

1. The Question of the New: Wittgenstein, Kuhn, Cavell

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Introduction

The editors of this special issue of the *Journal of Cavellian Studies* invited contributors to write on Stanley Cavell and Thomas Kuhn. Unfortunately, this paper will end with Kuhn. The reason is simple: I found that I couldn't begin writing anything on Cavell and the new before I had set up the literary and historical framework for the project, and before I had discussed Ludwig Wittgenstein's work on aspect-seeing and Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962).¹ These are the parts of my work in progress that I'll share here.

This paper is an excerpt from my work in progress on the question of the new in literary history, a subject that has interested me ever since I first began to think seriously about Henrik Ibsen's revolution of modern theater.² Literary history is built on claims about change, emergence, breaks, even revolutions. But such terms require the concept of the new. How does the new arise? What do we mean when we claim that something is new?

In my current project I first discuss the new as a problem for literary critics and historians by briefly looking at what Fredric Jameson and Michael North has to say about the matter. Then I turn to Wittgenstein, Kuhn, and Cavell to work out a better philosophy of the new. Finally, I investigate two concrete cases of the new, to see how far the new philosophical framework helps to understand literary historical change. The first case is the emergence of modernism in the 19th century. Examples include Ibsen, of

1. Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 50th Anniversary ed. (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2012). Further references will be abbreviated to SSR.

2. See Toril Moi, *Henrik Ibsen and the Birth of Modernism: Art, Theater, Philosophy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

course, but also Charles Baudelaire, Gustave Flaubert, Oscar Wilde, and Maurice Maeterlinck, just to mention a few. Then, in the final chapter, I ask whether the recent emergence of autofiction marks the beginning of something new in literary history. Here my major example will be Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle*, but I will also consider writers such as Serge Doubrovsky, G. W. Sebald, and Annie Ernaux.

The question of the new is profoundly interdisciplinary, for it is relevant to every historical and historicizing discipline. The subject of the new is situated at the intersection of history, philosophy and literary criticism. To ask about the new in literary history is also to ask about the new in the humanities. I am not, however, trying to work out an overarching theory of the new. Rather, my examples and analyses stand as an invitation to readers to look and see, to consider to what extent my analysis may be useful to their own efforts to think about change in history.

About Wittgenstein, Kuhn, Cavell, and the New

Although Cavell never wrote an essay entitled "The New" or "On Change," he did write about the (modernist) revolution in philosophy introduced by Wittgenstein and Austin, and about the advent of modernism in the arts, particularly in music. As Ingeborg Löfgren has shown, Cavell's signature concern in his discussion of modernism in the arts is the question of fraudulence.³ By "fraudulence" Cavell means the way modernist art forces the reader or beholder to use her own judgment as to whether the work before her is art, as opposed to some kind of gimmick. In the history of literary modernism, a version of this question does in fact regularly arise, often in the negative, as when a critic declares that a new work is so awful that it doesn't deserve to be called art at all. (This was, for example, a common response to Ibsen's *Ghosts* when it first opened in 1881.)⁴

The theme of the new also emerges in Cavell's elucidations of Wittgenstein's vision of language. He writes beautifully, in many different texts, about the way in

3. See Ingeborg Löfgren, *Interpretive Skepticism: Stanley Cavell, New Criticism, and Literary Interpretation* (Uppsala: Litteraturvetenskapliga Institutionen, 2015.)

4. Cavell examines the question of fraudulence most extensively in Cavell, "Music Discomposed," in *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 180-212.

which we learn words in quite specific contexts, and then, miraculously, find ourselves able to go on to use them — project them — in completely different contexts. Sometimes our projections surprise and delight us with their power to show us something new, something we didn't know until we put it in just that new way. Whoever first said "I have to feed the meter," or "He's gaslighting you" may have felt that thrill. (This is why Cavell resists attempts to reduce Wittgenstein's vision of language to a narrow understanding of "rule-following.") It is also why a study of the emergence of the new needs to spend some time asking about the role of metaphors.)⁵

To understand Cavell's thinking about the new, it helps to have a clear view of Kuhn's thinking about the subject. Conversely, it helps to know Cavell and Wittgenstein if one is to see what Kuhn is doing. There are biographical reasons for this. Cavell and Kuhn forged a deep intellectual companionship when they both worked at Berkeley in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the period in which Kuhn was working on *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and Cavell on his foundational essays "Must We Mean What We Say?" (1959) and "On the Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy" (1962).⁶ Given that Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (PI) wasn't published until 1953, the two men were reading it at a time when philosophers were still just beginning to work out what Wittgenstein was actually doing in the book.⁷ No wonder their conversations felt like a passionate discovery of a new way of thinking about philosophy and the world.⁸

As the example of Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir shows, attempts to reduce regular and ongoing conversations between two brilliant thinkers to a one-directional influence running from a dominant to a receptive partner are rarely convincing. I take Cavell's and Kuhn's intellectual relationship to have been one of mutual illumination and inspiration. It doesn't follow that their understanding of

5. For more on projection of words, see ch. 7 in Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

6. Cavell, "Must We Mean What We Say?" and "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 1-40 and 41-67.

7. My references are to Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: The German Text, with an English Translation*, 4th ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), abbreviated to PI.

8. Anyone interested in a more detailed account should read Vasso Kindi's careful elucidation of their relationship, "Novelty and Revolution in Art and Science: The Connection between Kuhn and Cavell," *Perspectives on Science* 18, no. 3 (2010): 284-310.

Wittgenstein was identical in all respects.⁹ Nevertheless, both Kuhn and Cavell's work on the new only really becomes comprehensible when read in the light of Wittgenstein.¹⁰ While Kuhn leans more heavily than Cavell on the section on aspect-seeing in *Philosophy of Psychology - A Fragment* (PPF, previously known as "Part II" of *Philosophical Investigations*), both men are profoundly inspired by Wittgenstein's vision of language and his critique of the traditional notion of concepts.

