Quiet desperation, silent melancholy: polemos and passion in citizenship education

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I. Introduction: Towards an alternative language of democracy and philosophy of education

One way to identify the crisis of democracy and education today is in terms of a loss of voice. But I am speaking here not of the question of voice as it emerges in the politics of recognition. The issue has rather to do with the failure of one's voice in its contribution to the public realm and the simultaneous pretence of its realisation in the private. Behind this division between the public and the private is a despair over the loss of the weight of one's voice, a scepticism about one's existence in society, which is tantamount to a hope that this "I" can do something to change "my" society. In the 19th century America Henry D. Thoreau expressed this sense as the "quiet desperation" he diagnosed in the people of Concord, Massachusetts (Thoreau, 1992, p. 5). In a similar strain, Emerson called it "silent melancholy" (Emerson, 1990). The despair derives from the irony of democracy's fate – that rift between, on the one hand, the fact that people's consent to society is a condition of democracy and, on the other, the fact that the life that they lead is one in which they do not know what to say or even what they *want to* say. Later in the 20th century, Dewey saw this phenomenon as the "eclipse of the public" (Dewey, 1984a, p. 304), in which "indifference is the evidence of current apathy" (pp. 311-312) and where one does not know "what one really wants" (Dewey, 1984b, p. 133). In response he proposed the recreation of the "Great Community" – a public space where different individual voices are valued and where mutual learning and cooperation take place. Contemporary scenes of democracy and education, however, exemplify the real sceptical challenge about the point of political participation, and by implication about one's place in society in relation to others. In order to rectify this growing scepticism, education in the "knowledge", "skills", and "dispositions" of citizenship has been offered as one *solution* (Crick, 2000). The nature of the scepticism, however, and the nihilistic sense of loss seem to call for something more than – perhaps something that precedes – questions of knowledge, skills and dispositions. What is called for in democracy and education is a

recovery of desire *per se* – of people's desire to say what they *want* to say and desire to participate in the creation of the public. Where can we find such a vision and language of education, and what can philosophy of education *do* in this regard?

In response, this paper attempts to offer an alternative vision of philosophy, one that addresses a dimension of language that has a crucial bearing on our desire to say what we mean: Stanley Cavell's *ordinary language philosophy*. This may seem a detour, but in fact it provides an invaluable route towards a richer understanding of what political participation and citizenship education might amount to. Cavell's approach, with its careful emphasis on language, is sometimes criticized as "linguisticism," and hence as being "impolitic" (Anderson, 2006, pp. 207, 211), or as "mere textual aestheticism" (Shusterman, 1997, p. 108), and hence demurring from action. Behind these lines of criticism lies an assumed division between action and language, and, so it is implied, the political requires the former. Cavell's ordinary language philosophy may, therefore, appear irrelevant and useless in terms of any *practical* implications for citizenship education. The way he reconstructs philosophy, however, from the perspective of ordinary language, provides us with an alternative route to citizenship, a mode of participating in democracy *from within*. I say "from within" because this attention to ordinary language touches the very fabric from which the political is constructed. Cavell's approach to scepticism in his ordinary language philosophy indicates a way out of the nihilism inherent in our democracies without abrogating our hope for words and thought, for how we relate to the language we use is part of our becoming political – the very theme of his *Emersonian moral perfectionism*. The way he re-envisions the boundaries of the philosophical and the political avoids assimilating the former to the latter: by showing instead how the former contributes to the latter, it leads us to reconsider the question of what can philosophy *do* in the crisis of democracy; it shows how philosophy and the political are inseparable from the concept of education.

In the following I first examine various features of Cavell's ordinary language philosophy. On the basis of this, his approach to scepticism is considered in terms of the way it shifts attention from knowing to acknowledging. This reveals the *private* life to be a fulcrum for examining our selves and language, and, further, a crucial condition for our becoming *public*. In the next section, significance of acknowledgement is illustrated in the light of Emersonian moral perfectionism. The crucial role of language and conversation within this is examined especially. In conclusion, I attempt to show how

Cavell's ordinary language philosophy and Emersonian moral perfectionism together can guide us beyond the nihilism of loss of voice and towards political participation – for the creation of democracy from within. Cavell's philosophy is turned towards our existential need to recover political emotion, the mainspring of a desire to think that affirms humanity as necessarily political and that, I shall conclude, must be the basis of citizenship education.

