

# Moral perfectionism and democratic responsiveness: reading Cavell with Foucault

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## Abstract

Starting from existing interpretations of Cavell's account of moral perfectionism, this article seeks to elaborate an account of democratic responsiveness that foregrounds notions of 'turning' and 'manifesting for another'. In contrast to readings of Cavell that privilege reason-giving, the article draws on the writings of Cavell as well as on Foucault's work on *parrēsia* to elaborate a grammar of responsiveness that is attentive to a wider range of practices, forms of embodiment and modes of subjectivity. The article suggests that a focus on the notions of 'turning' and 'manifesting for another' is crucial if we are to account for the processes through which political imagination is opened up so as to bring about novel ways of being and acting. The arguments are illustrated with reference to recent events in the Arab Spring as well as to the politics of redress in a post-transitional social movement, Khulumani.

**Keywords:** *democracy; responsiveness; Cavell; Foucault; parrēsia; frank-speaking; moral perfectionism; reason-giving; 'turning'; 'manifesting for another'; political imagination*

[Y]ou have to turn yourself around in order to see how things are and that seeing will take you by surprise.<sup>1</sup>

I ought to go upright and vital, and speak the rude truth in all ways.<sup>2</sup>

Let us affront and reprimand the smooth mediocrity and squalid contentment of the times.<sup>3</sup>

Democratic responsiveness is often treated as a matter, exclusively, of the asking for and giving of reasons between partners in the democratic conversation. In this article, I suggest that characterisations of democratic responsiveness that focuses primarily on the provision of reasons miss important aspects of such responsiveness. Drawing on Cavell, I shall argue that a central part of democratic responsiveness consists of making oneself intelligible, both to others and to oneself, and this involves

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a range of practices, of which reason-giving is only one. A key element that risks being lost in the overemphasis on reason-giving is that of ‘manifesting for another’. ‘Manifesting something for another’ forms a central part of Cavell’s account of moral perfectionism, which is crucial to providing a nuanced account of democratic responsiveness. To flesh out this argument, I explore the idea of ‘turning’ and the role that the practice of ‘making something manifest for another’ plays in Cavell’s work. So as to highlight the specificity of Cavell’s account of manifesting for another, I set it alongside Foucault’s treatment of ‘frank-speaking’ or *parrēsia*, arguing that the resonances and divergences in their accounts make visible the importance of various modes of manifesting for another. This, in turn, is a key part of the process of thinking through the modalities of a grammar of democratic responsiveness. In the concluding part of the article, I draw out these themes and relate them back to Cavell’s work on moral perfectionism. So as to make these arguments somewhat more concrete, I make use of a discussion of two political events that have had a serious impact on our contemporary political imagination, each of which raises important questions as to how we conceive of politics. The first concerns the activities of the Khulumani movement, a movement best known for its litigation on global corporate responsibility under apartheid; the second, continuing to impact on our consciousness, is taken from the recent events in North Africa and the Middle East.

The Khulumani support group—a post-transitional group campaigning for reparation in post-apartheid South Africa—works creatively to stage unresolved issues of transitional justice by engaging in a range of activities, including a high-profile international court case, and local campaigns aimed at restoring a sense of active citizenship to victims of gross human rights abuses.<sup>4</sup> One of these more local events took place when the movement was invited by a member of the (then) Mbeki government, Frank Chikane to attend an event in a township of Soweto called Kliptown. Instead of simply attending, Khulumani members presented Chikane with a coffin containing what they called the ‘unfinished business of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)’. The significance of this act becomes clear when one notes that Chikane himself was once of a victim of the regime’s assassination squads, and that Kliptown is where the now famous Freedom Charter was adopted by the African National Congress (ANC) and other protest organisations in 1955. The presentation of the coffin staged the failure of the ANC to address the ongoing issues faced by the majority of the victims of apartheid. It sought to problematise society’s self-satisfaction with its successful transition, and to call those who consent to it, to account. This is also why Khulumani members are called ‘bad victims’: they refuse to go away (as opposed to the good victims, who told their stories and went home).<sup>5</sup> The oft-remarked upon resentment displayed against members of Khulumani could be argued to be a marker of society’s unwillingness to be reminded of its unfinished business.

The second example is that of Mohammed Bouazizi, the impoverished Tunisian street vendor, who set himself alight, igniting a series of events that spread across North Africa and the Middle East. There is no doubt that acts of self-immolation inspire both awe and horror. For our purposes, I here want to note the ‘contagion

effect' of these events. The death of Bouazizi was linked to that of Khaled Saeed in Alexandria (an alleged drug dealer killed by police), and Khaled Saeed's death in turn came to stand for the general sense of repression and resistance visible in protests spreading across Egypt, with banners and facebook pages proclaiming: 'We are all Khaled Saeed!'. These and similar events raise difficult questions about democracy. What do they tell us about (the staging of) democracy and about the demand for responsiveness? What sort of demands do they place on us? How do inchoate voices cross the threshold of visibility? How do these events grip us? What are the mechanisms through which the 'contagion effect' works? What role does the visceral register play here?<sup>6</sup> These questions are often treated as marginal to the concerns of political theory. I want to suggest otherwise. Drawing on the work of Cavell and Foucault, I argue they stand and ought to stand at the core of our concerns. They capture the urgency of events that allow us to, or even force us to undergo a *turning*, which may surprise us.

## PERFECTIONISM AND/AS MORAL REASONING

Perfectionism's emphasis on culture and cultivation is, to my mind, to be understood in connection with this search for intelligibility, or say this search for direction in what seems a scene of moral chaos, the scene of a dark place in which *one has lost one's way*.<sup>7</sup>

In Cavell's writings, the idea of democratic responsiveness emerges in the context of his account of moral reasoning. I draw here, *inter alia*, on the reading by Falomi that emphasises the primacy of reason-giving in Cavell's writings on moral perfectionism.<sup>8</sup> In his careful reconstruction of Cavell's arguments, Falomi suggests that perfectionism constitutes a mode of moral reasoning, which is characterised by seeking to elucidate the 'kind of "cares and commitments" that we are prepared to recognize'. Hence, the aim here is to define *which* normative positions one acknowledges, rather than 'assess *whether* certain normative commitments known in advance are adequately met'.<sup>9</sup> Falomi outlines three features of this account of moral reasoning. The first—the giving of and asking for reasons—aims to *define* one's cares and commitments. The second concerns the possibility of *challenge* by one's interlocutors; the ability to question those reasons and the claims so entered. The final feature concerns whether one can *respect* the position so articulated. As Falomi puts it, 'a clarification of the respective moral positions may enable us to see, for instance, that our interlocutor fully accepts the kind of responsibility that his professed position implies . . . In such cases, we might realize that we respect our interlocutor's position, even if we cannot share the particular moral judgement she entered'.<sup>10</sup> As it is clear from this characterisation, responsiveness—here understood in terms of the practice of asking for and giving reasons—stands at the heart of Cavell's account of moral perfectionism.