Cavell and Kuhn both emphasize the mutuality of their intellectual exchanges. In his introduction to *Structure*, Kuhn expresses wonder at their intellectual compatibility: "That Cavell, a philosopher mainly concerned with ethics and aesthetics, should have reached conclusions quite so congruent to my own has been a constant source of stimulation and encouragement to me. He is, furthermore, the only person with whom I have ever been able to explore my ideas in incomplete sentences."¹¹ Cavell reciprocates by stressing how much he learned from conversations with Kuhn "about the nature of history and, in particular, about the relations between the histories of science and of philosophy."¹² Cavell was the first to tell Kuhn that many of the questions he was trying to think about had been illuminated by J. L. Austin and Wittgenstein. He also made Kuhn think hard about the question of "what causes conviction."¹³ At the same time, Cavell stressed how much he learned from Kuhn in those early days: "It was my clear impression that I was learning more from our exchanges, gathering more food for thought, than Tom was, more material about how language is open to the world, or the future, how concepts change, why the openness of concepts to projection into strange contexts is what makes language possible [...]."¹⁴ Anyone

9. At least one passage in *Structure* reads like a parallel version of a passage in Cavell's 1962 essay. A closer examination of the differences and similarities might be quite illuminating for their different views. I briefly refer to these passages below.

10. K. Brad Wray argues that Kuhn owes more to V. O. Quine than to Wittgenstein. See Wray, *Kuhn's Intellectual Path: Charting The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021). I think there is a good case for modifying that argument in the light of Sandra Laugier's excellent account of what the later Wittgenstein and Quine have in common. See Laugier, *Why We Need Ordinary Language Philosophy*, trans. Daniela Ginsburg (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013).

11. SSR, xlv.

12. Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?: A Book of Essays*, xiv.

13. Cavell, *Little Did I Know: Excerpts From Memory* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010), 355.

14. *Ibid.*

familiar with Cavell's philosophy will recognize that he is here expressing some of the cornerstones of his own mature thought.¹⁵

Why Care About the New? Jameson and North

Why should we care about the new? For historians, the reason is obvious: without some kind of concept of newness, we can't really historicize anything. The concept of the new is grammatically connected (in Wittgenstein's sense of "grammar") not just to the old, but to a whole network of other terms: beginnings, endings, before, after, change, break, transition, transformation, and revolution. Without the concept of the new, it becomes impossible to periodize. But to periodize can be an uncomfortable activity. What was intended as a subtle analysis of a complex network of phenomena quickly gets reduced to a story about sharp boundaries and gives rise to talk about "breaks." Yet when we immerse ourselves in the historical evidence, actual breaks can be extremely difficult to find.¹⁶ The messy details of the historical record quickly make most boundary-drawing seem arbitrary. Yet, as Fredric Jameson puts it: if we are to think about history, "We cannot not periodize."¹⁷

There is no need to be a historian to realize why we need a workable understanding of what we do when we talk about the new. Existentially and politically the idea of the new is grammatically connected to hope. If we genuinely believed that nothing is ever new under the sun, what would sustain us in the struggle to change the world? The belief that modernity brought on the climate crisis, for example, relies heavily on the concept of the new. It posits a before and conjures up a vision of an af-

15. A final introductory note: Both Kuhn's "paradigm" and Cavell's "tradition" have been accused of being "conservative," usually in the sense that such critics believe that their models of newness can't in fact conceptualize change at all, and therefore only return the new to the old. To my mind, such claims tend to be based on a wrong-headed idea of what Kuhn means by "paradigm," which is then projected on to Cavell's "tradition." Although I think my section on Kuhn below begins to show why I think so, in my work-in-progress I only discuss such claims in relation to Cavell's "tradition," which means that this is yet another question I won't get to in this paper.

16. Kuhn's account of the discovery of oxygen in the late 18th century is an excellent illustration. See SSR, 53-57.

17. Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present* (London and New York: Verso, 2002), 29.

ter. Without the idea of the new, words like transformation or revolution become meaningless.

All this may seem self-evident. Yet, strangely, claims about newness are often met with doubt and rejection. Literary historians know only too well how to debunk claims about change, transition, innovation, and revolution. Every time someone claims that a literary or cultural phenomenon begins with a particular work, author, or historical event, someone else will always point out that whatever case we put forward is far from the first, that someone somewhere did something very similar long before our exemplar turned up. Yet such counterexamples rarely settle the discussion. When did free indirect speech first turn up in literature? An expert on modernism might point to Flaubert. A Romanticist might retort that there are cases in Jane Austen too. And then the Medievalist trumps them both by proudly pointing to an example in Chaucer. Yet, in spite of all that, the Modernist usually still feels that *something* new is going on in Flaubert's use of the form. Is she wrong? How do we need to think about the new for her intuition to make sense?

In *A Singular Modernity* Fredric Jameson turns to the example of modernity itself. This immensely rich book should ideally be read in the light of Jameson's work on postmodernism, which, among other things, is an effort to historicize the present. Jameson's thinking about the new could easily be the subject of a separate essay. Here, however, I just want to set out a few brief remarks on how he frames the question of historical change in the book that has inspired my own understanding of literary modernism. When did modernity begin? Jameson points out that there are at least fourteen different answers to that question. For example, while the Enlightenment and the French Revolution still get the most votes, German historians think that the Protestant Reformation marks the watershed. Philosophers will mention Descartes; historians of science go with Galileo. If economists think that modernity begins with the emergence of capitalism, postcolonial theorists point to the conquest of the Americas, and Hegelians believe that modernity only emerged with historical consciousness itself.¹⁸

For Jameson, this multiplicity of stories is as good as it gets, for there will never be one, overarching, ultimate account of modernity. All we have, and will ever

18. *Ibid.*, 31-32.

have, are “narrative options and alternate storytelling possibilities.”¹⁹ Moreover, all such theories are, and can only be, the product of hindsight. If we were to try to historicize our own present moment, for example, Jameson writes, we will discover that “the present cannot feel itself to be a historical period in its own right without this gaze from the future.”²⁰

For Jameson, there are only two ways at looking at the new: it’s either “cyclical” or “typological,” either recurrence — a coming round again of the old — or a fulfilment or completion of a moment in the past.²¹ But, as Jameson is the first to acknowledge, the two models quickly become difficult to keep apart. In *Novelty*, Michael North also argues that Western culture has only ever had two basic models of newness, namely “recurrence” (or “cycles”) and “recombination.” In the first model, which seems to me to combine both of Jameson’s categories, the new is an effect of a “cyclical revival,” in which the new is considered a restoration to a truer self or state of affairs: a return of the old, but in a better, truer, more perfect state.²² In the second, the new consists of a new blend of familiar ingredients. Both models, North explains, respond to the fundamental philosophical problem of the new, namely the fact that the universe already contains all the elements (all the energy, all the matter) we’ll ever have. On this view, the new can only arise through a remix, a new combination of old elements. This explains why so many theorists like to exemplify the emergence of the new by pointing to the power of language to create ever new meanings from a limited number of elements, whether those elements are taken to be words, the letters of the alphabet, or Saussure’s signifiers or phonemes.²³ More recently, the recombinatory power of the building blocks of DNA have been invoked to make the same point. North’s history culminates in his account of Darwin’s theory of evolution as a kind of synthesis of the two views, in which “all novelty [...] is the hybrid offspring of recurrence and recombination.”²⁴

19. *Ibid.*, 32.

