

## **TITLE PAGE**

Title: “We are alone, and we are never alone”: The political education of human nature

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## **1. Introduction: Reconsidering the politics of environmentalism**

Henry D. Thoreau, the 19<sup>th</sup> century American transcendentalist, is known as a nature writer. The work by which he is best known, *Walden* (1854), is a record of his living in the woods at Walden Pond for nearly two years. It is interpreted typically as a book in the tradition of “American pastoralism” (Leo Marx, 1992, p. 379) and is understood as the revelation of a possible ecology or environmentalism that would resist the plundering and destructive consequences of booming industry and commerce – in other words, of capitalism (Standish and Saito, 2005, p. 222). Lawrence Buell, in his *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writings, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995) presents Thoreau’s view on nature from the perspective of environmentalism and in the light of its implications for nature politics. He points out the historical fact that Thoreau loved to read Darwin’s *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of HMS Beagle* (1839) (Buell, 1995, p. 117) and shared with Darwin the idea of the “conflation of natural and human phenomena” (p. 417). Nevertheless, unlike Darwin, Thoreau “undermines the hierarchies of civilization/barbarity” (p. 418). Buell raises three distinctive features of Thoreau’s view on nature. First is his “empirical” approach to nature. Second, Thoreau sustains “a deeply personal love and reverence for the nonhuman” (p. 137). Third is the political implication of Thoreau’s environmentalism. Thoreau dissented from “nineteenth-century norms” and propounded a “self-conscious politics of environmentalism: a defense of nature against the human invader” (p. 135). In sum, Buell concludes, Thoreau took a “path from *homocentrism* toward *biocentrism*” (p. 138, italics added).

Buell’s environmentalist reading of *Walden* may show something of its worth today, in the predicament of the post-modern globalized world – one in which the apparent advances of science and technology have risked the destruction of nature and the alienation of human beings from nature. The politics of environmentalism raises the question of how to (re)connect human beings with nature in such a way as to achieve a harmonious coexistence. Its underlying assumption is of a dichotomous picture between, on the one hand, the natural and the biological, and, on the other, the social, the cultural,

and the conventional. As Rousseau's *Emile* illustrates, the former is a purer, more aboriginal state of human nature, the latter, a state that has degenerated from its original purity. Hence, a shift from homocentrism to biocentrism is called for.

This paper questions this Buellian politics of the environment and tries to destabilize its assumptions of coexistence between man and nature. In order to show why this is problematic and to present an alternative vision of environmentalism and political education, I shall discuss Stanley Cavell's reading of Thoreau, a reading conditioned by ordinary language philosophy. Centering on Thoreau's idea of transcendence in the ordinary with the mediation of language, I shall try to show that the natural is always already cultural and that a reengagement with nature in itself is the very process of becoming political. Cavell's Thoreau will redirect us from biocentrism to humanism and provocatively turn political education away from anodyne aspirations for coexistence and towards a qualified isolation. Political education is learning how to be a "neighbor," with nature and other people, bridging the private and the public – a political education for the perfection of human nature. To be a neighbor in this sense, I shall argue, is something other than mere coexistence.

## **2. From biocentrism to humanism: Cavell's reading of Thoreau's *Walden***

Buell says that "Thoreau's environmental perception remained energized throughout his life by a sense of natural piety" (p. 129). In this regard he indicates some common traits between Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Emerson's view on nature, according to Buell, is characterized by a relation of unity, intimacy and sympathy between man and nature (p. 209). To use Emerson's own expressions, the relation is typified by "unison" (Emerson, 1957, p. 29), "il più nell' uno" (the many in the one) (p. 30), and "Unity" (p. 40). Buell says that "the Emersonian correspondence project continued to affect Thoreau's work" (p. 131). While Thoreau, however, took a "scientific," "empirical" and "detranscendentalized" approach to nature, especially after 1850 (pp. 117, 134), Buell demonstrates Thoreau's multiple identities by quoting the following phrase from his journal: "I am a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher to boot" (Thoreau quoted by Buell, 1995, p. 117). In Thoreau "pastoral aesthetics and romanticist natural piety [are found] interacting with empirical study and scientific interests" (Buell, 1995, p. 138).