The point of engaging in such a process of asking for and giving reasons is that, for Cavell, it is a crucial part of the practices that 'enable us to maintain relationships, when the divergences of our cares and commitments threaten their continuation'.<sup>11</sup>

Cavell puts it thus: ‘Morality . . . provides one possibility of settling conflict, a way of encompassing conflict which allows the continuance of personal relationships against the hard and apparently inevitable fact of misunderstanding, mutually incompatible wishes, commitments, loyalties, interests and needs’.<sup>12</sup> That such reason-giving and asking is capable of contributing to the establishment and maintenance of relations to and with others arises from the dual purpose of not only making our cares and commitments known to others but also, significantly, clarifying them for ourselves. This self-clarification is a crucial dimension of moral reasoning because Cavell suggests that a persistent threat to one’s ‘moral coherence’ comes from one’s sense of obscurity to oneself, ‘as if we are subject to demands we cannot formulate, leaving us unjustified, as if our lives condemn themselves’.<sup>13</sup> In this, Cavell’s writings resonate with that of the later Foucault, for whom care of the self offers a possible counter-practice to biopolitics and its disciplinary techniques.<sup>14</sup>

Perfectionism, thus, concentrates on the moment of making oneself intelligible to others and to oneself. Difficulties in moral life arise not from ignorance of one’s duties or a conflict of duties but from ‘a confusion over your desires, your attractions and aversions’,<sup>15</sup> which stand in need of someone who is able to confront one’s confusion, the friend for instance and this requires having moral standing.

### MANIFESTING AN IDEAL

[T]his place of the ideal occurs at the beginning of moral thinking, as a condition of moral imagination, as preparation or sign of the moral life.<sup>16</sup>

Leaving aside for the moment wider set of issues raised by the emphasis on giving an account of oneself/living a justified life, two further questions arise here, namely, that of the role of reason-giving in becoming intelligible to oneself and to others, and the place of such reason-giving and other practices of becoming intelligible in democratic responsiveness. There is no question that democratic responsiveness is a key concern here: it is precisely in the moments when reasons seem to have run out, that responsiveness is most in demand. The conversation cannot go on unless something is shown.<sup>17</sup>

We have already noted the importance of reason-giving in the place of moral reasoning. However, it should be noted that this is only a *part* of perfectionism. Cavell suggests that what he characterises as ‘making oneself intelligible’ is ‘the interpretation moral perfectionism gives to the idea of moral reasoning, the *demand* for providing reasons for one’s conduct, for the justification of one’s life’.<sup>18</sup> Perfectionism, in this sense, gives one interpretation of moral reasoning and is limited in what it can do. As Cavell suggests, one should not overestimate the work the ability to converse can be expected to do. Moreover, obeying the demand for intelligibility—which is what makes perfectionism count as a dimension of any moral theory—leaves everything else open: ‘whether there are limits to the obligation to be intelligible, whether everyone isn’t entitled to a certain obscurity or sense of

confusion' and even that there are occasions on which there is not something to say.<sup>19</sup> Cavell puts it thus:

Evidently I do not find that listening to reason is exhaustively expressed by the ability to produce and to be moved by argument. Sometimes it requires refusing to listen to arguments. Sometimes it requires demanding that one's own voice be listened to, taken into account.<sup>20</sup>

One should not underestimate the difficulties associated with the demand to make oneself intelligible. Whence does the demand arise? Who articulates it? On whose terms? These questions are crucial to the characterisation of moral perfectionism. However, I will approach them in an oblique way by suggesting that attention to the features of making oneself intelligible, which *exceeds* and *precedes* reason-giving, may begin to address also those issues that are suggestive of power differentials, material and epistemic inequality and so on that blight the ability to engage in conversation. Of course, Cavell is well aware of this, suggesting as he does that moral perfectionism addresses precisely those who feel left out of the sway of justice and benevolent calculation.<sup>21</sup>

To explicate further what is at stake here, I will recount what I take to be other important dimensions of this process that risk being lost from sight if one were to focus on perfectionism as a matter of moral *reasoning* exclusively. Of these, there are numerous examples in Cavell's writings. They are captured, *inter alia*, by the opposition between confrontation and conversation; they are evident in his emphasis on provocation and turning; on the characterisation of 'manifesting for another', and appear under the heading of addressing the instruments at one's disposal of making oneself intelligible. As I have already suggested, these are not secondary issues. Rather, they occur at the *beginning* of moral thinking, making possible moral imagination.<sup>22</sup> In this respect, Cavell invokes, for instance, the figure of the friend—a recurring theme in Cavell's writings on Plato, Aristotle, Emerson, and in his analysis of romantic comedies—who 'may occur as the goal of the journey but also as its instigation and accompaniment'.<sup>23</sup>

In every case, the question of a certain standard ('standing for' in Emerson) that inspires and provokes and that draws the self beyond its present repertory 'to an unattained but attainable self' arises.<sup>24</sup> Moral perfectionism, Cavell argues explicitly, challenges the idea of moral motivation by showing the possibility of access to (an) experience 'which gives to my desire for the attaining of a self that is mine to become, the power to act on behalf of an attainable world I can actually desire'.<sup>25</sup> The experience that draws me out beyond my present state (of self) *provokes a turning*. (A sense of dislocation, of disruption or of disquiet accompanies this process.<sup>26</sup>) Drawing on Emerson, Cavell notes the dual quality of turning captured in the terms 'conversion' and 'aversion'. He asks whether the turning implied in conversion and aversion 'is to be understood as a turning away from the society that demands conformity more than as a turning towards it, as in a gesture of confrontation'.<sup>27</sup> Clearly 'turning' here does not imply a rejection of society, an attempt to segregate oneself, because even turning involves and invokes a confrontation with society and

its extant mores and institutions.<sup>28</sup> This also has implications for the way in which we think of responsiveness, which on this reading is not simply a matter of conversation between individuals; rather, it invokes a broader engagement with—rejecting and provoking—societal norms.

Whichever comes first, Cavell suggests that each of us can identify a ‘fateful moment’ in which we recognise the call to ‘take one’s place’ in society, whether one likes the places on offer or not. The demand is to make clear ‘where I stand’.<sup>29</sup> As noted earlier, ‘standing’ here invokes thematics of standards, of representativeness, of standing for and often invokes in Cavell’s writings the role of the friend as an exemplar of a perfectionist relation, intimately embedded into the account of turning: it is what inspires and accompanies the process of such turning.