20. *Ibid.*, 26.

21. Jameson invokes Robert Jauss. See *ibid.*, 20.

22. See Michael North, *Novelty: A History of the New* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2013, Kindle ed.), ch. 2: “Two Traditions of the New: Cycles and Combinations.”

23. Ordinary language philosophers will immediately note that such arguments assume that language is a finite structure, with boundaries. As such they stand in sharp contrast to Wittgenstein’s and Cavell’s vision of use as infinitely open-ended. I discuss these questions in the first four chapters of *Revolution of the Ordinary*.

24. North, *Novelty*, 74.

Jameson, who tends to exemplify newness by speaking of modernity (and by extension, of modernism), stresses that the search for the one, synthesizing, theoretical and historical account of modernity will always be futile. Although no thinker could be less Wittgensteinian than Jameson, this argument comes close to Wittgenstein's idea that most concepts don't have rigid boundaries, that to understand them, all we can do is to examine examples, and that the search for one overarching definition, or the one intrinsic essence of the concept at stake will always be futile. Like so many other concepts in history and the humanities, Jameson's "modernity" is a classic case of a "family resemblance" concept.²⁵ This is why I think that Jameson's conclusion, namely that "Modernity is [...] a narrative category" fails to get it right.²⁶ Jameson's formulation invokes concepts like "storytelling" or "narrative" as if they explained something. But all such concepts do is to restate the original claim: since we seem not to be able to agree on one general definition of modernity, we'll just call the different accounts "stories." This view opens up a kind of subjectivism — the new is in the eyes of the beholder — that runs counter to Jameson's Hegelian outlook on history. (In my view, however, Jameson himself does not take the step into subjectivism and relativism.) Jameson takes for granted that when a phenomenon — in this case: modernity — can't be brought under a concept with rigid boundaries, then it must reduce to a set of different "stories." This is why his account of the new is vulnerable to accusations of subjectivism.²⁷

North's history of Western theories of the new is a treasure-trove of information. Nevertheless, his fundamental account of the new is less convincing than Jameson's. Right at the outset, North dismisses "relative novelty" — the idea that "everything is new to someone somewhere" — as completely uninteresting.²⁸ The trouble with "relative novelty," according to North, is that it "makes novelty a routine fact of existence," and thus entirely fails to account for the grand drama of the new, for a "genuine novelty, in the sciences at any rate, is a major disturbance in the universe, a development like consciousness or life itself."²⁹ In this way, North turns "the new"

25. See PI, §67.

26. Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, 40.

27. Here, a close reading of Wittgenstein's analysis of concepts such as "game" would prove helpful. For more on this, see ch. 3 in *Revolution of the Ordinary*.

28. North, *Novelty*, 5.

29. *Ibid.*

into something like an object existing independently of any specific observer. While he does stress both the “inherent impossibility of ever finding [the new] in a pure state,” and how difficult it is for scientists, philosophers, and scholars of the humanities to agree on what is to count as a new departure, he still casts the new as a an observer-independent phenomenon.³⁰ Nevertheless, North’s picture of the new remains something like a new law of physics, or a new element, like oxygen. But, as Kuhn constantly stresses, even a law of physics or a new element must be perceived and formulated by someone. And that someone must be someone who already has a concept of the old, of the past, or the new would just not strike her as new. In other words: the new can only appear new to someone who is already situated within a tradition, a context, a practice. If we eradicate the perceiving subject understood as a historically situated human being from our account of the new, we will be left either with positivism or its postmodern negation.

The challenge then becomes how to get properly into focus both the idea that the new is something real, something “out there,” and the idea that any talk about the new fundamentally depends on human perception, or experience. A further challenge is how to preserve the sense that the new can be profoundly ordinary. After all, everyone knows what it’s like to have a new insight, see a new connection, to have an “Aha!” moment. In a psychoanalytic session, for example, the analysand may suddenly realize something she never realized before. The new insight may be banal, ordinary, commonplace — the analyst may have seen it coming for months — yet it is still new to her, and it may well change her life in profound ways. The difference between different flashes of insight isn’t the structure of the experience, but its significance in the world.

North’s distinction between insignificant and subjective (“new to me”) and world-historical and objective (“absolutely, radically new”) kinds of newness obscures the real distinction, namely the difference between asking what the experience of the new is (asking about its essence, definition, or grammar) and asking what makes a specific new insight or discovery important, historically transformative, world-changing (asking about its significance). As in the case of language, the ordinary shows us what the use is — the practices, the language-games, the grammar — without which

30. *Ibid.*, 161.

we wouldn't even have any criteria for distinguishing between the usual and the unusual. What then is "ordinary newness"? I take Wittgenstein's account of aspect-seeing in *Philosophical Investigations* to provide a particularly compelling answer.

Aspect-Seeing, or Discovering the New

Wittgenstein's discussion of aspect-seeing is, in large part, a discussion of the experience of seeing or thinking something new. The experience appears to be commonplace, for most of his examples, including the very first one, are simple and ordinary: "I observe a face, and then suddenly notice its likeness to another. I see that it has not changed; and yet I see it differently" (PPF, §113). I know it's your face, but now I see in it that "unmistakable Karamazov quality" that I never noticed before.³¹ The famous duck-rabbit shows that an aspect can remain hidden until it suddenly "lights up" [*aufleuchten*] (see PPF, §118). (I only saw the duck, but now I see the rabbit!) Here too we see something new although nothing has changed.