It is the notion of continuity that underlies Buell's environmentalism. There is the quest for a "continuum or a monism" beyond any "binary schism" (p. 211). Thoreau's interest in Native American culture is read as a manifestation of his idea of "kinship between human and nonhuman realms" (p. 211), with nature a "common habitat" (p. 264). Politically it implies "organizing the environment in terms of its points of nonhuman interest instead of in terms of the directions and markers that most human beings depend on" (p. 135). This, Buell claims, epitomizes Thoreau's "ecocentric thinking" (p. 143). By "political" Buell does not mean "the political process as such," but rather an "interest in provoking social reflection and change" (ibid.). In this biocentric picture of a unified relationship between the human and the nonhuman, the human and the civilized are opposed to the natural and the biological, and priority is given to the latter. The political is an overarching realm in the unity of the two.

There are two initial, intuitive questions to be raised concerning Buell's reading of Thoreau and, more generally, his idea of the politics of environmentalism. First, as a way of achieving the unity of two realms, Buell presents us with a structure in which the human being is absorbed into the totality of nature: the self is relinquished in nature (p. 171) and the "persona" fades into the natural scenery (p. 476), which he refers to as an "aesthetics of relinquishment" (p. 143). Thoreau's view on nature is seen as a kind of vitalism based upon coexistence between man and nature (or the human and the nonhuman). If this is the structure of man's relation to his environment, and if this is what is at the heart of what Buell takes Thoreau to mean by being political, is it not the fate of an individual human being eventually to be assimilated into the totality of nature? A second question is related to the internal structure and the way *Walden* is written. If Thoreau is an anti-homocentric, biocentric/ecocentric environmentalist, why is it that this book is not just about nature but about nature *and language*. The fact that there is a chapter actually called "Reading" is by no means the only reason for saying that *Walden* is a book about reading and writing. These are factors that are seriously underexamined in Buell's account.

In helping us find whether these intuitive questions are adequate or not, Cavell's alternative interpretation, presented in *The Senses of Walden* (1992), sheds light not only on Thoreau's *Walden*, but also on what can be meant by environmentalism and, more broadly, the political. But we need to tread carefully with the terms here. Cavell rereads *Walden* as a book not on nonhuman transcendentalism, but on *transcendence in*

*the ordinary* as the crucial momentum for becoming political.

Thoreau's view on nature, like Emerson's, is based upon the analogy between man and nature. *Walden* is filled with detailed observations and descriptions of nature and of living creatures as "neighbors" to man. He writes:

. . . if we take the ages into our account, may there not be a civilization going on among brutes as well as men? They seemed to me to be rudimental, burrowing men, still standing on their defence, awaiting their transformation (Thoreau, 1992, p. 182).

This suggests a correspondence between man and nature, and yet at the same time, as Buell points out, it implies the overturning of any received hierarchical relationship between man and nature.

Cavell's reading, however, disturbs interpretations of Thoreau as a proponent of sheer continuity between man and nature.

"Our moulting season, like that of the fowls, must be a crisis in our lives. The loon retires to solitary ponds to spend it (I, 36)." This use of "must be" is a key to his position. What the imperative means is that our moulting season, unlike that of the fowls, is not a *natural* crisis. . . So at the heart of this apparent return to nature, it is not haphazard for him to say, "Nature is hard to be overcome, but she must be overcome (XI, 12)." Our nature is to be overcome (Cavell, 1992, p. 43).

The word "must" connotes both the sense of inference and of obligation. The analogy between men and fowls is shown by the former sense, but the latter sense indicates the distinction or, say, discontinuity between them. The double meaning of this "must" signifies that man is both a natural being and a trans-natural being. Cavell's statement that a crisis is not a "natural" accomplishment means that man, as human being, is obligated to undergo a crisis (Saito, 2005a, p. 197). As Cavell says, "nature is not my habitat, but my exemplar, my dream of habitation" (Cavell, 1992, p. 43). Here see a slight but significant difference from Buell's interpretation of nature as a place, a "common habitat." Man must overcome nature, though not necessarily by an aggressive

invasion of it. Cavell's distinction between a habitat and a habitation implies that nature is for sure a place for human beings *to live*, and yet to live does not automatically mean to find one's home in nature. In fact, the descriptions of place in *Walden* are suggestive of rather of transitivity and sojourning than of settling and owning. Yet still at the same time, Thoreau says, "There is a solid bottom everywhere" (Thoreau, 1992, p. 220), for the places you pass through can provide foundation enough in every act of finding. Hence, place is *displaced* in his writing. This is a paradoxical and dual relationship between man and nature, to live in intimacy and yet astride a rift.