### PERFECTIONIST POLITICS?

[Y]ou have to *turn yourself around* in order to see how things are and that seeing will take you by surprise.<sup>30</sup>

Before looking in more detail at the examples of turning in Cavell’s writing, it may be useful at this point to place this discussion of perfectionism and the demand to indicate where one stands with respect to society in a more explicitly political setting. At the outset and in parentheses, it should be noted that when Cavell invokes ‘politics’ (rather than for instance, ‘democracy’), it is almost always in the context of inquiring into the difficulties and demands of constituting a ‘we’. On one of the few occasions where he defines the quality of political speech, he does it in the following terms:

Political utterance might be conceived as the case in which one or more persons seek to establish a group by recommending or urging or rashly declaring its separation, in the case of the social contract, by separating it from nature and from strangers (separating ‘we’ from ‘it’ and from ‘they’).<sup>31</sup>

This is not to suggest that questions of (moral) perfectionism are not already intimately tied into questions of politics. They are, although, the one is not reducible to the other. Following Emerson, there is clearly an internal link for Cavell between moral perfectionism and the possibility of democracy.<sup>32</sup> As he puts it:

There are undeniably aristocratic or aesthetic perfectionisms. But in Emerson it should . . . be taken as part of the training for democracy. Not the part that must internalize the principles of justice and practise the role of the democratic citizen—that is clearly required, so obviously that the Emersonian may take offense at the idea that this aspect of things is even difficult, evince a disdain for ordinary temptations to cut corners over the law. I understand the character and training and friendship Emerson requires for democracy as preparation to withstand not its rigors but its failures, character to keep the democratic hope alive in the face of disappointment with it. (Emerson is forever turning aside to say, especially to the young, not to despair of the world . . .).<sup>33</sup>

Moral perfectionism is, thus, intimately related to politics, and more precisely to the possibility and the failures of democracy. Emersonian perfectionism, Wolfe argues,



provides the foundation ‘for democratic relations with others, with those other selves I have not yet been but who also—and this is the engine of Emerson’s constant polemical project—need to surpass themselves, in an ongoing process of democracy conceived as otherness always yet to be achieved’.<sup>34</sup> Moral perfectionism speaks as much to the possibility of democracy as to the inevitability of its debasement.<sup>35</sup> It is on this terrain that Cavell also situates education and character and friendship, all of which could be considered to fall within the domain of what would allow us to deal with such debasement, to withstand cynicism and a loss of democratic hope.

The division Cavell draws here as elsewhere between the internalisation of the principles of justice and the virtues<sup>36</sup> that need to be cultivated in our interactions with one another echoes the way in which Foucault deploys the distinction between *politeia* and *dunasteia*. *Dunasteia* concerns the ‘problem of political man himself, of his own character, qualities, his relationship to himself and to others, his *ethos*’.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, *politeia* concerns ‘the constitution, the framework which defines the status of the citizens, their rights, how decisions are taken, how leaders are chosen and so on’.<sup>38</sup> Against those commentators who argue that a ‘turn to ethics’ is inherently depoliticising, this makes clear that the *ethos* at stake here is not one that can be removed from politics. Suffice it to say at this point that the *hinge* position that is occupied here by the critical, aversive subject is precisely the point at which its political character both becomes visible and is staged.

It is precisely in this hinge position that Foucault situates the role of the speaking subject in terms of *parrēsia*.<sup>39</sup> Owen, in his analysis of the resonances between Cavell’s perfectionism and Foucault’s account of *parrēsia*, argues that for the latter as for the former:

*Parrhesiastic* practice is . . . concerned not simply with self-knowledge but, more generally, with becoming intelligible to oneself through a form of critical testing of oneself by way of engagement with someone—typically a friend—who acts as a *parrhesiastes*.<sup>40</sup>

In both of these cases, I am interested in whether critical practices such as these—*parrēsia* for Foucault and ‘turning’ for Cavell—can be reduced to moral reasoning. I have suggested they cannot. The reason for this is that they involve staging, conveying and manifesting for another a way of life, which exceed as well as precede (although it may include) argument and conversation. Together, these embodied practices make up an important part of the account democratic responsiveness.

## **MANIFESTING FOR ANOTHER: FRIENDSHIP**

In his ‘Introduction’ to *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, Cavell outlines some of the features particular works may contribute to perfectionism. He takes as an example Plato’s *Republic* and suggests some 28 such features. Cavell’s Emersonian perfectionism clearly diverges from Plato’s. Cavell suggests that:

the path from the *Republic's* picture of the soul's journey (perfectible to the pitch of philosophy by only a few, forming an aristocratic class) to the democratic need for perfection, is a path from the idea of there being one (call him Socrates) who represents for each of us the height of the journey, to the idea of each of us being representative for each of us . . . Emerson's study is of this (democratic, universal) representativeness . . . under the heading of 'standing for' . . . as a relation we bear at once to others and to ourselves.<sup>41</sup>

Keeping these contrasts in mind, Cavell's list is nevertheless instructive. It starts with noting the centrality of a conversation between (older and younger) friends, one of whom is:

Intellectually authoritative because (4) his life is somehow exemplary or representative of a life the other(s) are attracted to, and (5) in the attraction of which the self recognizes itself as enchained, fixated, and (6) feels itself removed from reality, whereupon (7) the self finds that it can turn (convert, revolutionize itself) and (8) a process of education is undertaken, in part through (9) a discussion of education, in which (10) each self is drawn on a journey of ascent to (11) a further state of that self.<sup>42</sup>

This short extract captures the way in which 'manifesting for another' operates in the picture of perfectionism. As noted earlier, it is the starting point of a processual account, in which the self is described as 'attracted to', as 'enchained', 'drawn upon a journey' in which an education is undertaken, such that the self achieves further intelligibility to the self. In other passages, Cavell and Conant describes this process as one in which one learns to 'follow in one's own footsteps' by attaching one's heart to another,<sup>43</sup> so as to achieve something 'higher', a further self. Cavell portrays the urgency of this process as *not* resulting or emerging from 'moral reasoning' involving the 'calculation of consequences issuing in a judgment of value or preference, nor of a testing of a given intention, call it, against a universalizing law issuing in a judgment of right', suggesting that 'if calculation and judgment are to answer the question Which way? perfectionist thinking is a response to the way's being lost'.<sup>44</sup> Cavell proposes that we think, instead, of perfectionist friendship 'as the finding of mutual happiness without a concept', and articulating its basis would be a part of the point of the friendship itself.<sup>45</sup>

The education that is at stake in such friendship is a matter of 'finding one's way rather than getting oneself or another to take the way'.<sup>46</sup> This is evident also in Cavell's writing on Hollywood remarriage comedies. In his analysis of 'Bringing up Baby' (Howard Hawks 1938), this is made evident in Cary Grant's character—Dr David Huxley—*letting himself be changed* by his adventure rather than be told what to do. Hence, Katherine Hepburn's character—Susan Vance—manifests for David another way of being. Cavell's account of teaching in this respect echoes his reading of Wittgenstein's teacher teaching the following of rules:

I conceive that the good teacher will not say 'This is simply what I do' as a threat to discontinue his or her instruction, as if to say: 'I am right; do it my way or leave my sight'. The teacher's expression of inclination in what is to be said shows readiness—(unconditional) willingness—to continue to present himself as an



example, as the representative of the community into which the child is being, let me say, invited and initiated.<sup>47</sup>

The picture of the relation between friends and of education by and with another that Cavell draws for us is one that seeks to adumbrate a non-teleological democratic approach that foregrounds the central role of the demand for *responsiveness*. Manifesting for another is not a matter of ‘getting another’ to do something in a particular way, but rather one of living a life in such a way that it acts to draw the self to a further self, making possible a turning away from and towards society in provocation. Hence, as Cavell argues, it concerns the possibility of instituting a new, alternative mode of being and acting. If I am persuaded, it is not by words alone, or in the first instance.