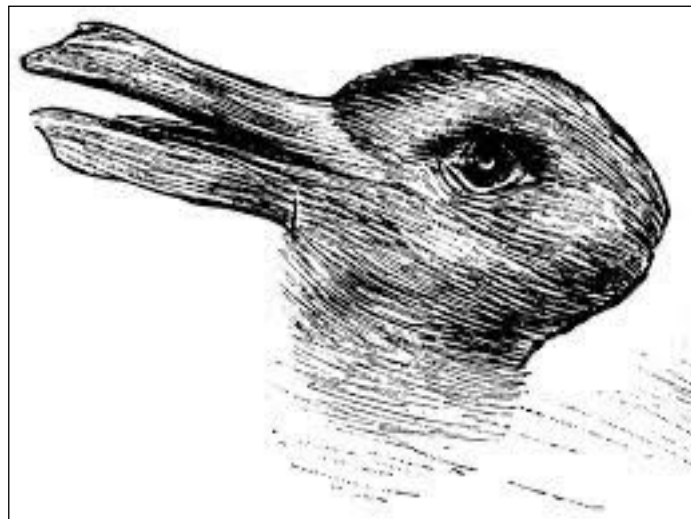


Fig. 1: Duck-Rabbit.

We should resist the temptation to turn the duck-rabbit into *the* exemplary case of aspect-seeing. Rather, as Avner Baz reminds us, in the case of the duck-rabbit one

31. I am echoing Cavell's formulation in *The Claim of Reason*, 187, which occurs in a discussion of Wittgenstein's understanding of essence as grammar.

aspect *eclipses* the other.³² The case of the face, for example, is not like that: when I suddenly notice your likeness to your father, I don't cease seeing your face as your face.

Aspect seeing is not just seeing. To see an aspect is not the same thing as to attribute a concept to something, i.e. to realize what a thing is. I don't see my fork *as* a fork. I just see a fork: "One doesn't '*take*' what one knows to be the cutlery at a meal *for* cutlery" (PPF, §123). Aspect-seeing always has a temporal dimension. Aspects dawn, but they can fade as well.³³ To see an aspect is to experience a sudden dawning, a feeling of discovery: *Now* I see the likeness! *Now* I see the rabbit! Such exclamations are not just descriptions or reports, for they are, as it were, "forced from us" [*Er entringt sich uns*] (PPF, §138). Like expressions of pain, they *escape* us.

To see an aspect is not to place an interpretation on an object: "But how is it possible to see an object according to an *interpretation*?" (PPF, §164). Discussing the example of the chalice/two profiles illusion, Jan Zwicky explains why seeing an aspect isn't an interpretation: "It makes no sense to say one is more basic than the other, nor to say that the drawing is "really" just splotches of paint that we can "interpret" as we choose."³⁴



Fig. 2: Chalice/Profiles.

32. Avner Baz, *Wittgenstein on Aspect Perception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 30. Baz short book has been invaluable to me in my attempts to understand Wittgenstein on aspect-seeing.

33. Baz is particularly good on the reasons why aspects aren't continuous, or permanent. See *Wittgenstein on Aspect Perception*, 25-33.

34. Jan Zwicky, *The Experience of Meaning* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 13.

Interpretations are needed when we are in doubt about something and require further explanations. But we don't first get puzzled by the duck, in the sense that we wonder whether it really can be a duck instead of a goose or a swan, before after much consideration, we decide to interpret it as a rabbit. In the duck/rabbit case, and the chalice/profiles case, we first see one figure plainly. Zwicky calls it "an experience of direct perception: we see one of the figures immediately, and the second shortly afterward (especially if we've been told it's there)."³⁵

For Wittgenstein, aspect-perception produces insight. When we give voice to the experience of aspect-seeing, we simultaneously express our own experience — the surprise, the delight, or the shock of the new insight — and describe or report on the insight. Wittgenstein writes that "the very expression which is also a report of what is seen is here a cry of recognition" (PPF, §144). The original term is *Erkennen*, which even more than the English "recognition" implies "cognition," "knowledge," "understanding," "insight," and so on. When the aspect dawns on us, we sometimes feel "as if an *idea* [*Vorstellung*] came into contact, and for a time remained in contact, with the visual impression" (PPF, §211). Aspect-seeing gives us new insight: "What forces itself on one is a *concept* [*Begriff*]," Wittgenstein writes (PPF, §191). The dawning of the aspect gives us a new concept. But "new" here doesn't mean a concept that has been utterly unheard-of until this moment: In Wittgenstein's examples it is just one we didn't have in our minds *here*, in *this* situation, until the aspect "lit up."³⁶ Aspect-seeing fuses *seeing* and *thinking*: "the lighting up of an aspect seems half visual experience, half thought" (PPF, §140). "Is it a case of both seeing and thinking? Or a fusion of the two — as I would almost like to say?" (PPF, §144) Zwicky rightly calls aspect-seeing's characteristic mix of perception and cognition by a simple name: "understanding." Wittgenstein teaches us, she writes, that the "traditional distinction between sense perception and thought is empty."³⁷ When the aspect dawns, we understand something new.

Wittgenstein's aspect-seeing challenges traditional philosophy's belief that the pursuit of truth requires us to begin with atoms, fragments, parts, the smallest possible units (as if that were even always an option). As Zwicky sees it, the point of

35. *Ibid.*

36. Unlike some philosophers, Wittgenstein didn't think the task of philosophy was to reach "unheard-of" insights, let alone to create unheard-of concepts to express them. See PI, §133.

37. Zwicky, *The Experience of Meaning*, 14.

Gestalt-theory is to show that a crucial part of human perception and human thinking happens because we grasp wholes (shapes, forms) *before* we grasp their internal parts. Atomizing, analyzing, taking apart is often (but not in every case) something we can do because we have *already* grasped the whole.³⁸

To my mind, Wittgenstein's vision of language already has a kind of Gestalt "feel" to it, for he insists, over and over again, that we can't begin our quest for meaning with individual words, or even individual sentences. To understand a word, we need to grasp the language-game in which it occurs, which again means having a sense of the grammar of the utterance, which means understanding the particular ways in which a group of speakers live their lives in language. The particular word only gains meaning in the context of the whole.³⁹

As usual, Wittgenstein is drawing our attention to something we already know but tend to forget.⁴⁰ In philosophy, for example, Frege's logical analysis of sentences presupposes, as it must, that we can't do the analysis unless we already know what the sentences mean, for otherwise we just couldn't tell what function specific words have in the whole.⁴¹ Ferdinand de Saussure, who unlike Wittgenstein, did assume that individual words taken in isolation were bearers of meaning, also took for granted that we can't determine the simplest linguistic units of a language unless we already know the meaning of the words they occur in: "Meaning justifies the delimitation," he writes.⁴² In other words: to determine that English has phonemes like /k/, /m/ and /r/, we need to already know the difference between "cat," "mat," and "rat." The building blocks emerge as a result of the analysis of the whole.⁴³

38. Zwicky mentions a "bag of marbles" as an example of exceptions to this rule. See Zwicky, *The Experience of Meaning*, p. 5.