II. Cavell's ordinary language philosophy and its response to scepticism

Cavell's philosophy is profoundly influenced by J. L. Austin and Wittgenstein. Unlike the logical positivist's approach to language, with its anxious verificationism, what matters to ordinary language philosophy (hereafter abbreviated as OLP) is a particular context of life, one in which *we* commit ourselves to what we *say*. The emphasis here is on the first-person plural, "we": "we learn language and learn the world *togethe*r" and "the learning is a question of aligning language and the world" (Cavell, 1969/1976, pp. 19, 20). On the basis of this, we are already involved in *moral* responsibility to what we *should* say in a certain situation: "what we mean (intend) to say, like what we mean (intend) to do, is something we are responsible for" (p. 32). For OLP the "normative" is not something which is added later to the "descriptive" fact; it is rather the case that our ordinary activity and use of language is in itself already moral as it involves our relation to others. "Establishing a norm is not telling us how we *ought* to perform an action but telling us how the action is done, or how it is *to be* done" (p. 22). In this sense, what we say is what we *must* mean, with the element of "necessity" (p. 9).

> A statement of what we must do (or say) has point only in the context (against the background) of knowledge that we are in fact doing (or saying) a thing, but doing (saying) it – or running a definite risk of doing or saying it – badly, inappropriately, thoughtlessly, tactlessly, self-defeatingly, etc. (p. 27).

What is valued here is the "pragmatic implications" of our utterances (p. 32). This indicates another significant feature of OLP: the *performative* nature of language, of our doing something in the words we use (p. 39). When we say what we must mean, it is

already a form of action, of commitment to words, others and the world.

With these basic features, OLP readdresses the nature and role of philosophy. One thing this achieves is a resistance to that illusionary reality that has sometimes been constituted by professional philosophers themselves in their peculiar use of language, and hence, in their conception of the world. Such discourse, in the name of "clarity", traps richer possibilities of language under human control, depriving language of its autonomy. Cavell's position instead is to show that if we return ourselves and language to our "natural environment" and pay close attention to the details of particular uses of language in ordinary contexts, we commit ourselves to "clarity" of another kind (p. 41) – clarity not within "an all-embracing system" but as requiring us to say and think what makes us intelligible to the world. In other words, to return language to the ordinary is not to acquiesce in an arbitrary use of language or to reduce it to a matter of personal preference. Rather, it is to accept the open possibility of language (and by implication, its autonomy "to remind ourselves that ordinary language is natural language, and that its changing is natural" (p. 42)); and yet to keep engaged in the working out of criteria *together*: in search of where we should stand when there is no shared fixed ground.

Acceptance of and confrontation with change by OLP, without relying on the fixed standard, partly reflect its response to the anxiety of human being over the unstable, the unknown, and the non-transparent. This is most prominently demonstrated in the way Cavell addresses the philosophical debate on scepticism, especially as this relates to the mind of the other. Traditionally the debate has been conducted in terms of whether one can *know* the mind of the other. This is partly an inheritance of the problem from Kant of "the limitations of human knowledge" (Cavell, 2004, p. 127). Cavell says:

> Kant's solution to what he calls the "scandal of scepticism" is part of what has sustained or nourished my interest in tracing the scandal. Suppose we articulate Kant's solution to the scandal by saying: whatever our relation to the world as such (call this the unconditioned cause of the conditioned world) turns out to be (Kant calls this faith), it cannot be one of knowledge. Then it is a question for me whether this is an answer to skepticism or a further description of its truth (pp. 126-127).