How, according to Thoreau, can human beings rebuild such a relationship with nature? In response Cavell highlights Thoreau's idea of "neighboring" as our relation to nature "at its best" – "knowing the grandest laws it is executing, while nevertheless 'not wholly involved' in them" (Cavell, 1992, p. 105). The relation of neighboring is neither man's invasion of nature nor his complete immersion in it; not even "a mutual absorption" but "a perpetual nextness, as an act of neighboring or befriending" (p. 108). This is not a relationship of unity, but one of "doubleness," with the dual sense of nearness and distance (or say, continuity and discontinuity). This, Cavell says, is Thoreau's response to the Kantian project of answering skepticism (p. 64): "*Walden*, in effect, provides a transcendental deduction for the concepts of the-thing-in-itself and for determination – something Kant ought, so to speak, to have done" (p. 95), that is, "[t]he externality of the world is articulated by Thoreau as its nextness to me" (p. 107).

Thoreau's act of living in the woods at Walden Pond is an experiment in displacing and rebuilding the relationship between man and nature: that is, it is a "continuous activity" of "*placing* ourselves in the world" (p. 53). In Cavell's reading of Thoreau, language plays a crucial role in this experiment. *Walden* is a book about "the creation of a world by a word" (p. 112). It is only through words (relearned) that we can release nature from the bondage created by human beings, and recover for ourselves the things of this world (p. 64). The writer of *Walden* stands "on tiptoe" (Thoreau, 1992, p. 71), on the border between man and nature. And as Cavell remarks, "Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads" (p. 188; Cavell, 1992, p. 112). Walden Pond is the point of contact at which heaven and earth meet: Thoreau as a human being locates himself between heaven and animal, representing the position of achieving transcendence from within nature, to become human again.

The relationship of neighboring between human beings and nature represented by Cavell's Thoreau contrasts with the picture one gains from Buell, with its emphasis on unity, continuity, and, as we saw, the conflation of natural and human phenomena. Though Buell acknowledges Cavell's idea of "nextness," he fails to pick up the ways that this is different from (or say, more complicated than) the coexistence and "sympathetic intimacy" implied in his own account (Buell, 1995, p. 364). It is this critical juncture at which language plays its crucial role in Cavell's reading. If *Walden* is the record of the recreation of the world by the word, it cannot be the case that the human being immerses himself in nature as the "nonhuman," hence, as *dehumanized*. Such labor is rather, as Cavell says, the "work of humanization" (Cavell, 1992, p. 76).

### **3. Transcendence, the ordinary, and language**

Cavell says that Thoreau's transcendentalism underwrites *ordinary language* philosophy (and, by implication, that language plays a crucial role in transcendence) (Cavell, 1984, p. 32). The unique features of language are elucidated not only by Thoreau's direct reference to the role of language in *Walden*, but also by the trace of language that Thoreau, writing on the border between heaven and earth, between the human and nature, has left us: that is, the book of *Walden* as the record of his experiment in living. Let us note three points about this.

First, language not only serves as a bridge between man and nature, but also constitutes a rift: it demands not only sharing and continuity, but also separation. This is captured by Thoreau's and Cavell's idea of the father tongue – "a reserved and select expression, too significant to be heard by the ear, which we must be born again in order to speak" (Thoreau, 1992, p. 69; Cavell, 1992, p. 15). In his theory of communication John Dewey says that language is "the cherishing mother of all significance" (Dewey, 1981, p. 146). Thoreau and Cavell, by contrast, while not negating the role of the "mother tongue," say that the human being needs connection with the father tongue, in order to "be born again." If the mother tongue is characterized by the immediacy typically represented by spoken language, the father tongue is represented by written language as "the maturity and experience" of the mother tongue (Thoreau, 1992, p. 68; Cavell, 1992, p. 15). We are as humans fated to this dual relation to language. The experience of rebirth is inevitably associated with death, with the image of ourselves

being divided by “a line of words so matured and experienced,” divided as if by a sword (Thoreau, 1992, p. 66; Cavell, 1992, p. 17). The image of death and the undergoing of rebirth symbolizes the moment of crisis brought by this heightened, more exacting relation to language. From this perspective, Cavell reads *Walden* as a book an attempt to “free us and our language of one another, to discover the autonomy of each” (Cavell, 1992, p. 63).