39. When I write "grammar" and "grammatically" in this paper, I mean "grammar" in Wittgenstein's sense of rules for how we use language, rules arising from "shared human behavior" (PI, §206). Or as Rush Rhees puts it: "The rules of grammar are rules of the lives in which there is language." Cora Diamond, "Rules: Looking in the Right Place," in *Wittgenstein: Attention to Particulars. Essays in Honour of Rush Rhees (1905-89)*, ed. D. Z. Phillips and Peter Winch (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 12.

40. This should not surprise us, for his aim in philosophy is to make us notice "the aspects of things that are most important for us [but which] are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity" (PI, §129).

41. See for example James Conant's analysis of the different function of "Vienna" in "Trieste is no Vienna," as opposed to "Vienna is the capital of Austria," in "Wittgenstein on Meaning and Use." *Philosophical Investigations* 21, no. 3 (1998): 235.

42. Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 105.

43. Many followers of Saussure appear to forget this. They argue as if we somehow recognize "empty signifiers" or "marks" as free-floating linguistic units in search of a meaning (the "signified"), although it is obvious that we only recognize signifiers as signifiers because we already know the language, they are part of, as it were. See ch. 5 and 6 in RO.

Wittgenstein compares aspect-seeing to certain children's games, as when children "say of a chest, for example, that it is now a house; and thereupon it is interpreted as a house in every detail" (PPF, §205). This is why he insists that aspect-seeing "demands *imagination* [*Vorstellungskraft*]" (PPF, §217): "The concept of an aspect is related to the concept of imagination" (PPF, §254). I take this to mean that the dawning of an aspect is grammatically connected to the imagination. But if aspect-seeing mobilizes the imagination, then aspect-seeing is also grammatically connected to freedom. Linda Zerilli reminds us that Hannah Arendt defined freedom as "the human capacity to begin anew."⁴⁴ Seeing or creating the new is an act of freedom.

Baz also considers aspect-seeing to be a manifestation of freedom. He reaches that conclusion through a discussion of Wittgenstein's idea of aspect-blindness: "Could there be human beings lacking the ability to see something as something — and what would that be like? [...] We will call it "aspect-blindness" (PPF, §257). To be "aspect-blind" is to be in some peculiar way incapable of making imaginative leaps, of moving one's mind beyond the confine of the actual. The aspect-blind person can only see facts. Such a person could recognize a black cross, but he couldn't say "Now it's a black cross on a white ground!" (PPF, §257).

Baz draws a parallel to Maurice Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the famous Schneider case, first published in 1918 by Kurt Goldstein and Adhémar Gelb. Schneider suffered a brain injury in World War I, and as a result became unable to make any kind of imaginative leap. He couldn't, for example, project himself into the future, or understand himself as part of a concrete, meaningful situation. His injury made him relate to the world exclusively as an agglomeration of disparate facts. Schneider lives in a "ready-made or congealed" world, Merleau-Ponty writes, he is "tied to actuality," and "lacks liberty."⁴⁵ For Baz, Schneider is aspect-blind in the sense that he lacks the "capacity to project sense creatively, playfully — to perceive given things and situations otherwise than how 'one' would perceive them, or other-

44. Zerilli's formulation. Zerilli also rightly connects freedom and imagination to Kant's understanding of aesthetic judgment in the *Third Critique*, which I'll discuss below.

45. "[R]eady-made or congealed world," *Phenomenology of Perception*, p. 112 ["un monde tout fait ou figé," *Phénoménologie de la perception* (130)]; "tied to actuality," "lacks liberty" (135) ["lié à l'actuel," "manque de liberté" (158)].

wise than what [he] objectively knows them to be.”⁴⁶ An aspect-blind person is incapable of “seeing things anew.”⁴⁷

Another way of putting this is to say that aspect-blind people can’t create new *internal relations* between objects. This capacity is crucial to aspect seeing: “What I perceive in the lighting up of an aspect is not a property of the object, but an internal relation between it and other objects” (PPF, §247). In Gestalt-theory, which Wittgenstein invokes repeatedly in the aspect seeing chapter, two objects have an internal relation if you can’t change the one without changing the other. Certain figure/ground relationships, such as the chalice/profiles illusion, exemplify the point with particular acuity. When an aspect dawns, we suddenly see an object against a new background: we place it in a new context or, to use Wittgenstein’s habitual word for context: a new *Zusammenhang*, which means that we give it a place in a new sequence of events, come to see it as part of a new story.⁴⁸ To establish an “internal relation” between one object and another is to transform our understanding of both.

Wittgenstein’s examples of aspect-seeing quite often concern sudden perceptions of likeness (and therefore also differences), as in the case of seeing the chest as a house, or suddenly noticing your resemblance to your father. But if aspect-seeing makes us see likenesses, requires imagination, and gives us new insight, then it is akin to the capacity to see analogies and similarities, and to make metaphors. Zwicky draws the same conclusion: “The relevance of this figure for poetry is obvious — it is an example of metaphor in action, of seeing one thing (two faces in profile) as another (a chalice) on the basis of profound, inalienable, shared structure.”⁴⁹ At this point, Wittgenstein reminds me powerfully of Aristotle, who considered the capacity to see likenesses in different things to be crucial for poets,

46. Baz, *Wittgenstein on Aspect Perception*, 44.

47. *Ibid.*, 45. — After World War II powerful critics, including Carl Jung, voiced their skepticism of Goldstein and Gelb’s account of the Schneider case. Georg Goldenberg claims that their “enthusiasm” for a holistic understanding of human nature “induced [them] to fabricate” the case, and that “Schneider was willing to assume his part in that scenario.” Goldenberg, “Goldstein and Gelb’s Case Schn.: A Classic Case in Neuropsychology?,” in *Classic Cases in Neuropsychology, Volume II*, ed. Chris Code, Claus-W. Wallesch, Yves Joannette, and André Roch Lecours (Hove and New York: Psychology Press, 2003), 298. J. J. Marotta and M. Behrmann take a more nuanced position, pointing out, among other things, that other patients exhibited similar behaviors. See Marotta and Behrmann, “Patient Schn: has Goldstein and Gelb’s case withstood the test of time?,” *Neuropsychologia* 42 (2004): 633-38.

