Peter Lang. 2010. Generating Wonder and Curiosity. Einstein & Zen: Learning to Learn. 384 : 107-123.

Einstein was a powerful learner who said: "I have no special talents, I am only passionately curious." Einstein researcher Walter Isaacson thinks Einstein's curiosity is the best place to look for what constituted Einstein's genius. Einstein's genius and curiosity spanned a range between everything and nothing. His genius, which extends beyond hard science to neglected

aspects of cooperative social action, including schooling, is now becoming more fully uncovered. (107)

Einstein's fundamental belief was that freedom was necessary for creativity. Part of his notion of freedom was liberation from the self (people are highly unified free from being a separate self). Freedom from national boundaries is another of Einstein's thoughts. Vimala Thakar said: "As long as we cling to the idea that this is 'my mind, my own personal mind,' we'll have a strong tendency to want to look as good as possible. But if we observe the mind, from a nonpersonal viewpoint, from the perspective of nonownership, simply observe our minds and how they function, we'll be less trapped by judgments." (107-8)

If Einstein were writing about schooling today, he might ask: "Will more words from lectures or textbooks help one find what can't be learned from textbooks?" He may ask not only teachers and elected officials, but also citizens: "What do you wonder about? Take much time to openly wonder, imagine, and cooperatively notice what cant be learned from textbooks; then experiment, cooperatively discuss more, read and openly notice. Be silent and just notice at times. Notice what people do more than what they say." Einstein would also agree with Ananda Coomaraswamy who said: "The artist is not a special kind of person; rather each person is a special kind of artist." Einstein thought art and science are imaginatively integrated. Einstein knew the Hebrew holy writing, The Kabballah , means "receiving." He did not practice Judaism but he was very receptive and open. At the beginning of this process of thinking something that can't be learned from textbooks is an openness to receive, which is similar to an Einsteinian intellectual equivalent to a mathematicians zero. Einstein wanted schools to change from a controlling manipulative force to a freeing one to facilitate openness to the mysterious (what cant be learned from textbooks). Opening to the mysterious is opening minds to know they don't know. Knowing one doesn't know is a condition for powerful learning. Coming to know that there is no grand narrative helps one know they don't know. Through self-direction, one forms one's own narrative for any given situation. These narratives often change. Only following one grand narrative atall times often promotes mind closing and what may be considered a kind of "fundamentalist" thought that is far from what is fundamental. Consciously avoiding worry, not being overly anxious about the unknown (being open about what one is experiencing), helps one know one doesn't know. This openness helps one develop who and what one might become. (109)

Einstein's thought was unusually broad and open so as to avoid "siding," except when he considered passivity and war (he was aggressively passive and clearly for world government). Uncertainty (confusion) was common for Einstein and may have been the generator of his curiosity. His openness was so extensive that it is difficult to be certain of his limits. There are limits to E = mc2 but the limits are uncertain. As noted earlier, Scientists found that only 4% of our universe is energy and matter as we know it. The other 96% is dark energy and dark matter. Could c2 of dark m exceed the square of the speed of light? No one knows what applies to dark E or dark m. Einsteinsocial thought may be even more open in a highly acceptable way. One physicist mentioned no substance can move at the speed of light since it would take an infinite amount of energy to do so. How c2 can occur when substance can't even move at c is beyond me. Energy has a different definition than matter. Is there an inbetween point at some speed where matter is not yet quite energy nor still matter. (111).

Curiosity: Tim Ingold, "On not knowing and paying attention: How to walk in a possible world"

The man in the moon
Once as a boy, of eight or nine I think,
I was walking home from school
Along a path I always took.
On one side trees and bushes lined the way,
On the other, fields of wheat.
Ahead I saw a rod-like object poking out
Between the bushes. Was it the barrel Of a gun?
Terrified, I crept forward And found a man crouched there.
Tall and thin, he was, and full of beard.
'What are you doing?' I asked of him.
It was a telescope. 'I'm looking at the moon',
He said. And the moon looked back (2)