On the basis of this Cavell edges towards the latter path, and this reveals a further

description if its truth – not as an epistemological, but as an "existential truth" (Standish and Saito, 2005, p. 218). Scepticism is "neither refuted nor accepted" (Mulhall, 1996, p. 5). What does this mean? This is shown in the way Cavell analyses the debate between a sceptic and an anti-sceptic over the claim, "I know he is in pain." His approach is to untangle how the sceptic and the anti-sceptic use words to defend their respective positions, the application of their words, and to reveal "a way of taking the words, a 'picture' of their application" as being "senseless" (Cavell, 1969/1976, p. 260). Cavell puts the question differently: What do we mean by "knowing someone is in pain" (p. 253)? He tries to elucidate what is behind the question – what is at the bottom of our persistent search and concern for knowledge of other minds. Cavell does not negate the sceptic's question: he takes it to be "a real one" (p. 262): "What [the skeptic] wants to know – namely, what it is we go on in the idea that behavior is expressive – is the right thing to want to know" (ibid.). His point is that the way both the sceptic and anti-sceptic try to answer the question misses the significant fact of human nature – what precedes their epistemological basis of analysis.

Cavell transfigures the question of scepticism along the following lines: What can language do, or how can we re-relate ourselves to what we say when we "become morally inaccessible to one another" (p. 23)? In response he does not leave the mind of the other as an inaccessibly private realm, and yet neither does he attempt to make it fully transparent in epistemological terms. He transforms the way the question is addressed:

> I take the philosophical problem of privacy. . . not to be one of finding (or denying) a 'sense' of 'same' in which two persons can (or cannot) have the same experience, but one of learning why it is that something which from one point of view looks like a common occurrence. . . from another point of view looks impossible, almost inexpressible (that I have your experiences, that I *be* you (p. 263).

The "real question" starts to emerge when we confront the other in a way that does not allow us to "appeal to a pre-existent rule or standard" (p. 23): showing the "criteria of identity" (of pain) is not "quite enough" (p. 245)[i]. The "normative" nature of moral life does not exist in appealing to a norm. To say this is not to abrogate the idea of criteria (and hence, the search for the good); it is to reconstruct its meaning.

III. Moral encounter and acknowledgment

From knowing to acknowledging

What is illuminated from within the debate between the sceptic and the non-sceptic in Cavell's analysis is "a compulsion, a nihilistic despair of the pain of acknowledging separateness" (and the expression of its denial) (Cavell, 2004, p. 112), "a process of psychic torture" (p. 117), or the failure to "capture my experience of separation from others" (Cavell, 1969/1976, p. 260). Cavell, however, tries to show that our incapacity and powerlessness is not a "metaphysical finitude" (p. 263), and he explores a "region of the concept of knowledge, one which is not a function of certainty" (p. 258). This region is *acknowledgment*, it is this that provides the mainspring of Cavell's alternative approach to scepticism. Acknowledgment is not an abrogation of knowing *per se* (and, hence, of thinking itself), or of the human wish to know the other; rather, it is a shift in the dynamics of focus in our approach to the other, attesting the best possible form of engagement with the (private) life of the other. "It is not enough that I *know* (am certain) that you suffer – I must do or reveal something (whatever can be done). In a word, I must acknowledge it, otherwise I do not know what '(your or his) being in pain' means" (p. 263). Acknowledging is related to a dimension of the moral life that precedes any purely epistemic knowing. We may succeed or fail to acknowledge others, but: "A 'failure to acknowledge' is the presence of something, a confusion, an indifference, a callousness, an exhaustion, a coldness. Spiritual emptiness is not a blank" (p. 264). A challenge to Cavell's OLP then is how to give words to this sense of unknownness, an ambiguous realm of our moral, or say, spiritual life. This requires us to commit ourselves to a continuous search for common ground through language. "[T]he appeal to 'return our words from their metaphysical to their everyday use' is to allow us the freedom, the steadiness of ground, upon which to walk again, that is to direct ourselves, to inner and outer goals" (Cavell, 2004, p. 110). The use of language together with others is the act of "conjecturing" (Cavell, 1992, p. 28) – or to use Emerson's word, "metre-making" (Standish, 2002, p. 160) – throwing words together, thinking together, and putting words on trial in the eyes (and ears) of others.