As I have noted earlier, any such turning, being persuaded and enchained by, drawn to, another mode of being and acting already presupposes for Cavell a sense of dislocation, of restiveness if not restlessness, of a fissure in our ability to word the world (as Mulhall may put it). The need for moral intelligibility precisely arises from a ‘scene of moral chaos, the scene of a dark place in which *one has lost one’s way*’.<sup>48</sup> Politically, the equivalent would be a situation in which available vocabularies no longer make sense, no longer have the grip they had before. Under these circumstances, we would be responsive to alternative imaginaries. But, the demand for democratic responsiveness goes beyond this minimal sense of responsiveness as openness to the possibility of change. As we have seen, it has the form of a demand: we have a responsibility to respond, to acknowledge claims made. This acknowledgement requires both a loosening of the previous picture that held us captive—figured in Cavell’s work in the sense of being lost for words—and a subjective acknowledgement of our previous sense of being captive and captured. It is precisely because our societies must fall short of perfect justice that we have this responsibility to respond. As Cavell puts it:

We are, or at any hour may become, aware of the reality of what it means to say that our consent is demanded, and that it is given, what it means that society is mine, that I am the judge of the case whether our partial justice is good enough to participate in whole-heartedly.<sup>49</sup>

## **MANIFESTING FOR ANOTHER: *PARRĒSIA***

We have already noted that Cavell’s Emersonian account of transfiguration, turning and conversion resonates with Foucault’s characterisation of *parrēsia*. (Cavell himself also remarks on the resonance of his work with that of Foucault in *Little did I Know*.) Foucault situates *parrēsia* in the context of practices of self and of spiritual direction in Antiquity, where *parrēsia* means ‘to say everything’ or is translated as ‘free-spokenness’ (*franc-parler*).<sup>50</sup> It designates a multiplicity of aspects of such practise, including:

a virtue, a quality (some people have *parrēsia* and others do not); a duty (one must really be able to demonstrate *parrēsia*, especially in certain cases and situations);

and a technique, a process (some people know how to use *parrēsia* and other do not).

And, he goes on to argue

This virtue, duty, and technique must characterize, among other things and above all, the man who is responsible for directing others, and particularly for directing them in their effort, their attempt to constitute an appropriate relation to themselves.<sup>51</sup>

*Parrēsia* is situated at the intersection between the obligation to speak the truth, procedures and techniques of governmentality and the constitution of the relationship to self. Moreover, for Foucault as for Cavell, such activities are not only limited to a concern with the self and the transformation of the self but also provide a bridge to questions concerning the governance of others.

Hence, *parrēsia* is explicitly concerned with politics. As we have noted, it occurs at the intersection, the hinge between *dunasteia* and *politeia*, ‘between the problem of the law and the constitution on the one hand, and the problem of the political game on the other. The place of *parrēsia* is defined and guaranteed by the *politeia*; but *parrēsia*, the truth-telling of the political man, is what ensures the appropriate game of politics’.<sup>52</sup> Foucault goes on to suggest that we find here the root of:

a problematic of society’s immanent power relations which, unlike the juridical-institutional system of that society, ensure that it is actually governed. The problems of governmentality in their specificity, in their complex relation to but also independence from *politeia*, appear and are formulated for the first time around this notion of *parrēsia* and the exercise of power through true discourse.<sup>53</sup>

Foucault places his discussion of *parrēsia* in the context of three displacements: from analysis of the development of bodies of knowledge to forms of verdiction; from explanations in terms of domination in general to procedures of governmentality; and from a theory of the subject to pragmatics of the subject and techniques of the self. His analysis of *parrēsia* concerns ‘how truth-telling (*dire-vrai*), the obligation and possibility of telling the truth in practices of government can show how the individual is constituted as subject in the relationship to self and the relationship to others’.<sup>54</sup> As for Cavell, intelligibility of the self is a pre-condition for engaging with others. Hence, there is an intimate, one could say, internal relation between taking care of oneself, knowing oneself and one’s ability to relate to others: ‘one cannot attend to oneself, take care of oneself, without a relationship to another person. And the role of this other is precisely to tell the truth . . . and to tell it in a certain form which is precisely *parrēsia*’.<sup>55</sup>

Foucault outlines different modalities of speaking the truth, including that of the prophet, the seer, the philosopher and the scientist, each of which has different ways of binding himself to true discourse.<sup>56</sup> This is what Foucault understands by the ‘dramatics’ of true discourse: an analysis of the facts of discourse, ‘which show how the very event of the enunciation may affect the enunciator’s being’.<sup>57</sup> The prophet is the speaker of ‘truth as destiny’; the sage speaks of ‘what is’, of ‘the nature (*physis*) of the cosmos and of all things in it’; the teacher-technician speaks truth as *techne*, ‘the

ensemble of learned knowledges and acquired skills'. The parrēsiast speaks truth as ethos. As McGushin puts it:

The parrhesiast reveals to the listener the listener's own truth, the listener's ethos, by speaking in such a way that the listener is thrown back upon himself. In other words, the parrhesiast does not tell the other who he is objectively. Rather, the manner of speaking in parrhesia provokes the listener, brings the listener to a new relationship to himself.<sup>58</sup>

Before continuing the discussion, it is useful to look at one of the examples that Foucault regards as an exemplary parrēsiastic moment, namely the deployment of the term in Euripedes' *Ion*. While Foucault detects three different kinds of veridiction in the play (of the oracle, of confession and of political discourse), Euripedes reserves the term *parrēsia* for one only, namely, Ion's political right to speak freely.<sup>59</sup> In fact, in his brief remarks on the different modalities of truth-telling, Foucault captures the more general sense in which:

someone weak, abandoned, and powerless proclaims an injustice to the powerful person who committed it, this complaint of injustice *hurled against* the powerful by someone who is weak.<sup>60</sup>

This speech act, which is ritualised in Greek society, is linked to other rituals: hunger strikes in India; some forms of suicide in Japan; in each case, the means of combat is 'a discourse which is agonistic but constructed around this unequal structure'.<sup>61</sup> Although these modalities are not named *parrēsia* in the classical texts, they are found in later treatises from the Hellenistic and Roman period.<sup>62</sup> Be that as it may, what Foucault opens up here is the question as to the different forms and structures a political *dramatics* of true discourse may take.<sup>63</sup> In this respect, Foucault mentions the role of the public orator analysed in texts of Antiquity; the *parrēsia* that characterises the Prince's counsellor; the role of the monarch's minister; the figure of critical discourse emerging from the eighteenth century, to the political discourse of the revolutionary, all of which address the more general question: 'What is this person who arises within society and says: I am telling the truth . . . ?'<sup>64</sup>