48. I am struck by the likeness to Zwicky’s remark that “Gestalt comprehension is insight into how things hang together.” *The Experience of Meaning*, 5.

49. Zwicky, *The Experience of Meaning*, 13.

and also as something that cannot be taught: “The greatest thing by far is to have a command of metaphor. This alone cannot be imparted by another; it is the mark of genius, for to make good metaphors implies an eye for resemblances.”⁵⁰ Wittgenstein’s understanding of aspect-seeing undoes the usual demarcation between perception and knowledge. It also transcends the traditional barriers between poetry (literature, the art of writing) and philosophy by showing that the power of metaphor is not just aesthetic but cognitive, and that both poets and philosophers need imagination to see (and create) the new.

In the moment the aspect dawns, I discover neither a purely subjective entity, nor a purely objective feature of the object or event. When I see the chest as a house, for example, I still see the chest: I would surely draw it in the same way both before and after I realized that children could play house with it. Nevertheless, my perception of the chest as a house is not private or subjective in the sense that only I can see it, for I can explain to you what’s going on with the chest-house game, and you can come to see it too. In a discussion of “aesthetic matters,” Wittgenstein notes that in a conversation about music someone might say: “You have to hear these bars as an introduction” (PPF, §178). If you try to do that, maybe the point will dawn on you. Or not.

In this respect, aspect-seeing is like the experience of beauty, according to Kant: My experience of beauty is subjective, in the sense that it is internal to me: nobody else can experience beauty on my behalf. But at the same time it is an experience, a perception of an object, of something in the world. Baz puts it well: “Like beauty as characterized by Kant, an aspect as characterized by Wittgenstein hangs somewhere between the subject and the object: it is not a property of the object, and yet we call upon others to see it *as if* it were.”⁵¹ Baz rightly stresses the difference between Kant’s invocation of judgment as part of his metaphysical universalism and Wittgenstein’s emphasis on judgment emerging as agreement in our words. Although the experience of beauty can neither be outsourced nor delegated, it is sharable. I can

50. Ch. 22 in Aristotle, *The Poetics*, S. H. Butler’s 1895 translation (online, Project Gutenberg). Cf. James Hutton’s translation: “but most important by far is to have an aptitude for metaphor. This alone cannot be had from another but is a sign of natural endowment, since being good at making metaphors is equivalent to being perceptive of resemblances.” *Aristotle’s Poetics*, trans. Hutton (New York: Norton, 1982), 71.

51. Baz, “The Sound of Bedrock: Lines of Grammar between Kant, Wittgenstein, and Cavell,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 24, no. 3 (2015): 611.

explain to you what it is about this landscape, this painting, this piece of music that makes it beautiful. And then you may come to hear or see it the way I do. Or not. Unlike the grasping of rational arguments, the perception of beauty — the judgment that this is beautiful — is a perception grounded in freedom, not in necessity. Yet it still responds to something in the object. Kant writes in §32: "For the judgment of taste consists precisely in the fact that it calls a thing beautiful only in accordance with that quality in it by means of which it corresponds with our way of receiving it."⁵²

Wittgenstein's account of aspect-seeing is an account of the experience of seeing the new in all kinds of contexts. It is an account of what it is to experience a "Eureka!" moment. Wittgenstein's understanding of aspect-seeing offers a phenomenology of the experience of having new ideas, and shows that it requires freedom, creativity, and imagination. The capacity to see "likenesses"— new connections—as when we make up metaphors is part of the experience of aspect-seeing. At the same time, the dawning of the new aspect is perfectly ordinary, and can arise in any activity or practice. It is as relevant for scientists as it is for artists, writers, and humanists.

To see an aspect, then, is to experience a sudden flash of insight, to have an experience which is at once an act of judgment and imagination, and a response to the world. This gets us to Kuhn, who argues that paradigm changes arise precisely through (Wittgensteinian) flashes of insight. In normal science, he writes, crises are terminated "by a relatively sudden and unstructured event like the gestalt switch. Scientists then often speak of the 'scales falling from the eyes' or of the 'lightning flash' that 'inundates' a previously obscure puzzle, enabling its components to be seen in a new way that for the first time permits its solution."⁵³

Just like Wittgenstein, Kuhn insists that the dawning of an aspect is not an interpretation: "No ordinary sense of the term 'interpretation' fits these flashes of intuition through which a new paradigm is born."⁵⁴ To grasp Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* we need to read it in the light of Wittgenstein's philosophy of aspect-seeing. Once we do, Kuhn's project emerges as far more useful for humanists than

52. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), §32, 162.

53. SSR, 122.

54. SSR, 123.

has conventionally been assumed. In particular, as I will show in later work, Kuhn's understanding of paradigm shifts illuminates Cavell's account(s) of the relationship between what he calls the "tradition" and the revolution in philosophy and literature that we call modernism.

Wittgenstein's philosophy is permeated by his conviction that the fact that human beings are finite creatures, embedded in human forms of life, isn't an obstacle to the search for knowledge, but its condition of possibility. Wittgenstein's late philosophy is profoundly critical of what Cavell calls the temptation to turn philosophy into a grand project of the "Rejection of the Human."⁵⁵ Kuhn's work is also committed to the idea that science is a human activity carried out by human beings, as opposed to an accumulation of purely objective facts about nature. I suspect that the tendency to overlook this commitment is one reason why his theory of paradigm shifts has been so frequently perceived as some kind of claustrophobic structure or machine, which then spectacularly fails to give any account of how one could ever get outside the structure. If one places the acting, thinking subject back into Kuhn's theory, it becomes obvious that this is not a plausible reading.⁵⁶

If Kuhn epochal book builds on his understanding of Wittgenstein's aspect-seeing, it follows that his philosophy of science is as relevant for literary history, and for the humanities more generally, as it is for the sciences. It is true that the humanities don't accumulate knowledge in the same ways as the sciences. It is also true that we continue to work on age-old questions, that there is no such thing as discarding Plato and Aristotle because later work has superseded their questions and analyses. But it is also true that the humanities do undergo, in large and small ways, something that I would certainly call paradigm shifts. In literary studies we can think of the shift from historical-biographical criticism to New Criticism in the mid-twentieth century. Or the rise of poststructuralist theory with its critique of the subject displacing older theories of authorship. Or the intense canon wars in the 1980s, which were essenti-

55. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 207. Not surprisingly, Cavell writes this in a context where he discusses Wittgenstein's understanding of meaning as use: "The meaning is the use" calls attention to the fact that what an expression means is a function of what it is used to mean or to say on specific occasions by human beings" (206).