Cavell's shift of emphasis from knowing to acknowledging is part of an overarching project of re-envisioning philosophy: philosophy begins when we encounter

the unsolvable perplexities of life, "a critical impasse in the mutuality of our concepts" (Cavell, 2004, p. 185). In other words, what is at stake in acknowledgment is not *mutual* understanding, but the kind of moral encounter that is prompted by a mismatch, by the sense of a rift, of separation, of a relationship in disequilibrium. In confronting the moment when "I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned," Cavell's response, borrowing from Wittgenstein, is to keep engaged in the "eccentricities" of the unknown other in search of (a temporary, though secure) ground in "our use of language with each other" (p. 114). This involves a turn in thinking – in two ways – from problem-solving to *dissolution*, which together bypass any sense that knowledge, skills, and dispositions might be the "solution" to the problem of citizenship education or that the "scandal of scepticism" can be simply solved. Cavell writes:

> There is no question of a totality of philosophical problems that are to be systematically solved. One can also say: Philosophical problems are not solved polemically, which etymologically says, not by taking sides. . . Nothing (nothing to doubt) is left unexpressed (Cavell, 2004, p. 185).

In place of polemical problem-solving, Cavell's philosophical inclination is towards a more overarching transformation of the very way we picture the problems of life. He contrasts here a Wittgensteinian approach to problems with that of Deweyan pragmatism: "for my taste pragmatism misses the depth of human restiveness, or say misses the daily, insistent split in the self that being human cannot, without harm to itself, escape" (Cavell, 2003, p. 5). As the *Philosophical Investigations* shows repeatedly, the problems philosophy sets for itself are not so much to be solved as to be dissolved. But what that book also reveals to the attentive reader is that the philosophical pressure behind the problems does not simply dissipate but keeps coming back. One response, the one to be resisted, in the face of these pressures is to cling fast to the fixities of our understanding, our belief that systematic solutions are to be found. Another is to acknowledge the moment of impasse, the necessary rift, the inevitable separation. This, Cavell says, is Wittgenstein's "scene of instruction" (Cavell, 2004, p. 186).

Why conversation matters: an Emersonian way of acknowledgment

Cavell claims that Emerson and Thoreau "underwrite" ordinary language

philosophy (Cavell, 1984, p. 32). And his account of acknowledgment as a response to scepticism is reflected and thematised in his elaboration of Emersonian moral perfectionism (Cavell, 1990). In Emerson's writing, the philosophical import of which is curiously denied in Anglo-American professional philosophy, Cavell finds a different mode of thinking, involving commitment to language and, more broadly, change of perspective regarding the moral life. Philosophy begins when we confront "the perplexities of human life itself" (Cavell, 2004, p. 186), accept the inevitability of its critical impasses: "In the moral life," Cavell says, "the game is never over" (p. 172). And, as Emerson writes, "There are no fixtures in nature. . . The law *dissolves* the fact and holds it fluid" (Emerson, 1990, p. 166, italics added). Emerson's "Man Thinking" (Emerson, 1990, p. 45) is tested through re-engagement with language, in the face of such aporia – "not by action but by suffering, of which Emerson's continuous example is his writing, which continuously and patiently gives expression to his *aversion* to the ways things are, that is, to the ways he and his country men keep things" (Cavell, 2004, p. 139, italics added). This formulation of "suffering" and "patience", Cavell says, is Emerson's reconfiguration of Kant with now "the intellectual hemisphere of knowledge as passive or receptive and the intuitive or instinctive hemisphere as active or spontaneous" (Cavell, 1992, p. 129). Such thinking also, let it be added, reconfigures Dewey's problem-solving, as well as his account of change and action.

In Emersonian moral perfectionism, Cavell also reconsiders the meaning of morality. He asserts that it is not the constraint of the moral law (as in Kant) that guides us in the moral life but the presence of another, which is to say of someone who represents the "standpoint of perfection" (Cavell, 1990, pp. 58-59). In other words, the "constraint" is given by the "recognition and negation" of the other (p. 59) – that is, by the success or failure of acknowledgment (Cavell, 1969/1976, p. 263). Hence what is at stake in the moral life in Emersonian perfectionism is not an "ought" derived from a moral imperative but rather the question of *how* this "I" is to confront this other, who is "another myself" (Cavell, 1990, p. 59); *how* this "I" can be "drawn" beyond the present state of myself, can sustain an aspiration to a further state of myself (ibid.). The strong focus on the "I" here means that this does not sit easily within the frame of the Kantian autonomous "I"; Cavell's Emersonian "I" is already involved in the encounter with the other, or say, in a relationship in which the acknowledgement of the other is paramount.