*Parrēsia*, at first, is an explicit political practice linked to democracy; it is only later that it becomes, first, divorced from democracy and then associated with philosophy (Plato's writings are paradigmatic of this shift).<sup>65</sup> Here, I will concentrate on it as a political practice.<sup>66</sup> The first important point to note concerns its conditions of emergence. As for Cavell, for whom perfectionism is a response to a sense of confusion, of not knowing one's way about, *parrēsia* as introduced by Euripedes, is a response to the crisis of democracy. The play, written in 418, is situated at the end of the first part of the Pelloponesian War between Spartans and Athenians during the period called the Nicias peace (which represented a compromise between Delphi and Athens). In post-Periclean Athens:

the problem arises of who will really exercise power within the framework of legal citizenship. Given that the law is equal for all (the principle of *isonomia*), and given that everyone has the right to vote and to give his opinion (*isegoria*), who will have the possibility and right of *parrēsia*, that is, to say, to stand up, speak, try to persuade

the people, and to try to prevail over his rivals, at the risk, moreover, of losing the right to live in Athens, as happens when a political leader is exiled or ostracized, and the possibility of his own life?<sup>67</sup>

Because the assembly is open to all citizens, there is no way to distinguish those who can act as parrēsiasts. Should everyone have this right (Cleon), or should it be reserved to a few (Nicias)? This political context of the play, Foucault suggests, established the drama of political truth-telling.

Foucault emphasises that Euripedes responds to this problem by introducing a difference: ‘on the basis of a constitutional equality, it is the difference introduced by a truth-telling which makes democracy work’.<sup>68</sup> Although *parrēsia* is linked to *isegoria* and to *politeia* because there cannot be *parrēsia* without the right of citizens to speak, it is not reducible to *isegoria* (the statutory right to speak that is constitutive of citizenship). *Parrēsia*, as we have seen earlier, is the hinge or link position between *politeia* and *dunasteia*, which Foucault characterises through the idea of the parrēsiastic rectangle, where each of its corners captures one of its dimensions: (1) the formal equality accorded to all citizens; (2) the pole of ascendancy that captures the position of those who, although speaking in front of and above others, get them to listen; (3) the jousting and rivalry associated with the practice, which requires (moral) courage; and (4) truth-telling as (good) *parrēsia*.

The parrēsiast, in speaking the truth and through binding himself to the truth, manifests something for another, at the same time as affecting his own mode of being. Foucault argues that in the parrēsiastic encounter, the subject’s mode of being is retroactively affected:

in producing the event of the utterance the subject modifies, or affirms, or anyway determines and clarifies his mode of being insofar as he speaks.<sup>69</sup>

Foucault emphasises in this respect that an analysis of *parrēsia* should look, not towards ‘the internal structure of the discourse, or to the aim which the true discourse seeks to achieve vis-à-vis the interlocutor, but to the speaker, or rather to the risk that truth-telling opens for the speaker’.<sup>70</sup> The reason for this is that the exemplary parrēsiastic scene is one in which the speaker ‘undertakes to tell the truth, while willingly and explicitly accepting that this truth-telling could cost them their life’.<sup>71</sup> Hence, as noted earlier, what Foucault calls the *dramatics* of political discourse involves more than argument. To analyse it, we need to give attention to the mode of being of the subject and the (retroactive) effects that parrēsiastic activities have on the speaker, risking his life in assuming the responsibility of *parrēsia*.

## TOWARDS A GRAMMAR OF DEMOCRATIC RESPONSIVENESS

Reflecting on some of the resonances and contrasts between these accounts allows us to begin to draw out some of the aspects of the grammar of democratic responsiveness.<sup>72</sup> While both Cavell and Foucault emphasise the importance of acts that manifest alternative possibilities of being and acting, there are significant differences in the manner in which each suggests the act of manifesting (alternatives)

for another operates. We have noted Cavell's emphasis on the careful relation of instruction between teacher and child, one that for him raises questions about the inheritance of a culture and the treatment of newcomers (children)<sup>73</sup> and of society's power to exclude and impotence to include.<sup>74</sup> The model of manifesting for another, nevertheless, remains one that echoes the Nietzschean reading of following in the footsteps of another, as one follows in one's own footsteps/such that one makes them one's own. It is equally a picture of instruction that emphasises the centrality of responsiveness, of ongoing engagement and conversation (engagement not being reduced to conversation), and of provocation. While some of these elements are present in Foucault's account of *parrēsia*, there are also dimensions of this practice that differ significantly in the historical cases he analyses. I draw out these divergences, not to suggest that one is better or more appropriate but to emphasise both the fact and the importance of such *diversity* in modes of manifesting for another.

One of the most notable difference concerns Foucault's characterisation of the *agonistic* structure of the *parrēsiastic* encounter as it is manifested in Euripedes' plays. Far from a careful scene of instruction and education of the sort analysed by Cavell, *parrēsia* 'is not a form of pedagogy'; while addressing 'someone to whom one wishes to tell the truth, it is not necessarily a matter of teaching him'. *Parrēsia*, as Foucault puts it, has 'a rough, violent, abrupt aspect'; the *parrēsiast*:

*throws* the truth in the face of the person with whom he is in dialogue ... and there is none of that progression peculiar to pedagogy, passing from the unknown to the known, from the simple to the complex, or from the part to the whole. To some extent we can even say that there is something in *parrēsia* which is completely contrary to at least some pedagogical procedures.<sup>75</sup>

In *parrēsia*, the person who tells the truth:

Throws the truth in the face of his interlocutor, a truth which is so violent, so abrupt, and said in such a peremptory and definitive way that the person facing him can only fall silent, or choke with fury, or change to a different register, which in the case of Dionysius is the attempt to murder Plato.<sup>76</sup>

Foucault's situates this analysis in the context of an agonistic politics: the *parrēsiastic* discourse takes the form of an agonistic game, a discourse of debate in the political field, one which concerns the exercise of power in the framework of the city but in non-tyrannical conditions, 'that is to say, allowing others the freedom to speak, the freedom of those who also wish to be in the front rank ... It is then a discourse spoken from above, but which leaves others the freedom to speak, and allows freedom to those who have to obey, or leaves them free at least insofar as they will only obey if they can be persuaded'.<sup>77</sup> This difference introduced by the courageous speech of the *parrēsiast* is what guarantees democracy from its debasement.

For both thinkers, practices that serve to open up alternative ways of acting and being in the world, of 'turning', do so not primarily through engaging in debate, (moral) conversation and argument, although these may well form part of the practice. Equally important is the *manifestation* of alternatives that *provoke* and

*demand* responses. Think here of David's concluding words in 'Bringing up Baby', of the role of the friend, and of the parrēsiast, whose telling of the truth depends on a whole array of other factors for its effectivity. Earlier on, I have suggested that one could understand the relation between the practices of manifesting for another and engaging in arguments and asking for and giving reasons—insofar as they all are part of the democratic grammar of responsiveness—in relation to Wittgenstein's treatment of ostensive definition as prepared for by practices of ostensive training. Wittgenstein demonstrates that there are a whole of lot skills, information and knowledge that one needs to acquire before one can ask questions concerning ostensive definition, and these prior sets of skills are acquired through (ostensive) training. The same holds for democratic practices of responsiveness.