Somehow, it seemed to encapsulate everything I wanted to say, about the wisdom that lies in taking the time to observe, about how the inherent uncertainty and anticipation with which we creep forward in life can nevertheless open to immense possibility, about the correspondence of generations in the meeting of young minds and old, about what it takes for eyes to light up in wonder and astonishment, and about what all this means for an education that – beyond the stultification of the school classroom – truly opens our eyes to the world around us. These are my topics in the paragraphs to follow. (2)

<u>Knowledge and wisdom; self and soul</u>

The poet T S Eliot, in his Choruses from the Rock, included these lines:

Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
Where is the knowledge we have lost in information? (Eliot 1940: 72)

Has wisdom somehow dissolved into knowledge? Has knowledge dissolved into information? Could it be possible that we know too much, or that we have too much information? Never in the history of the world, it seems, has such a wealth of knowledge, and such riches of information, been married to such poverty of wisdom. In the land where knowledge is king, and information his castle, wisdom – it seems – is held in contempt. For knowledge and wisdom are not at all the same; they may indeed operate at cross-purposes. To show why they are different, I want to introduce another distinction, between the self and the soul.

The self is an invention of modern thought. Its source lies in the identification of the person I am with an interior intelligence, to which only I have immediate access. This self thinks, reflects, forms its own theories of what might be 'out there', or of the thinking of other selves, hidden from me as I am from them. It considers its options, and delivers its intentions. But it cannot, in itself, engage in lively intercourse with the real world. That is left to the body, which furnishes the self with its physical and sensory apparatus.

The soul is an idea of far more ancient provenance, and retains its force among peoples around the world as yet uncrushed by the modernist onslaught. What these people tell us is that the soul, far from being locked up within a bodily casing, is – like the air we breathe, the anima – cast upon the current of life. It is a churn or vortex, wherein life's incessant movement is momentarily pulled aside, deflected from its course, wound up on itself. As such, the soul is a site not of intention but of affectation, a concentration of energy and vitality which, like a coiled spring, holds within its torque the memory of its lively formation. As philosopher Michel Serres writes, baring his own soul: 'I am myself a deviation, and my soul declines, my global body is open, adrift. It slips, irreversibly, on the slope. Who am I? A vortex' (Serres 2000: 37).

Now as the self is distinguished from the soul, so knowledge is distinguished from wisdom. The self, in carving out a place for itself in the world, seeks the safety and security of established positions. Every increment of knowledge adds another stone to the walls with which it shores itself up against the barrage of physical externality. Thus, knowledge breeds inattention, as the self is driven ever further within a citadel of its own making. The soul, by contrast, since it is radically open to the world, is also defenceless, and therein lies its wisdom.

Whereas knowledge treats the world as its object, for wisdom the world is its milieu. Knowing is about fixing things within the concepts and categories of thought; wisdom unfixes and unsettles. To know is to have things accounted for, explained away or embedded in context so they no longer trouble us; to be wise is to bring things back into the fullness of presence, to pay attention, and to care. Knowing is rational and intellectual; wisdom relational and affective. Knowledge has its challenges, wisdom has its ways; but where the challenges of knowledge close in on their solutions, the ways of wisdom open out to a process of life. Where knowledge protects, wisdom exposes; where knowledge makes us safe, wisdom makes us vulnerable. Knowledge empowers, wisdom does not. But what wisdom loses in power it gains in existential strength. For while knowledge may hold the world to account, it is wisdom that brings it to life.

This not to say that we can do without knowledge. That would be absurd. It is rather a matter of balance. At the present juncture, the scales have tipped precipitously towards knowledge, at wisdom's expense. Our question is: how can the balance be restored? By all means let us investigate the moon, map its features, unlock its materials, speculate on its origins. But let us not seek to take possession of it. We are here on this planet, after all, at the moon's behest The wise course is to open our eyes to it, and bid welcome to its radiance. For we can only experience the moon in the shining of its light. (3)

A turn towards the world

The Scottish poet Andrew Greig has this to say on the matter: 'Sometimes the more you know the less you see. What you encounter is your knowledge, not the thing itself' (Greig 2010: 88). Might we, then, see more, experience more, come closer to the truth of things, be a little wiser, by knowing less? Blinded by knowledge, we can often fail to see what is before our eyes. We attend to things only so far as it is necessary to accommodate them within the compartments of thought, so that they can be ticked off, accounted for, understood, laid to rest But truly to attend is to bring things to presence: not to discover the truth about them, but to discover the truth that comes from them, in the experience. This is the truth of wisdom. It lies not in objective fact, or in what scientists treat as 'data'. Nor will we come any closer to it by gathering more information. For the truth of wisdom lies beyond the facts.