This is a part of the reason why "conversation" and "friendship" play key roles

in Emersonian moral perfectionism, providing, as they do, occasions when we are reengaged with language together, where (ideally) we learn continually to speak again. Echoing the idea of perfection without final perfectibility, Emerson talks about the "game of conversation":

> Conversation is a game of circles. . . 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 (Emerson, 1990, p. 170).

Conversation here implies something different from the cooperation that is to the fore in Rawls' theory of justice. The imperfectability of our moral life requires us to keep testing words together. And the conversation is not identical to communication, as, for example, in Dewey's pragmatism. Communication implies *exchanging* diverse perspectives, through which mutual understanding is achieved. The point of conversation, in contrast, is not to know others, to be geared towards settling down in agreement, and consequently to share a common ground of understanding: it is rather in its disequilibrium, even its antagonism ("my friend as my enemy" [Cavell, 1990, p. 59]), that conversation serves acknowledgement. In phrasing that captures the multiple significances of marriage and remarriage in his writing, Cavell says that conversation is the occasion for "the tying of the (hitch) knot, the entanglement of lives, is on the way and will not, for some happy reason, come undone" (Cavell, 2004, p. 160). Hence, paradoxically, *con*versation involves an *a*version, "a *continual turning away* from society" and "a continual turning *toward* it" (Cavell, 1990, p. 59). The entangled movements "toward and away" never converge into a fixed point.[ii] The following description of conversation by Cavell indicates this:

> The idea of "conversation" . . . emphasizes neither a given social project nor a field of fairness for individual projects. . . What it emphasizes is, I might say, the opacity, or non-transparence, of the present state of our interactions, cooperative or antagonistic. The virtues most in request here are those of listening, the responsiveness to difference, the willingness for change (Cavell,

2004, pp. 173-174).

In short what distinguishes Cavell's perfectionist notion of "moral conversation" from Kant's or Rawls' (which tend to be dominated by "rational moral conversation") is the kind of *vulnerability* the "I" exposes in confronting the other, in sharing fate with the other. It is also the element of *risk*, of destabilizing the moral ground on which the "I" is standing, "your understanding of the other as of yourself" (p. 235). There is no pre-existing measure, independently of conversation, that assures you of your conviction about your moral standing.

Conversation provides the occasion through which the "rights of one's own desires" are given words, through which they are acknowledged (p. 182). What is alleged to be "eccentric" is not just left inaccessible, trapped in the unknown, but awaits expression. There is then a responsibility to lend an ear to "the grief, the sense of rejection, that this [person's] extended muteness bespeaks" (p. 203). The other to oneself emerges in the course of conversation in the moment when he "can ask [the other] to rescue him from his fear of expression" (p. 206). In Emersonian perfectionism a recovery from scepticism, a way out of silence (the deprivation of one's voice) points towards a regaining of this "*desire* to think", to the "possibility of thinking", against the "denial of the world" (p. 201). To be able to say "I think" is to regain "authority in his speech" (p. 203)[iii]: it is to take responsibility for "my" words. Conversation matters precisely because of this recovery, the remembrance of one's desire to speak again. And this is crucial to the political.

IV. Creating democracy from within: Towards a different kind of political participation

> [P]erfectionism holds philosophy to be an inescapable register of human life, hence of moral encounter (Cavell, 2004, pp. 186-187)

> [T]he voice I lend in recognizing a society as mine, as speaking for me, is my voice, my own. If this is perfectionism's issue, it should indicate why perfectionist claims must enter into the conversation of justice (Cavell, 1990, p. 27).

Irrespective of the apparently apolitical nature of his linguistic approach, Cavell's OLP has a structure from within which each of us learns to enter into *political* life – the "political" always being distinguished from the merely polemical, or from any problem-solving framework of thought.[iv] OLP's approach is not one of evasion but of aversion as a mode of political participation – what Thoreau calls "civil disobedience", and what Cavell identifies as "a confrontation which takes the form of a withdrawal" (Cavell, 1984, p. 50). The word "confrontation" here is significant as it connotes engagement with others, and "moral encounter" is the precondition of our political life. In this regard Cavell's OLP and Emersonian moral perfectionism can be seen as forms of relational ethics. With the mediation of language, however, and with the space for the unknown and the non-transparent being acknowledged, one's confrontational relationship with the "other" can never be immediate or direct: it is irrevocably indirect, and hence it requires a peculiar mode of neighbouring – that is, of being next to oneself, or even "beside oneself in a sane sense" as a condition of being next to others (Cavell, 1992, p. 104).