A further aspect of 'turning' implicit in both Foucault and Cavell, but not thematised, is that of the visceral character of such turning.<sup>78</sup> Cavell talks of *turning oneself around* to see how things are.<sup>79</sup> Whilst such turning clearly refers to seeing and to changing aspects, turning also evokes a bodily aspect that, however, remains largely unexplored. This bodily aspect involves not only a physical turning oneself around but also a turning that affects one's bodily orientation in the world, one's position not only as an enunciating subject but also as an embodied subject. Thinking of turning in multiple senses calls for sensitivity to spatial orientations and their relation to embodiment, both as lived and as inscribed.<sup>80</sup> That is, turning involves a reorientation—of view, of body and of the architecture of spatial positioning and inscriptions—all of which are relevant to thinking about the potential changes wrought by manifesting for another.<sup>81</sup>

We have seen that both the moment/process of 'turning' and the opening up of new possibilities are central to both Cavell and Foucault's thinking. In this respect, there is an almost uncanny resonance between Foucault's discussion of *parrēsia*, which he contrasts to performatives (understood in the illocutionary sense of the term) and Cavell's treatment of the illocution/perlocution distinction in Austin. Both authors emphasise the *open* character of these moments, where no pre-determined protocols and rituals are followed and invoked:

In *parrēsia* ... the irruption of true discourse determines an open situation, or rather opens the situation and makes possible effects which are, precisely, not known. *Parrēsia* does not produce a codified effect; it opens up an unspecified risk.<sup>82</sup>

There is no accepted conventional procedure and effect. The speaker is on his or her own to create the desired effect.<sup>83</sup>

For both, the subject is not only produced by the effects of the act but bound by them:

The subject binds himself to the statement he has just made, but also to the act of making it<sup>84</sup>

(In the absence of an accepted conventional procedure, there are no antecedently specified persons. Appropriateness is to be decided in each case; it is at issue in each. I am *not invoking a procedure but inviting an exchange*. Hence:)



I must *declare* myself (explicitly or implicitly) *to have standing* with you (be appropriate) in the given case.” . . .

I therewith *single you out* (as appropriate) in the given case.<sup>85</sup>

It is also a moment in which the freedom of the subject is foregrounded:

*Parrēsia* only exists when there is freedom in the enunciation of the truth, and freedom also of the pact by which the subject binds himself to the statement and the enunciation of the truth<sup>86</sup>

You may contest my invitation to exchange, at any or all of the points marked by the list of conditions for the successful perlocutionary act, for example, deny that I have standing with you, or question my consciousness of my passion, or dismiss the demand for the kind of response I seek, or ask to postpone it, or worse. *I may or may not have further means of response.*<sup>87</sup>

Hence, whilst it goes beyond mere openness precisely insofar as it is a demand, an account of democratic responsiveness cannot pre-determine responses and must leave open the possibility of not having the means of providing a response.<sup>88</sup> This is precisely the point at which Cavell argues something must be shown, manifested. It is here also that the importance of the place of cultivation of responsiveness becomes apparent.<sup>89</sup>

Finally, both Foucault and Cavell are sensitive to debased forms of the practices they describe and analyse. Cavell notes the possibility of a debased perfectionism, citing for instance the Army recruitment slogan ‘Be all that you can be’.<sup>90</sup> Foucault does the same, citing the fact that *parrēsia*, understood as ‘saying everything’ could and has been debased historically, in cases where it indicates an incontinence in speech, where everyone could say anything in any manner. As Gros puts it:

At any moment formal egalitarianism may turn back against this difference introduced by the true discourse of the person who courageously commits his speech in order to defend his point of view on the common interest. This is the demagogic moment criticized by Isocrates and Plato, when *parrēsia* is submerged by *isegoria*.<sup>91</sup>

As for Foucault, for Cavell the aversive voice, the manifestation of other possibilities, is what enables us to withstand democracy’s inevitable failures. It introduces a difference, the showing of which is important, and urgent, in itself.<sup>92</sup>

Before returning to the examples with which I started, a brief comment on the argument discussed at the outset, namely that Cavell’s work on moral perfectionism cannot and should not be reduced to an account of or concern with moral reasoning. Taking account of the arguments developed here, it is clear that the scope of moral perfectionism goes beyond reasoning, to include modes of subjectivity, of manifestation and of provocation, none of which can be reduced to reasoning and all of which act as pre-conditions for it. One task that follows from this today is to grapple with the different forms in which politically, demands for perfectionism/responsiveness are staged. That is, to return to Foucault’s questions concerning the political dramatics of true discourse, of the forms of subjectivity it fosters and of the ways in which that shapes our cares and commitments.

### MODES OF MANIFESTING FOR ANOTHER: 'WE ARE ALL KHALED SAEED!'

In conclusion, let me now return to the examples with which I started and reflect on what it is that the emphases on turning and manifesting alternatives for another can tell us about the grammar of democratic responsiveness, and how such insights may potentially affect the manner in which we approach events such as these. Drawing on the insights provided by the reading of Cavell and Foucault, I suggest that the cases discussed at the outset can be understood as exemplars that successfully act to draw the self to further selves, empowering subjects both to act differently and to imagine alternative worlds. A key part of this process, as I have argued, consists in manifesting these alternatives for others. This involves, typically, not simply the addition of one more voice or view to the extant situation and conversation. Rather, both Cavell and Foucault argue that what is required here is a turning away from existing alternatives and towards new possibilities. Such turning, in turn, pre-supposes some dislocation and hence reorientation of how we see and experience things.

Before fleshing these suggestions out somewhat further, I would like to comment briefly on some important differences between these cases that should not be overlooked. In the South African case, we are dealing with a post-transitional movement that is articulating a wide range of claims for redress within a relatively well-established, albeit new, democratic order. Hence, it is not here a question of establishing the right to have rights, but rather one of extending and deepening existing possibilities in a direction beyond that envisaged initially within the (post-transitional) order.<sup>93</sup> In the cases of Tunisia and Egypt on the other hand, the events sparked off by the self-immolation of Bouazizi and the death of Saeed contributed to establishing the very terrain on which claims to freedom could be expressed in the first place.