Second, language in Thoreau’s transcendentalism serves not to solidify the object or meaning, but to confront and acknowledge the gap that lies between the occurrence of words and of objects: word and object (via the human being) do not stand in a relationship of correspondence. The gap between soul and body, and of mind and world, is underwritten by the nature of language. The sense of the rift entailed by language betrays our expectation of correspondence. In *The Claim of Reason*, Cavell expresses this mismatch in such expressions as: “I found that words were not failing me (not, anyway, in the sense that they were abandoning me); they were overwhelming me” (Cavell, 1979, p. 61); and “words have not failed me, but I have gladly left them behind” (p. 63). Thoreau expresses this with the phrasing: “the volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement” (Thoreau, 1992, p. 217; Cavell, 1992, p. 27). Truth refuses to be finally fixed: it is “instantly *translated*” (ibid.) This might be said to be Thoreau’s anti-representationalist view of language. He sees language as characterized by transitivity and volatility.

Third, with the mediation of language, man is engaged in the task of temporal dislocation and relocation. The following passage symbolizes this:

In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and the future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line (Thoreau, 1992, p. 11; Cavell, 1992, p. 9).

The act of “notching” the nick of time, standing in this moment, requires a certain exactness, as well as the acceptance of precariousness and uncertainty, captured by the image of standing on a tightrope. “We should live quite laxly and undefined in front, our outlines dim and misty on that side” (Thoreau, 1992, p. 216). Language is prophetic

here. The temporal nextness, going beyond what is, invites the self to go beyond itself. As Thoreau declares: “I desire to speak somewhere *without* bounds; like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments” (ibid.). Awakening and rebirth, or say, transcendence, are not simply natural bestowals or accidental events: rather they are the work of humanization through language.

Man is a natural being all the way through, while at the same time fated to live as a trans-natural being. And yet, the “natural” here does not mean the biological as opposed to the cultural. Human nature is already involved in linguistic activity, and hence there is no such thing as the purity of a child’s natural impulse existing before language. *Human nature is already and always cultural and social*. For Thoreau, the process of socialization is accompanied by phenomenological and temporal displacement and relocation, with the moment of crisis and rebirth as the critical juncture and disjuncture between the human being and nature, and within human beings themselves. Thoreau’s father’s tongue serves to undergo such a disjunctive moment. This implies that language does not serve to solve or absorb a tension between natural instinct and culture, but to sustain the rift.

A parallel difference here is observed between Buell’s and Cavell’s interpretations of Thoreau. Buell appreciates Cavell’s representation of *Walden* as a “post-Kantian recovery of the thing-in-itself by apprehending nature’s ‘nextness to me’” (Buell, 1995, p. 364). From here Buell draws his own interpretation that “[n]ature remains other but connected, meaningful albeit not fully known: not terrain, but place” (p. 268). It follows that human beings undergoes a “process of conversion” in nature (i.e., in Walden), to be enlightened by nature to nonhuman interests, and to reenter “civilized life” again as human beings but with a different (allegedly broader) perspective on social life. In this scheme, “conversion” and rebirth are represented as if they were purified and spiritual moments in nature, outside society: the inner (the private) is juxtaposed against the outer (the public). By contrast, Cavell represents Thoreau’s placing himself “one mile from any neighbor” not as a romantic “literary withdrawal,” but as an act of manifesting himself as a “visible saint” (Cavell, 1992, p. 11). Acting as an example to his neighbors, he symbolically stands at the intersection between the natural and the social.

In contrast to Buell, Cavell considers “being alone” and “separateness” to be conditions of neighboring (p. 54). Still this is not a matter of choice between being alone or being with others. With the tone of paradox, Cavell says that the drift of

*Walden* is that “we are alone, and that we are never alone” (p. 80): the realization of our kinships is “an endless realization of our separateness” (p. 54). This directs us to a dimension of social relationships that exceeds the state of coexistence. Cavell’s philosophy of ordinary language is not merely a linguistic analysis: it has social implications. It is demonstrated in the emphasis on the “we” in the language community and the “I” as the voice of dissent. Engagement with “criteria” is the discovery of who your neighbor is: you cannot know a priori who your neighbor is (Cavell, 1979, p. 22).