56. Kuhn discusses the numerous misunderstandings of his book in "Postscript — 1969," in Kuhn, Thomas S. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. With an Introduction by Ian Hacking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012, pp. 173-209. See also the section on "paradigm" in Ian Hacking's splendid introduction.

ally paradigm wars. Or, in Britain, the “Ibsen wars” of the 1890s. What exactly is a paradigm, then?

Paradigms and the World They Reveal

Paradigm and *paradigm change* are Kuhn’s most famous concepts. Ever since the first edition of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was published in 1962, scholars have debated the meaning of these terms. Faced with what he took to be a barrage of misunderstandings, Kuhn himself also set out to explain and nuance his concepts. I will attempt no overview. Instead, I will simply zoom in on the aspects that matter the most to me in the concept of paradigm, namely (1) Kuhn’s idea that the “lightning flash” that signals a paradigm change represents a Gestalt-switch, a change in internal relationship between a figure and a (back)ground, and (2) Kuhn’s use of the term “world,” as when he talks about scientists’ working in a different world after a paradigm change. (I have already stressed his fundamental commitment to the idea that science is carried out by human subjects, so I won’t return to that here.)

In his excellent introduction to the 50th anniversary edition of *Structure*, Ian Hacking points out that for Kuhn, the first, fundamental meaning of “paradigm” is “shared example” or “standard example,” of the kind one can find in physics textbooks, for example. The Greek *paradeigma* was used by Aristotle to signal an *exemplar*, an exemplary case nobody could dispute, a case one could appeal to in other, similar cases. In Latin, *paradeigma* became *exemplum*. Hacking stresses that the term had been little used in modern philosophy before Kuhn. The only exceptions were some passages in Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, and in the work of the (positivist) Vienna Circle.⁵⁷ Kuhn himself felt that “paradigm” was the least understood of his concepts. In his 1969 postscript he writes that: “The paradigm as shared example is the central element of what I now take to be the most novel and least understood aspect of this book.”⁵⁸

57. See Ian Hacking, “Introductory Essay,” in SSR, xvii-xxv.

58. SSR, 186.

While he always insisted that “shared example” was the original, and only fully meaningful use, he acknowledged that many of his readers had turned this original, “local” meaning of paradigm into a much more all-encompassing or “global” affair. I agree with Hacking that whatever the problems readers in the 1960s and 1970s had with the concept, it is time for us to “happily restore [paradigm as a shared example] to prominence.”⁵⁹

A paradigm, in the sense of an exemplary case, is not so much a theory (although theories may be developed from the paradigm) as an instantiation or embodiment of the right sort of scientific practice. Textbooks teach such practices by focusing on specific exemplary cases, which scientists are trained in, and which they rely on when they think about how to resolve new problems. The paradigm case stands for a way of working which relies on an array of shared assumptions, working practices and specific laboratory equipment. A paradigm is “knowledge embedded in shared exemplars,” as Kuhn put it in his 1969 postscript.⁶⁰

A paradigm shouldn’t be construed as a large, over-arching structure — a kind of closed box — that holds its practitioners in a vice-like grip. A paradigm can pertain to quite small, local areas of scientific inquiry. Kuhn writes that “paradigms need not be common to a very broad scientific group.”⁶¹ He also stresses that some paradigm changes “need be revolutionary only for the members of a particular professional subspecialty.”⁶² In so far as such members remain in conversation with colleagues in other subspecialties, they will not even be wholly immersed in their own local paradigm.

If a paradigm is a shared example, or a set of shared examples, as presented in textbooks of science, then there clearly are paradigms in the arts and humanities. In literary studies, for example, larger or smaller groups of critics share a sense of what the essential works — literary or theoretical — in a field are. Their “exemplars” are the works the practitioners in the group think everyone in the field should know, the works they regularly teach their students. The set of exemplars — the paradigm — gives rise to characteristic questions, ways of reading, assessment of

59. Hacking, “Introductory Essay,” SSR, p. xviii.

60. SSR, 192.

61. *Ibid.*, 49.

62. *Ibid.*, 50.

what counts as interesting, and so on. In the humanities, many different paradigms are simultaneously at work. When they clash, conflicts arise. But they don't always clash, for they don't all compete to give an account of the same phenomena. Because "culture wars" or "canon wars" express a conflict between paradigms they often signal what Kuhn would call a moment of "crisis," and point to a pending paradigm shift.⁶³

Kuhn uses the term "world" about reality as revealed by the paradigm. Here are some examples: "The very ease and rapidity with which astronomers saw new things when looking at old objects with old instruments may make us wish to say that, after Copernicus, astronomers lived in a different world. In any case, their research responded as though that were the case."⁶⁴ "After discovering oxygen Lavoisier worked in a different world."⁶⁵ Discussing the famous "incommensurability" of paradigms, he writes:

In a sense that I am unable to explicate further, the proponents of competing paradigms practice their trades in different worlds. . . . Practicing in different worlds, the two groups of scientists see different things when they look from the same point in the same direction. Again, that is not to say that they can see anything they please. Both are looking at the world, and what they look at has not changed.⁶⁶

In this passage, Wittgensteinian aspect-seeing is at work. Although the actual lines on the paper have not altered, I see the duck, you see the rabbit. To "live in a different world" means having different understanding of what it is we are seeing when we look at the same thing. (I'll return to this.) This is not skepticism, nor relativism. It is a deep-going acknowledgment of the imbrication of world and word, of the way our ways of talking about things affect our way of being in the world. Just as Kuhn's "paradigm" isn't a closed box, Kuhn's "world" isn't a closed, all-encompassing structure: "At times of revolution [...] [the scientist] must learn to see a new gestalt. After he has done so the world of his research will seem, here and there, incommensurable."⁶⁷

63. I return to culture wars in the literary-historical parts of my project.

64. SSR, 117.

65. *Ibid.*, 118.

66. *Ibid.*, 150.