From our perspective, what is important is that both *stage* and *embody alternative* possibilities, holding out other possible ways of doing things that exceed the present. In so doing, each problematises the very possibility of appearance on a political stage, albeit through different processes and activities.<sup>94</sup> At stake here, therefore, are not simply the actual contents and internal logics of the political discourses. Whilst attention to such discourses is indispensable, it is not sufficient given that what is at stake is the very framing of the events offered by such discourses, and the manner in which that framing is both made visible and contested. In the South African case, the dominant imaginary of successful transition, and together with it the particular image of a society reconciled with itself, captured in the idea of the 'rainbow nation' was being questioned so as to open up a space for an engagement with what is construed as 'the unfinished business of the TRC'. The latter, and in particular the idea of redress, could not appear on the stage of transitional politics and the politics of reconciliation without at first making visible the fact that 'transitional politics' and discourses of 'reconciliation' already delimit the space of politics in distinctive and limiting ways.<sup>95</sup> In the cases of Egypt and Tunisia, the self-immolations captured the sense of desperation of those 'left out of the sway' of justice, struggling for 'freedom' and striving to establish the possibility of being heard.<sup>96</sup> These different events of staging

condense, in the Freudian sense of the term, challenges to a system. However, for challenges such as these to become visible, the very terrain on which they are staged and enacted first has to become an object of contestation if not confrontation.<sup>97</sup>

It is through such contestation—that simultaneously seeks to make visible the limits of the sayable—that aversion to society's demands to conform to the extant order is expressed. Hence, the call for a *turning away* from society also involves a *provocation* to acknowledge one's implicatedness in the extant order and so foregrounds the analysis of existing power relations and inequalities in speaking positions. Yet, as it is clear from Foucault's analysis of parrēsia, strength often arises from speaking from a position that is not already absorbed into the dominant speaking positions. This is clear in the case of the Khulumani movement, where making visible implication and complicity with the extant order is at the centre of their activities. Khulumani seeks to address implicatedness practically through an emphasis on redress, which requires a turning away from a limited mode of addressing the past, while the self-immolation of Bouazizi literally embodies the demand to turn away from existing ways of doing things. In neither case could the provocateurs be argued to speak from existing positions of power. To put it differently, what looks like a position of powerlessness from one perspective could be turned into a position of strength, thus becoming a position from which alternatives become available. This making available of alternatives comes, potentially, with a cost. As Foucault argues and practice makes clear, the risk here is often the risk of death.

This provocation highlights one of the key dimensions of responsiveness: it is a *relational practice* that is deeply embedded in existing social relations, positions of enunciation and contestations of those practices. Focussing on relationality is important for a number of reasons. For Foucault, the event of enunciation affects the mode of being of the subject: through parrēsia the subject binds itself to the truth, just as it affects the interlocutor. It is an act that both assumes and foregrounds relationality. For Cavell, manifesting for another seeks to establish the other as the addressee just as the subject declares herself to have standing with the other. Unlike approaches that assume the existence of subjects and then seek to analyse their interaction, a relational account of responsiveness, such as the one developed here, foregrounds the sense in which the very subjectivity of the subject comes into being in, and at times have to be altered, through the engagement with the other. Khulumani's calls for redress, and the court case in which it seeks to bring international corporations to account declares a relation to the other and constructs the other as a subject of complicity with a regime, for which responsibility has to be taken.

While doing so, these events also act as occasions of turning *towards* society: as a provocation to those who have pledged their allegiance to it—in turn—to turn.<sup>98</sup> Here again, responsiveness emerges as a *demand to respond* to a series of events and conditions that are experienced as unjust. Hence, responsiveness invokes both the ability to respond and the responsibility to respond, encapsulated in the expression response-ability. What is at stake in these events is the very demand to respond—that we are called on to respond—which stands at the heart of democratic responsiveness.

Each of these events arises out of a sense of *crisis* (something Cavell repeated places at the heart of his treatment of perfectionism) and elicits a *sense of surprise*. The surprise experienced by the subject on such occasions, on seeing ‘how things are’ *after* turning, evokes Wittgenstein’s emphasis on the affects of surprise and exclamation that accompany aspect dawning, seeing something anew, under a new aspect.<sup>99</sup> Wittgenstein argues that seeing something anew does not require a radical break, but a rearrangement of elements that have always been in view. Seen from this perspective, the manifestation of another way of being and acting—representing the standpoint of perfection—that is central to both examples precisely suggests a complex and nuanced account of turning, both as a moment and as a process.

Hence, turning here invokes discontinuity but without the requirement of a radical break. This aspect is crucial in gaining a more complex understanding of these events. In both cases, there is a complicated interplay between moment and process. The case of Bouazizi and the Arab Spring more generally consists of a number of ruptures. Some would argue that the term revolution may be the appropriate characterisation here. Yet, each of these key moments is also deeply marked by processes that can only be revealed through a genealogical tracing out of the struggles that inform and constitute but do not determine it. The process also has a futural aspect: Tahrir square inaugurated and sought to sediment practices that would shape the future and set limits to the possible alternatives. Manifesting for another is just this practice of opening up new horizons. The practice of cleaning the square (also seen in the aftermath of the London riots) and of attention to the provision of childcare are but two such examples. Hence, we have here a non-teleological account that is futural in character: manifesting—making visible another world—has the potential to shape our political imagination in important ways, yet this shaping is not determinate.

This *doubleness* is also evident in Cavell’s own account of moments in one’s life when one is called on to take a stand in and towards the society in which one lives. While it may occur acutely at particular stages of life, in adolescence, for instance, it also has a *recurring* character.<sup>100</sup> If indeed, as Cavell argues, what is at stake here is the cultivation of a new mode of being human, this must be both a starting point and an ongoing process, one in which one’s own world is transformed *and* this transformation is generalisable.<sup>101</sup> Ongoing processes are always going to be incomplete, even as one treats each attained state as a final state. Finally, as I have suggested, the practice of manifesting something for another is an embodied process, one that acts as simultaneously as goal, instigation and accompaniment on the journey, the end of which is not determined but is shaped by such manifestation. Exemplification comes first, precedes and exceeds processes of reason-giving, sometimes at a very high cost.

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## NOTES

1. Stanley Cavell, *Cities of Words. Pedagogical Letters on a Register of the Moral Life* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 330.
2. Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Self-Reliance', in *The Portable Emerson*, ed. Carl Bode (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977), p. 142.
3. Emerson, 'Self-Reliance', 147.
4. For a discussion of this movement see, *inter alia*, Tshepo Madlingozi, 'Good Victim; Bad Victim: Apartheid's Beneficiaries, Victims and the Struggle for Social Justice', in *Law, Memory and the Legacy of Apartheid*, ed. W. Le Roux and K. Van Marle (Pretoria: Pretoria University Law Press, 2010), 107–26; Aletta J. Norval, "'No Reconciliation Without Redress": Articulating Political Demands in Post-Transitional South Africa', *Critical Discourse Studies* 6, no. 4 (2009): 311–21.
5. Madlingozi, 'Good Victim; Bad Victim', 107–26. This division between 'good' and 'bad' victims echoes the distinction between good and bad cynics in Foucault. As McGushin puts it, 'The good Cynics are those who are not too disturbing, not too critical, who, in fact, pretty much resemble everyone else. The bad Cynics, on the other hand, are too radical in their critique of cultural norms or principles of reason'. See, Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 163.
6. There is now a significant number of works taking up the question of the visceral register in politics. See, *inter alia*, William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); and Sharon Krause, 'Bodies in Action: Corporeal Agency and Democratic Politics'. *Political Theory* 39 (2011): 299–324.
7. Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome. The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism*. The Carus Lectures, 1988 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), xxxii.
8. Flathman reminds us of some important distinctions within perfectionist approaches as understood by Cavell. He calls Cavell's account a conception of moral and political perfectionism (MPP), (or Emersonian Perfectionism), which should be distinguished from other versions of perfectionism, 'in particular those that claim to have identified the *telos* toward which all human thought and action should be directed'. Flathman calls the latter 'perfectionist perfectionism' (PP). See, Richard Flathman, 'Perfectionism Without Perfection: Cavell, Montaigne, and the Conditions of Morals and Politics', in *The Claim to Community*, ed. Andrew Norris (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 99. Whenever I use the term 'moral perfectionism' in this paper, I mean it to indicate the non-teleological perfectionism of the Emersonian kind espoused by Cavell.
9. Matteo Falomi, 'Perfectionism and Moral Reasoning', *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* II, no. 2 (2010): 93.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, 94.