It is hardly surprising that in a world where facts often appear divorced from any kind of observation, where they can be invented on a whim, propagated through mass media, and manipulated to suit the interests of the powerful regardless of their veracity, we should be anxious about the fate of truth. To many, it seems that in this era of post-truth, we are cast adrift without an anchor. We are right to insist that there can be no proper facts without observation. But we are wrong, I believe, to jump to the conclusion that truth is limited to the facts, to what can be objectively ascertained. The facts of a case, for example, may prove the criminal guilty, yet the truth of guilt will ever be tested in the trials of conscience, and in the affectations of the soul. It is, as such, unfathomable; no amount of additional information will get to the bottom of it.

There is more to observation, then, than objectivity. For to observe, it is not enough merely to look at things. We have to join with them, and to follow. And it is precisely as observation goes beyond objectivity that truth goes beyond the facts. This is the moment, in our observations, when the things we study begin to tell us how to observe. In allowing ourselves into their presence rather than holding them at arm's length – in attending to them – we find that they are also guiding our attention. Attending to these ways, we also respond to them, as they respond to us. Study, then, becomes a practice of correspondence, and of care. It is a labour of love, giving back what we owe to the world for our own existence as beings within it.

Wisdom means taking our counsel from the world itself: it is to turn towards the world for what is has to teach us, to attend to it, and to accept in good grace what it has to give. But it is also to refute the division between data collection and theory building that underwrites normal science. In the protocols of science, data are not what the world offers to us; they are what we extract from it, by force or subterfuge. Having filled our bags with data we cut and run, turning our backs on the world in order to construct our knowledge of it. This is deeply unethical. If we are to even begin to address the problems of the world, we need to re-embed science in wisdom.

Let us, then, turn again towards the moon, and allow our attention to be guided by it. Let it stir the soul. Perhaps, then, the moon might help us to recover that sense of enchantment, even of astonishment, which today's science has crushed beneath the heavy boots of astronautical ambition, and which the entertainment industry has branded as a wonder drug Through all this the moon, supremely indifferent to injury and insult, continues to shine in the sky, while we, earthly beings, are still here, blessed by its light. Life goes on. (5)

Astonishment and surprise

Astonishment and surprise. But astonishment is not the same as surprise (Ingold 2011: 74–5). The distinction parallels one that I have already drawn, between anticipation and prediction. And if the other side of prediction is the failure of ignorance; the other side of anticipation is the possibility of not-knowing. I aim to show that not-knowing and ignorance are entirely different. The idea of ignorance rests on the presumption that to come into knowledge, things have to be explained to us. The idea of prediction rests on the presumption that things are explicable. Thus, ignorance and prediction are two sides of the same coin, and both are key to the rhetoric of normal science.

According to the model of conjecture and refutation, which science owes to the philosophy of Karl Popper (1950), progress in any field of inquiry lies in its cumulative record of predictive failures, which has lifted us from the state of ignorance to one of knowledgeable enlightenment.

But for science, the way to know the world is not to open oneself to it, as you would perhaps to another person, but just the contrary, to hold it at a distance. This is done by means of methodology, by which is meant a set of protocols expressly devised to immunise the investigator from any infection arising from too close a contact with the phenomena of his or her investigation. The aim, then, is to grasp these phenomena within a grid of concepts and categories.

Scientists are surprised, but not astonished, when their predictions turn out to be wrong. But prediction rests on the conceit that the world can be held to account. Scientists depend on the unexpected to know that events are taking place and history is being made. By contrast, those who are open and attentive to the world – among them, many so-called 'indigenous peoples', but also most children whose minds are yet to be subdued by adult disciplinary oppression – though perpetually astonished, are never surprised. They are not so arrogant as to believe that the world is predictable, even in principle, or that it can be held to account. Their openness, or exposure, renders them vulnerable, but it is also a source of strength, resilience and wisdom. It allows for ongoing responsiveness. Why, after all, should we gaze at the moon when we know so much about it already? Is it not because it is so astonishing? (12)

Observation: Wood, James. (2010). "Serious Noticing". *Michigan Quarterly Review.* 49(4).