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. And the claim to community is always a search for the basis upon which it can or has been established (p. 20).

Participation in the language community has political implications. First, human beings as linguistic beings are already involved in a social contract. “What I consent to, in consenting to the contract, is not mere obedience, but membership in polis. . . [C]itizenship . . . is the same as my autonomy; the polis is the field within which I work out my personal identity and it is the creation of (political) freedom” (p. 23). Second, the political is reconsidered in such a way as to form an extension of one’s self-examination and discovery of others. A Cavellian approach bridges the psychological (or psychoanalytic) with the political. “Political” here means the process of discovering one’s neighbor while discovering one’s contributing of one’s own voice to the community. Third, in Thoreau’s experiment in living, at *Walden* and in the writing of *Walden*, this political relationship already manifests itself within nature. Through ongoing moments of conversion through language, as it were, from the inner to the outer, we learn to be good neighbors, “to get our living together” (Thoreau, 1992, p. 49; Cavell, 1992, p. 79).

In the dynamics of the “we” and the “I,” of aloneness and togetherness, Thoreau’s and Cavell’s views on language shed light on what might be called an alternative space for “privacy” or the inner – one that is distinguished from egocentrism and monologue. There is nothing inward, no “ghost in the machine,” which is the essence of the self, or the original mold of the self. This alternative innerness is crucial for the sake of and in the process of realizing outwardness (or becoming public) from

within. It is different from Buell's reading of Thoreau because of its combination of the fading of the persona in nature *and* the retaining of a "coherent figure" and "responsible agent" in society (Buell, 1995, pp. 477, 549). Cavell's reading of Thoreau's idea of the self does not fall into this dichotomous scheme. The Thoreauvian self dissolves, and yet at the same time, there is an "intimation of the wholeness of the self. . . out of a present sense of incoherence or division or incompleteness" (Cavell, 1992, p. 103). The partiality of the self remains throughout, while the self is dissolved constantly, sustaining the space for the strange and the unknown both within and without the self (i.e., the natural fact confronted by the "I"). The relationship of neighborhood, then, is built not only outside others, but also within oneself. This Cavell and Thoreau call the state of the "double" – "consciousness of self, and of the self's standing, beyond self-consciousness," or "being beside oneself" (pp. 102, 104). This dual relation can never be reduced to "mutual absorption" but continues to a "perpetual nextness" (p. 108). Thoreau's and Cavell's idea of individual separation, with its prophetic force, cannot be fully realized in a confluence with nature.

#### **4. Conclusion: Political education for isolation**

[T]hose capable of the deepest personal confession (Augustine, Luther, Rousseau, Thoreau, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, Freud) were most convinced they were speaking from the most hidden knowledge of others (Cavell, 1979, p. 109).

In philosophizing, I have to bring my own language and life into imagination. What I require is a convening of my culture's criteria, in order to confront them with my words and life as I pursue them and as I may imagine them; and at the same time to confront my words and life as I pursue them with the life my culture's words may imagine for me: to confront the culture with itself, along the lines in which it meets in me (p. 125).

The discussion of this paper started with initial and intuitive questions concerning Buell's environmental politics, a politics based on the ideas of coexistence

and of a dichotomization of the human and the nonhuman. Buell speaks of a conflation, but ironically his understanding of this depends upon an initial dichotomization, one that on Thoreau's view is, I have tried to show, unwarranted. Cavell's rereading of Thoreau has shown what is missing from Buell's approach, and it offers an alternative possibility for our engagement with the environment, an alternative way of becoming political.