67. *Ibid.*, 112.

Note the “here and there”: this corresponds to the sense of paradigm as a series of exemplars, not as a self-enclosed “global” structure.

Kuhn’s way of talking about “world” arises from his Wittgensteinian understanding of language. At times, Kuhn on language sounds much like Cavell:

The child who transfers the word “mama” from all humans to all females and then to his mother is not just learning what “mama” means or who his mother is. Simultaneously he is learning some of the differences between males and females as well as something about the ways in which all but one female will behave towards him. His reactions, expectations, and beliefs — indeed, much of his perceived world — change accordingly.⁶⁸

Compare this to Cavell’s exquisite summary of how children learn language: “In ‘learning language’ you learn not merely what the names of things are, but what a name is; not merely what the form of expression is for expressing a wish, but what expressing a wish is; not merely what the word for “father” is, but what a father is; not merely what the word for ‘love’ is, but what love is.”⁶⁹ While there clearly are significant differences between these two passages, they share an underlying vision of language as intertwined with the world.⁷⁰

In the same year as Kuhn published *Structure*, Cavell published his magnificent essay “Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy.” In this essay, Cavell conveys Wittgenstein’s vision of the intertwinement of world and word by saying that when we learn language, we learn how to share “routes of interest and feeling, modes of response, senses of humor and of significance and of fulfillment, of what is outrageous, of what is similar to what else, what a rebuke, what forgiveness, of when an utterance is an assertion, when an appeal, when an explanation — all the whirl of organism Wittgenstein calls “forms of life.””⁷¹ To share a world is to share some (but not

68. *Ibid.*, 128.

69. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 177.

70. Kuhn’s idea of a “transfer” of the word “mama” from all humans to all females (etc.) strikes me as strange. What child begins by calling all humans “mama” and ends by discovering her own mother? Cavell would say that we learn a word in a specific context, and then learn to project it in new contexts. Cavell also insists that when we learn how to talk about things and practices, we learn what they are. This is in keeping with Wittgenstein’s reminder that “*Essence* is expressed in grammar” (PI, §371).

71. Cavell, “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy,” 52.

all) such routes: to enjoy the same movies, laugh at the same jokes, understand why you take offense, and what it would take to be forgiven. To learn a language as a child is to be initiated into the ways of a particular world. In the same way, when Kuhn's scientists learn to speak the language of their specialties, they are, as it were, initiated into a world which takes some cases to be paradigmatic for its activities.

To "share a world" does not mean to be locked up together in an impermeable prison-like structure. Worlds are open-ended and imbricated in other worlds. My world and yours may overlap significantly yet be different. If we are lucky, we get to educate our experience, learn to grow into new modes of feeling and thinking throughout our life. These are the kinds of changes Kuhn has in mind when he talks about scientists no longer sharing a world after a paradigm shift. He doesn't mean that they have nothing in common, or that nothing they did before the paradigm shift makes sense after. On the contrary, he stresses how old ways of measuring and gathering data may be roped into supporting the new paradigm. Yet, on some points, communication will no longer be possible. On certain points, the adherents of the new paradigm will feel that they have reached bedrock, as Wittgenstein describes it: "Once I have exhausted the justifications, I have reached bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: "This is simply what I do" (PI, §217). I have sometimes felt like this when I have tried to convey ordinary language philosophy to colleagues trained in the poststructuralist paradigms. It is as if we, in some crucial areas, no longer make sense to one another.⁷² Yet in others, we still communicate just fine. Regardless of our professional orientation, we often — but not always — agree perfectly on things like who the top candidates for admission are, or on whether exam candidates performed admirably or abysmally.

Aspect-dawning can't be forced. Someone stuck with the duck, can't simply will the rabbit into existence. This is why Kuhn talks about "conversion experiences" in relation to paradigms. Conversion doesn't replace reason. The point is not that there are no rational arguments to be made in favor of the new paradigm. It's rather that however rational the arguments for the new paradigm might be, they still violate the norms of the old paradigm, to the point that masters of the old paradigm might

72. See my discussion of the relationship between Derrida, Cavell and Wittgenstein in *Revolution of the Ordinary*, ch. 3.

exhibit life-long resistance to the new one. If some scientists come round it is often because the new paradigm solves some problems important to them. But it is also because the old guard has died off, or because of differences in sensibilities, generational differences, different needs and projects: in short, because of the complex interweaving of their lives and their science. It follows that someone who feels at home in one paradigm may simply never be persuaded that the new one is either important or useful. To my mind, the question of theoretical, philosophical, and literary “conversions” — a genuine change of mind — is particularly complicated, and particularly pressing in the humanities.⁷³

Kuhn insists that to change one paradigm for another isn't the same thing as to get closer to the truth about nature, as if the language of the old paradigm somehow was more distant from the world than the language of the new. His point is *not* that science doesn't uncover what we rightfully want to call truths about the world. On the contrary: the new paradigm clearly solves problems the old one couldn't explain. The point is, rather, that it makes no sense to think of language, or science, as either closer or further away from the world. That's the wrong picture. World and word, world and scientific practices, are intertwined from the start. It's because world and word meet in *us*, the users of language, that Kuhn denies that there can ever be a “pure observation-language,” a language stripped of every trace of the speaking subject and her investments in her world.⁷⁴ Kuhn, like Wittgenstein and Cavell, stands opposed to positivism, empiricism, and scientism.

Finally: the paradigm doesn't just enable “normal science.” It is the condition of possibility for revolutions, for without a paradigm we would never perceive the anomalies that one day may lead to a paradigm shift. The relationship between paradigm and anomaly is “grammatical” in Wittgenstein's sense of the word, for without a notion of the old, we would never be able to discern the new. When Kuhn writes that “Anomaly appears only against the background provided by the paradigm,” the paradigm becomes the indispensable background that allows the anomaly to be perceived.⁷⁵ To perceive the new, we need to see it against the right background, the right paradigm. In literary history, it's easy to make mistakes here. In my own work on Ib-

73 . I will discuss such cases in the literary part of my project.

74. SSR, 126.

75. SSR, 65.

sen, for example, I didn't really understand what made his theater so radical until I began to see it not against the background of realism, which had been the common move, but against the background of aesthetic idealism, the belief that art should uplift us by showing us the true, the good, and the beautiful. The question of background is a question of paradigm, and so of tradition. We have arrived at Cavell.