In the context of *Emersonian* moral perfectionism, the political life is more specifically the issue of American democracy – how to be engaged in "democracy as a way of life" (to borrow Dewey's expression), how ourselves, each of us, to confront the shameful condition of democracy – the state Emerson calls "secret melancholy" and Thoreau "quiet desperation", in which "consent can be neither given nor withdrawn" (Cavell, 2004, p. 198). This is the state of conformity, where "[man]" dares not say 'I think,' 'I am,'" (Emerson, 1990, p. 141) – where scepticism raises its head in doubting our mutual existence in society, in fomenting our despair at the fact that we are "left out of the basic decisions of the society," and in harbouring the insidious, nihilistic belief that "society is not mine" (Cavell, 2004, p. 188). It is, however, in this existential, even emotional sense of loss that Emersonian perfectionism finds its niche, from which it seeks its way out. Unlike Rawls' principle of justice, Cavell's politics does not leave the private life untouched but exposes it to philosophy's demands, with the hope of rekindling language and thought. Unlike Dewey's idea of democracy beginning at home (Dewey, 1984a, p. 368), a kind of home in which the issue of scepticism is held at bay, Cavell's democracy destabilises home – for what other kind of home in the end is there? This is the Emersonian perfectionist route to creating and criticising democracy *from within*, in the

passage from the private to the public. To address the private – as the non-transparent, the unknown, and the invisible – is not to take a reactionary turn towards subjective preference, imagined as this sometimes is to be the only alternative to transparency and visibility. Cavell's response to scepticism shows instead a third way of finding "my voice" – beyond any neat dichotomy of absolutism and relativism. Reconstructing criteria as a matter of "metre-making", Cavell's OLP underwrites Emerson's "finding as founding" (Cavell, 1989, p. 77) – the continuous search for foundation where there is no stable ground, or say, no common ground.

Again this is why conversation matters in the perfectionist idea of democracy – of democracy always still to be attained. It is a site in which one learns to speak together, in which one regains "authority" in one's speech and through which one's "political emotion" is resuscitated.

> In a democracy, happiness is a political emotion, as depression is; each is a contribution, oppositely, to the general mood in which our joint faith in our enterprise is maintained (Cavell, 2004, p. 185).

Being crucially related to political emotion, to a kind of language, the voice that is to be recalled in conversation is what Cavell calls "passionate utterance" (Cavell, 2005, p. 155). Passion here is not the negation of reason (as in the argument of emotivism) but a broader realisation of human reason *per se*: it does not abrogate thinking, but appeals to our *desire to* think, to bring "passion to speech" (p. 156), taking the "expressive" to be a neglected aspect of our speech (p. 159). Overturning the Kantian sphere of action and passion, it is a form of language through which to acknowledge others by reconsidering the meaning of thinking. Passionate utterance is also a feature of the performative in Cavell's OLP[v]: "A performative utterance is an offer of participation in the order of law. . . A passionate utterance is an invitation to improvisation in the disorders of desire" (p. 185). The performative here differs from performativity in Lyotard's sense and from the appeal to visible action in problem-solving that is found in Dewey's pragmatism. Cavell says we use language by "knowing which forms in what contexts are normative for performing the activities we perform by using language" (Cavell, 1969/1976, p. 33). His idea of the performative offers an alternative framework to the dichotomy between action and language. To find "my voice" is "to make a political being of me, create a polis to which I

belong" (Cavell, 2004, p. 188). This Cavellian sense of the performative makes us reconsider the meaning of action and the mode of political commitment – to build a road from the inmost to the outmost (Emerson, 1990, p. 131). Through passion and patience, it seeks to find a way "beyond nihilism" of re-relating oneself to public life (Cavell, 1992, p. 133). Passionate utterance in conversation symbolises the spirit of affirmation in Emersonian moral perfectionism, a spirit that would release our lives towards joy and wonder (Cavell, 2004, p. 189).