Of course, I don't want my children to have exactly the same childhood as I did: that would almost be a definition of conservatism. But I do long for them to be assaulted by the pungency, by the vivid strength and strangeness of detail, as I was as a child; and I want them to notice and remember. The carbonised clergyman; dressing in bed; Tom sitting by the kitchen drinking his sweet tea; the coal men with their leather jackets—you all have your equivalent memories. They are the foundation of our writing, because we need to notice in order to write good fiction and poetry, and then in turn the writing and reading of good fiction and poetry make us better noticers, better readers of the world.

Here is a paragraph from Aleksandar Hemon's autobiographical story, "Exchange of Pleasant Words," about a drunken and exuberant family reunion—what the family calls a Hemoniad—in rural Bosnia. The viewpoint is that of a child's, close to the ground, and rather drunk:

> The noxious, sour manure stench coming from the pigsty; the howling of the only piglet left alive; the fluttering of fleeting chickens; pungent smoke coming from moribund pig-roast fires; relentless shuffling and rustling of the gravel on which many feet danced; my aunts and other auntly women trodding the kolomiyka on the gravel, their ankles universally swollen, and their skin-hued stockings descending slowly down their varicose calves; the scent of a pine plank and then prickly coarseness of its surface, as I laid my head on it and everything spun, as if I were a washing machine; my cousin Ivan's sandaled left foot tap-tapping on the stage, headed by its rotund big toe; the vast fields of cakes and pastries arrayed on the bed (on which my grandmother had expired), meticulously sorted in chocolate and non-chocolate phalanxes.(2)

I want to talk briefly about noticing, and how literature can make us better, or more serious, noticers. I will speak about three kinds of serious noticing—aesthetic noticing, human noticing, and metaphysical noticing. By aesthetic noticing, I mean the function that poetry and fiction have to help us see the world more closely and carefully—to see better, to look again at our

surroundings, natural and man-made, to look more closely at the body, to open the pores of our senses and feel the world. There are at least four areas in which fiction and poetry can tutor us: they help us to see better; they help us to select; they transfigure the world (through metaphor and imagery); and lastly, because they remind us that we are looking at something, they add an element of self-consciousness or self-referentiality to the process of looking that is usually passed over or neglected in ordinary life. In Saul Bellow's novella, Seize the Day, Tommy Wilhelm, who is in his forties, helps an old man, Mr. Rappaport, across the street. He takes him by the arm and is struck by the man's "big but light elbow." It might not seem the most extraordinary piece of writing, but consider for a moment the precision of the paradox—the bone of the elbow is large because the old man is so skinny and gnarled; but it is unexpectedly light, because Mr. Rappaport is really just skin and bone, and is gradually disappearing into his own longevity. I like to imagine the youngish writer sitting at his manuscript in 1955, or so, and trying to imagine (or perhaps remembering and imagining) the exact experience of holding an aged elbow in his hand: big . . . big but . . . big but light! (3)

In ordinary life, we don't spend very long looking at things or at people, but writers do. And good writing also involves us self-consciously in the process of looking. That's to say, literature reminds us that something or someone is being looked at, as painting does, of course. John Berger has some good words on this, in an essay on drawing:

> To draw is to look, examining the structure of experiences. A drawing of a tree shows, not a tree, but a tree-being-looked-at. Whereas the sight of a tree is registered almost instantaneously, the examination of the sight of a tree (a tree-being-looked-at) not only takes minutes or hours instead of a fraction of a second, it also involves, derives from, and refers back to, much previous experience of looking.

(Some of you might think of the famous tree in War and Peace, which Prince Andrei rides past first in early spring, and then, a month later, in late spring. On his second journey, he doesn't recognize the tree, because it is so changed. Before, it had been leafless and wintry. But now, it is in full bloom, surrounded by other trees similarly alive: "Juicy green leaves without branches broke through the stiff, hundred-year-old bark, and it was impossible to believe that this old fellow had issued them.")