In considering our way of being with and in the environment, Cavell's philosophy of ordinary language transcends the dichotomy of the natural (impulse of the child or instinct) and the conventional (the norms and normality of adults or culture), and brings into the picture the idea of "a natural fact" (p. 125) as a "new (human) nature" (p. 121). The natural here cannot simply be biological (as juxtaposed against the social or conventional). Rather it is already a part of our civilization and culture, and so is broader than what we consider to be conventional in our social lives. The gap between natural instinct and culture is not a dichotomy between abnormality (as unconventional) or dissent (as nonconformist), on the one hand, and normality or conventionality, on the other. Cavell says that the skeptic's doubt that there are other minds is tantamount to denial of, or failure to confront, the natural fact of shared forms of life (p. 109), for these inevitably include elements of dissonance and the abnormal (p. 112). The presence of a "lunatic child" in Cavell symbolizes the natural fact of the asymmetry between teaching and learning (ibid.). The "I" is the locus in which the natural and the cultural meet each other in the language community, in which the gap (with the sense of the unknown) must always remain. The unknown, however, is not to be mystified. Rather it is the starting point of our rethinking and rebuilding our conventions from within, and hence reconstructing our political lives.

Cavell claims, that *Walden* is "a tract of political education," with the provocative thesis that "education for citizenship is education for isolation" (Cavell, 1992, pp. 85-86). "Self-examination" is at the heart of Cavell's/Thoreau's political education (Cavell, 1979, p. 25). Its implications are diverse. It resists the contemporary communal politics, which is often based upon the natural home as a place to return. It reminds us that we are always at the border of acceding to the closure of politics, in the shadow of inclusion. This is legitimized by the idea that the natural is cultural because it disturbs the romantic purification of nature in spiritual education, or naïve realism (with its concomitant illusion of being in direct commerce with nature). By resisting the

taming of voice and aesthetic judgment by the sloganizing of environmental politics, it protects the space of the dissident “I” as member of the polis. Thoreau’s philosophy of language, with its idea of the father’s tongue, characterized by doubleness, nextness, and transitivity, provides us with the mechanism in which the singularity of an individual is never dissipated in publicity and sharing, and yet at the same time, without falling into the “interiorisation of the spiritual” (Standish, 2009). One’s reengagement with the father tongue is a way of sustaining the space of the inner and the sense of rift – what Cavell calls “the daily, insistent split in the self that being human cannot . . . escape” (Cavell, 2004CW, p. 5) – the only means through which transcendence (the moment of converting crisis into hope) takes place: it is through this that the public is energized from within.

Thus the political (the most outward) needs the natural (as the cultural), and the natural awaits transcendence (the most inward): to become political from the inmost, we need education. There is no society before individuation: singularity and eccentricity of the self needs to be acknowledged before and throughout the process of socialization. It is this component of separation and isolation that is missing from the discourse of coexistence. The idea of participation in the language community implies that each self is responsible to her own voice, to be contributed to “her” society (which is a democratic aspect of American transcendentalism.) Hence, the perspective of dissent in Cavell’s philosophy of ordinary language is never a proposal for anarchism; nor is returning language to the ordinary simply as an endorsement of a common society with its averaged, everyday, mundane use of language. Rather it means to rethink our familiar relation to our words, to *return* ourselves to the ordinary, while *returning* the ordinary itself. Such returning is the very meaning of transcendence in the ordinary. Transcendence here does not mean some quasi-religious or mystical experience, or dramatic moment of conversion which takes place in exceptional (say, *extraordinary*) moments. It does not mean some purified movement upward, but rather, “transcendence downward” (Standish, 2008), to keep finding a solid bottom. It is the continuous activity of undergoing the moment of rebirth from within the ordinary, through language.

The following passage from *The Claim of Reason* captures the sense of transcendence that is at the heart of Cavell’s idea of the education of human nature:

The anxiety in teaching, in serious communication, is that I myself require education. And for grownups this is not natural growth, but *change*. Conversion is a turning of our natural reactions; so it is symbolized as rebirth (Cavell, 1979, p. 125).

Philosophy as the education of grownups here points to the very moment when we stand on tiptoe, at the limits of language, when I am thrown back to my own nature, to reexamine my relation to my culture. At such critical junctures, it is not that normal adults accept the abnormal child. Neither is this a matter of the celebration of the diverse talents of unique individuals. Philosophy as education begins when we lose our way.

When we think about how the experience of transcendence can find its place in the tide of globalization today, we realize that it must be geared neither towards biocentrism nor spiritualism in any dichotomous scheme of nature and civilization. Instead transcendence in the ordinary seeks to return humans to *human* nature (with the mediation of language, that is, through thinking). Linguistic activity itself is the work of humanization. Hence, political education is in a broad sense language education. Philosophy as the education of grownups is a call for education to regain humanity, for us to become human again, to become more humane.

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