The exercise of one's language, testing it together in conversation, is a way of learning "membership in the polis", and this involves identifying citizens as "neighbors" (Cavell, 1992, p, 85). And yet neighboring, in the wake of Cavell's approach to scepticism, cannot be simply communal: rather it must address us to the fact that "education for citizenship is education for isolation" (pp. 85-86), of how to reach out our hands to others while acknowledging separation as the human condition.

> In acknowledging a mode of speech in or through which, by acknowledging my desire in confronting you, I declare my standing with you and single you out demanding a response in kind from you, and a response now, so making myself vulnerable to your rebuke, thus staking our future (Cavell, 2005, p. 185).

Cavellian citizenship education, underpinned by the idea of acknowledgment, cannot be assimilated into a conventional discourse of political and citizenship education, including forms of these that highlight mutual understanding and recognition. The difference is most clearly marked when it comes to what is alleged to be "eccentric" in a society. Cavell's OLP thoroughly commits itself to the realm of the eccentric, exposing the human psyche to what it wishes to avoid. Against the political slogan of citizenship with inclusion, Cavell would dare to call for citizenship *without inclusion* as the most sincere possibility of our neighbourly relations with others.

So what can philosophy of education *do* if it is to contribute to democracy and citizenship? The point of this paper, in arguing for Cavell's philosophy, is not immediately to spell out its *practical* implications. Rather it demurs from answering this question directly; it averts from any easy equation of practice with action, of the political with visible outcomes. The performative is already there inevitably in each of us: we are

already acting, already participating, when we use language together and think together, and what other language or thought can there be? And yet the fixities of our thought, and the gentility of our behaviour, can all too often stifle this. We live lives of quiet desperation. We live lives of polite conversation. The foremost task of Cavellian citizenship education, then, is to remind and inspire among students a sense of this original urgency of the performative – of passionate language and thought as a precondition for political action. In the face of the quiet desperation and silent melancholy of students in the classroom, the teacher can start by engaging them with difficult texts (in literature, in philosophy, but in so much else too) – "difficult" in the sense that the students will be challenged by the text, by the different possibilities they can find there: they can be put in a position where they must conjecture the meaning of words together, remembering that they can and want to say something. The aesthetic and the political are inseparable. The internal transformation is the seed of outward change. And finally, as Emerson says, the inmost in due time becomes outmost.

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[i] Mulhall says on this point that though our relationship to the world is "fundamentally criterial, it cannot intelligibly be assessed in terms of truth and falsity" (Mulhall, 1996, p. 7). His expression "criterial foundation" (p. 15), however, suggests an essentialist trace in his interpretation of Cavell's stance on criteria.

[ii] In discussing the political implication of Cavell's philosophy, Andrew Norris highlights the idea of conversation. In Norris' view, the value of conversation is to acquire "more eyes, different eyes," to change our perspectives, and hence this involves "a conversion or exchange of views" (Norris, 2006, p. 93). He then associates "conversion" with "a figure for a turning in which we aim *toward rather than away from* our real need (the sun, the Good, God) so that we can see (*betrachten*) the truth" (ibid., italics added). As much as this is a part of an aspect of conversation and conversion, Cavell's idea of acknowledgment is suggestive, in my view, of a more dynamic and subtle relationship between conversion and aversion (or even to say, aversion as a part of conversion) than this converging picture of conversion might convey.

[iii] Cavell says: "The point of the proof in saying 'I think' is not alone that it must be said, or thought, in taking it upon myself, but also that no one else can, that is, no one can say it for me" (Cavell, 2004, pp. 202-203).

[iv] Norris sees Cavell's philosophy "as existential politics" (Norris, 2006, p. 91) and claims that, on Cavell's view, "the individual soul's conversion is political in its origin" (p. 95). What matters for Cavell in my view, however, is not so much whether existential conversion *is* already "political" or not (as if the "political" were already there), but *the way* one *learns to become* political while at the same time destabilising the existing form of the political. In this sense, I would say our existential conversion is *educational* before being political.

[v] Cavell says: "my idea of passionate utterance turns out to be a concern with performance after all" (Cavell, 2005, p. 187).