John Berger's phrase, "examining the structure of experiences," nicely applies to our second category, human noticing. In practice, of course, it doesn't make much sense to separate aesthetic noticing from human noticing. All noticing is human noticing; in fiction and poetry, detail is always someone's detail, whether it's the writer's or the character's. I separate the two categories because I want to emphasise that part of serious noticing that observes the self, in all its performance and pretence, its fear and secret ambition, its pride and sadness. I'm not here to tell you everything literature can do in this area, because I'd be here all day, and because in your own reading and writing you have already discovered, or are discovering, the massive capacities of the language. What I can do is select a few areas for illumination. Obviously, it is by noticing people seriously that you begin to understand them; by looking harder, more sensitively, at people's motives, you can look around and behind them, so to speak. Fiction seems to me extraordinarily good at dramatising how contradictory people are. How we can want two opposed things at once: think of how brilliantly Dostoevsky catches this contradiction, how we love and hate at the same time, or how quickly our moods, like clouds on a windy day, scud from one shape to another.

Often, in life, I have felt that an essentially novelistic understanding of motive has helped me to begin to fathom what someone else really wants from me, or from another person. Sometimes, it is almost frightening to realise how poorly most people know themselves; it seems to put one at an almost priestly advantage over people's souls. This is another way, I suppose, of suggesting that in fiction we have the great privilege of seeing how people make themselves up—how they construct themselves out of fictions and fantasies and then choose to repress or forget that element of themselves. (4)

Truly serious noticing leads me to my third category, rather pompously called "metaphysical noticing." By this, I mean the importance of using literature to ask the deepest questions about our existence. The asking of such questions gets harder every day. Emerson once said that society was a mob, conspiring against the sovereign strength of the self. Now we are an electronic mob, and the forces of distraction are powerfully arrayed against us. It has always been the case that society never wanted a writer to write a book, something you will discover when you leave this place and try to create the space and time to write. Society doesn't want your book of stories or poems, and you will have to push against society, as if you had your shoulder to the door of a crowded room; you will have to shove your book into existence, birth it violently. As I say, this was always the case. But now, inside that crowded room whose door is pushed shut by the press of bodies, a crazy party is going on. It's not just that society doesn't want your book. Worse in some ways, it does want a book from you, but not a serious one; it wants you to enter that room and join the party and entertain everyone. We are the luckiest, most pampered, most permanently distracted, permanently entertained people who have ever lived, and while many will want you to write thrillers, and film scripts, and juicy memoirs, and TV shows, and even political speeches, very few will want you to write a serious book—a book that has the slight severity of beauty, that severity we find in great work, that still shocks us, for instance, every so often when we watch an old film (by Renoir, say, or De Sica, or Ozu, or Godard), and we realise that the filmmaker doesn't care whether we are watching or not. Indeed, the great work of art seems almost to turn away from its audience, seems almost to say: "I don't care if you encounter me or not. I exist on my own terms." How hard it will be, to be art-pleasers in an era of crowd-pleasing. (5)

Listening: Nancy, Jean-Luc. 2007. *Listening*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Assuming that there is still sense in asking questions about the limits, or about some limits, of philosophy (assuming, then, that a fundamental rhythm of illimitation and limitation does not comprise the permanent pace of philosophy itself, with a variable cadence, which might today be accelerated), we will ponder this: Is listening something of which philosophy is capable? Or—we'll insist a little, despite everything, at the risk of exaggerating the point—hasn't philosophy superimposed upon listening, beforehand and of necessity, or else substituted for listening, something else that might be more on the order of understanding?

Isn't the philosopher someone who always hears (and who hears everything), but who cannot listen, or who, more precisely, neutralises listening within himself, so that he can philosophise?

Not, however, without finding himself immediately given over to the slight, keen indecision that grates, rings out, or shouts between *''listening''* and *''understanding''*: between two kinds of hearing, between two paces [*allures*] of the same (the same sense, but what sense precisely? that's another question), between a tension and a balance, or else, if you prefer, between a sense (that one listens to) and a truth (that one understands), although the one cannot, in the long run, do without the other? It would be quite a different matter between the view or the vision and

the gaze, the goal or contemplation of the philosopher: figure and idea, theatre and theory, spectacle and speculation suit each other better, superimpose themselves on each other, even can be substituted for each other with more affinity than the audible and the intelligible, or the sonorous and the logical.

There is, at least potentially, more isomorphism between the visual and the conceptual, even if only by virtue of the fact that the morphe¯, the *''form''* implied in the idea of *''isomorphism*,'' is immediately thought or grasped on the visual plane. The sonorous, on the other hand, outweighs form. It does not dissolve it, but rather enlarges it; it gives it an amplitude, a density, and a vibration or an undulation whose outline never does anything but approach. The visual persists until its disappearance; the sonorous appears and fades away into its permanence. What is the reason for this difference, and how is it possible? Why and how can there be one or several difference(s) of ''senses'' in general, and also difference(s) between the perceiving senses and the perceived meaning, ''sensed sense'' [*les sens sensibles et le sens sense´*]? Why and how is it that something of perceived meaning has privileged a model, a support, or a referent in visual presence rather than in acoustic penetration? Why, for example, does acousmatics, or the teaching model by which the teacher remains hidden from the disciple who listens to him, belong to a prephilosophical Pythagorean esoterism, just as, much later, auricular confession corresponds to a secret intimacy of sin and forgiveness? Why, in the case of the ear, is there withdrawal and turning inward, a making resonant, but, in the case of the eye, there is manifestation and display, a making evident? Why, however, does each of these facets also touch the other, and by touching, put into play the whole system of the senses? And how, in turn, does it touch perceived meaning? How does it come to engender it or modulate it, determine it or disperse it? All these questions inevitably come to the forefront when it's a question of listening (1-3).

''To be all ears'' [eˆtre a` l'e´coute, to be listening] today forms an expression that belongs to a register of philanthropic oversensitivity, where condescension resounds alongside good intentions; thus it often has a pious ring to it. Hence, for example, the set phrases ''to be in tune with the young, with the neighborhood, with the world,'' and so on. But here I want to understand it in other registers, in completely different tonalities, and first of all in an ontological tonality: What does it mean for a being to be immersed entirely in listening, formed by listening or in listening, listening with all his being? There is no better way to do this than to look beyond present usages. After it had designated a person who listens (who spies), the word e´coute came to designate a place where one could listen in secret. Eˆ tre aux e´coutes, ''to listen in, to eavesdrop,'' consisted first in being in a concealed place where you could surprise a conversation or a confession. Eˆ tre a` l'e´coute, ''to be tuned in, to be listening,'' was in the vocabulary of military espionage before it returned, through broadcasting, to the public space, while still remaining, in the context of the telephone, an affair of confidences or stolen secrets.

So one aspect of my question will be: What secret is at stake when one truly listens, that is, when one tries to capture or surprise the sonority rather than the message? What secret is yielded—hence also made public—when we listen to a voice, an instrument, or a sound just for itself? And the other, indissociable aspect will be: What does to be listening, to be all ears, as one would say ''to be in the world,'' mean? What does it mean to exist according to listening, for it and through it, what part of experience and truth is put into play? What is at play in listening, what resonates in it, what is the tone of listening or its timbre? Is even listening itself sonorous?

The conditions of this double interrogation refer first of all simply to the meaning of the verb e´couter, ‘‘to listen.’’ Consequently, to that kernel of meaning where the use of a sensory organ (hearing, the ear, auris, a word that gives the first part of the verb auscultare, ‘‘to lend an ear,’’ ‘‘to listen attentively,’’ from which e´couter, ‘‘to listen,’’ comes) and a tension, an intention, and an attention, which the second part of the term marks, are combined.3 To listen is tendre l’oreille—literally, to stretch the ear—an expression that evokes a singular mobility, among the sensory apparatuses, of the pinna of the ear4 —it is an intensification and a concern, a curiosity or an anxiety (4-5).

If ‘‘to hear’’ is to understand the sense (either in the socalled figurative sense, or in the so-called proper sense: to hear a siren, a bird, or a drum is already each time to understand at least the rough outline of a situation, a context if not a text), to listen is to be straining toward a possible meaning, and consequently one that is not immediately accessible.

We listen to someone who is giving a speech we want to understand, or else we listen to what can arise from silence and provide a signal or a sign, or else we listen to what is called ‘‘music.’’ In the case of these first two examples, one can say, at least to simplify (if you forget voices, timbres), that listening strains toward a present sense beyond sound. In the latter case, that of music, it is from sound itself that sense is offered to auscultation. In one case, sound has a propensity to disappear; in the other case, sense has a propensity to become sound.

But here there are only two tendencies, precisely, and listening aims at—or is aroused by—the one where sound and sense mix together and resonate in each other, or through each other. (Which signifies that—and here again, in a tendential way—if, on the one hand, sense is sought in sound, on the other hand, sound, resonance, is also looked for in sense.) When he was six years old, Stravinsky listened to a mute peasant who produced unusual sounds with his arms, which the future musician tried to reproduce: he was looking for a different voice, one more or less vocal than the one that comes from the mouth; another sound for another sense than the one that is spoken. A meaning with frontiers or one on the fringes of meaning, to paraphrase Charles Rosen. To be listening is always to be on the edge of meaning, or in an edgy meaning of extremity, and as if the sound were precisely nothing else than this edge, this fringe, this margin—at least the sound that is musically listened to, that is gathered and scrutinized for itself, not, however, as an acoustic phenomenon (or not merely as one) but as a resonant meaning, a meaning whose sense is supposed to be found in resonance, and only in resonance. (7)

Interrogation: Plato. 1876. The Dialogues of Plato (428/27 - 348/47 BCE). Tr. Lewitt, Benjamin. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

SOCRATES: And is the discovery of the nature of knowledge so small a matter, as just now said? Is it not one which would task the powers of men perfect in every way?

THEAETETUS: By heaven, they should be the top of all perfection!

SOCRATES: Well, then, be of good cheer; do not say that Theodorus was mistaken about you, but do your best to ascertain the true nature of knowledge, as well as of other things.

THEAETETUS: I am eager enough, Socrates, if that would bring to light the truth.

SOCRATES: Come, you made a good beginning just now; let your own answer about roots be your model, and as you comprehended them all in one class, try and bring the many sorts of knowledge under one definition.

THEAETETUS: I can assure you, Socrates, that I have tried very often, when the report of questions asked by you was brought to me; but I can neither persuade myself that I have a satisfactory answer to give, nor hear of any one who answers as you would have him; and I cannot shake off a feeling of anxiety.

SOCRATES: These are the pangs of labour, my dear Theaetetus; you have something within you which you are bringing to the birth.

THEAETETUS: I do not know, Socrates; I only say what I feel.

SOCRATES: And have you never heard, simpleton, that I am the son of a midwife, brave and burly, whose name was Phaenarete?

THEAETETUS: Yes, I have.

SOCRATES: And that I myself practise midwifery?

THEAETETUS: No, never.

SOCRATES: Let me tell you that I do though, my friend: but you must not reveal the secret, as the world in general have not found me out; and therefore they only say of me, that I am the strangest of mortals and drive men to their wits' end. Did you ever hear that too?

THEAETETUS: Yes.

SOCRATES: Shall I tell you the reason?

THEAETETUS: By all means.

SOCRATES: Bear in mind the whole business of the midwives, and then you will see my meaning better:–No woman, as you are probably aware, who is still able to conceive and bear, attends other women, but only those who are past bearing.

THEAETETUS: Yes, I know.

SOCRATES: The reason of this is said to be that Artemis–the goddess of childbirth–is not a mother, and she honours those who are like herself; but she could not allow the barren to be midwives, because human nature cannot know the mystery of an art without experience; and therefore she assigned this office to those who are too old to bear.

THEAETETUS: I dare say.

SOCRATES: And I dare say too, or rather I am absolutely certain, that the midwives know better than others who is pregnant and who is not?

THEAETETUS: Very true.

SOCRATES: And by the use of potions and incantations they are able to arouse the pangs and to soothe them at will; they can make those bear who have a difficulty in bearing, and if they think fit they can smother the embryo in the womb.

THEAETETUS: They can.

SOCRATES: Did you ever remark that they are also most cunning matchmakers, and have a thorough knowledge of what unions are likely to produce a brave brood?

THEAETETUS: No, never.

SOCRATES: Then let me tell you that this is their greatest pride, more than cutting the umbilical cord. And if you reflect, you will see that the same art which cultivates and gathers in the fruits of the earth, will be most likely to know in what soils the several plants or seeds should be deposited.

THEAETETUS: Yes, the same art.

SOCRATES: And do you suppose that with women the case is otherwise?

THEAETETUS: I should think not.

SOCRATES: Certainly not; but midwives are respectable women who have a character to lose, and they avoid this department of their profession, because they are afraid of being called procuresses, which is a name given to those who join together man and woman in an unlawful and unscientific way; and yet the true midwife is also the true and only matchmaker.

THEAETETUS: Clearly.

SOCRATES: Such are the midwives, whose task is a very important one, but not so important as mine; for women do not bring into the world at one time real children, and at another time counterfeits which are with difficulty distinguished from them; if they did, then the discernment of the true and false birth would be the crowning achievement of the art of midwifery–you would think so?

THEAETETUS: Indeed I should.

SOCRATES: Well, my art of midwifery is in most respects like theirs; but differs, in that I attend men and not women; and look after their souls when they are in labour, and not after their bodies: and the triumph of my art is in thoroughly examining whether the thought which the mind of the young man brings forth is a false idol or a noble and true birth. And like the midwives, I am barren, and the reproach which is often made against me, that I ask questions of others and have not the wit to answer them myself, is very just–the reason is, that the god compels me to be a midwife, but does not allow me to bring forth. And therefore I am not myself at all wise, nor have I anything to show which is the invention or birth of my own soul, but those who converse with me profit. Some of them appear dull enough at first, but afterwards, as our acquaintance ripens, if the god is gracious to them, they all make astonishing progress; and this in the opinion of others as well as in their own. It is quite dear that they never

learned anything from me; the many fine discoveries to which they cling are of their own making. But to me and the god they owe their delivery.

And the proof of my words is, that many of them in their ignorance, either in their self-conceit despising me, or falling under the influence of others, have gone away too soon; and have not only lost the children of whom I had previously delivered them by an ill bringing up, but have stifled whatever else they had in them by evil communications, being fonder of lies and shams than of the truth; and they have at last ended by seeing themselves, as others see them, to be great fools. Aristeides, the son of Lysimachus, is one of them, and there are many others. The truants often return to me, and beg that I would consort with them again–they are ready to go to me on their knees–and then, if my familiar allows, which is not always the case, I receive them, and they begin to grow again. Dire are the pangs which my art is able to arouse and to allay in those who consort with me, just like the pangs of women in childbirth; night and day they are full of perplexity and travail which is even worse than that of the women. So much for them. And there are others, Theaetetus, who come to me apparently having nothing in them; and as I know that they have no need of my art, I coax them into marrying some one, and by the grace of God I can generally tell who is likely to do them good.

Many of them I have given away to Prodicus, and many to other inspired sages. I tell you this long story, friend Theaetetus, because I suspect, as indeed you seem to think yourself, that you are in labour–great with some conception. Come then to me, who am a midwife's son and myself a midwife, and do your best to answer the questions which I will ask you. And if I abstract and expose your first-born, because I discover upon inspection that the conception which you have formed is a vain shadow, do not quarrel with me on that account, as the manner of women is when their first children are taken from them. For I have actually known some who were ready to bite me when I deprived them of a darling folly; they did not perceive that I acted from goodwill, not knowing that no god is the enemy of man–that was not within the range of their ideas; neither am I their enemy in all this, but it would be wrong for me to admit falsehood, or to stifle the truth. Once more, then, Theaetetus, I repeat my old question, 'What is knowledge?'–and do not say that you cannot tell; but quit yourself like a man, and by the help of God you will be able to tell. (1736-1738)