12. S. Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality and Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) quoted in Falomi ('Perfectionism and Moral Reasoning', 94), who points out the continuity of concerns between Cavell's early and later writings.
13. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xxxi–xxxii.
14. McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis*, xx.
15. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 42.
16. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 62.
17. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 116–7.
18. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 24 (emphasis added). In this sense, it differs from utilitarianism and Kantianism that propose means to calculate the good of an action and the rightness of an action, respectively.
19. *Ibid.*, 25.
20. *Ibid.*, 329.
21. *Ibid.*, 25.
22. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 62. The similarity with Wittgenstein's discussion of the practice of ostensive definition here immediately springs to mind: like ostensive definition, the ability to manifest something for another depends on having an array of virtues, being bound by one's words in a certain manner and so forth. Without the presence of these practical elements, the speaker's words would not have the desired effects.
23. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 27. Cavell suggests that perfectionism is distinctive in the absolute value it places on friendship.
24. *Ibid.*, 32.
25. *Ibid.*, 33.
26. White makes a similar argument relating to extraordinary experiences that allow us to break out of ordinary frames of reference. See, Stephen White, 'Fullness and Dearth: Depth Experience and Democratic Life', *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 4 (2010): 800–16.
27. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 22.
28. Foucault's work displays an almost identical treatment of 'turning'. McGushin (*Foucault's Askēsis*, xxi) argues that care of the self is an 'activity of philosophical conversion', a turn 'not inward but rather a turn toward the world as that evolving web of relations, practices, and knowledges in and through which my self manifests itself'.
29. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 23.
30. *Ibid.*, 330 (emphasis added).
31. *Ibid.*, 273.
32. Cavell, in one of his commentaries on Rawls' claim that perfectionism is undemocratic, argues that 'the particular disdain for official culture taken in Emerson and in Nietzsche (and surely in half the writers and artists of the last 150 years since 'The American Scholar', or say since romanticism) is itself an expression of democracy and commitment to it. Timocrats do not produce, oligarchs do not commission, dictators do not enforce art and culture that disgust them. Only within the possibility of democracy is one committed to *living* with, or against, such culture' (*Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 50).
33. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 56.
34. Cary Wolfe, "'The Eye is the First Circle": Emerson's "Romanticism", Cavell's Skepticism, Luhman's Modernity', in *The Other Emerson*, ed. Branka Arsić and Cary Wolfe (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 280.
35. This is already evident in Emerson's writings. In a journal entry on 'What is Democracy', Emerson writes the following: 'When I spoke or speak of the democratic element I do not mean that ill thing vain & loud which writes lying newspapers, spouts at caucuses, & sells its lies for gold, but that spirit of love for the General good whose name this assumes. There is nothing of the true democratic element in what is called Democracy; it must fall, being



- wholly commercial'. (quoted in Russel B. Goodman, 'Moral Perfectionism and Democracy: Emerson, Nietzsche, Cavell'. *ESQ* 43, no. 1–4 (1997): 170.
36. Cavell argues that his work is not that far removed from the tradition of virtue ethics, with the important exception that non-teleological perfectionism prevents and avoids the specification of a list of virtues to be cultivated.
  37. Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983*, trans. Graham Burchell and ed. Francois Gros (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 158.
  38. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 158.
  39. As he puts it: 'we can say again that *parrēsia* is very precisely a notion which serves as the hinge between *politeia* and *dunasteia*, between the problem of the law and the constitution on the one hand, and the problem of the political game on the other. The place of *parrēsia* is defined and guaranteed by the *politeia*; but *parrēsia*, the truth-telling of the man, is what ensures the appropriate game of politics. The importance of *parrēsia*, it seems to me, is found in this meeting point' (Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 159).
  40. David Owen, 'Perfectionism, *parrēsia*, and the Care of the Self: Foucault and Cavell on Ethics and Politics', in *The Claim to Community*, ed. Andrew Norris (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 128–55.
  41. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 9.
  42. *Ibid.*, 6–7.
  43. *Ibid.*, 53.
  44. *Ibid.*, 55.
  45. *Ibid.*, 32.
  46. *Ibid.*, xxxii.
  47. *Ibid.*, 72.
  48. *Ibid.*, xxxii.
  49. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 297.
  50. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 43.
  51. *Ibid.*
  52. *Ibid.*, 159.
  53. *Ibid.*, 59.
  54. *Ibid.*, 42.
  55. *Ibid.*, 43.
  56. *Ibid.*, 69.
  57. *Ibid.*, 68.
  58. McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis*, 10.
  59. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 153. *Ion* brings together a range of practices of truth-telling, including political, moral and judicial *parrēsia*. Neither its moral form (the confession of an offence that weighs on one's mind to someone who can guide as, as in Cruesa's confession to her father) nor its judicial form (the practice connected to an injustice, the cry of the powerless against one who misuses power) are called *parrēsia* in *Ion* but, as Foucault carefully notes, they will be called so later (Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 154).
  60. *Ibid.*, 133.
  61. *Ibid.*
  62. *Ibid.*
  63. *Ibid.*, 69.
  64. *Ibid.*, 69–70.
  65. Hence, political *parrēsia* occurs in two major historical forms: 'that of a discourse addressed to the Assembly, to all citizens by an individual concerned to make his conception of the general interest prevail (democratic *parrēsia*); [and] that of the philosopher's private discourse intended for the prince's soul in order to encourage him to follow the right path

- and to get him to her what flatterers conceal from him (autocratic *parrēsia*)'. [Frédéric Gros, 'Course Context', in Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983*, trans. Graham Burchell and ed. Francois Gros (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 380].
66. *Parrēsia* is not, Foucault emphasises, to be confused with persuasion and the art of rhetoric. It could draw on rhetorical techniques, but it does not have to do so. Given that rhetoric aims at persuasion, it does not require truth-telling. Moreover, *parrēsia* does not aim at persuasion; it is more akin to a judgement (Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 54). And, while it has an agonistic structure—two characters confronting and struggling over the truth—it is not a form of debate. Its specificity is not to be found within the internal forms of discourse or discursive strategies.
  67. *Ibid.*, 105–6.
  68. Gros, 'Course Context', 388.
  69. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 68.
  70. *Ibid.*, 56.
  71. *Ibid.*
  72. I understand 'grammar' here in a Wittgensteinian sense to mean the 'network of discriminations that inform our capacity to word the world', as Mulhall puts it (Stephen Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality: Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), 176). Grammar thus delimits the possible.
  73. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 99.
  74. *Ibid.*, 76.
  75. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 54 (emphasis added).
  76. *Ibid.*
  77. *Ibid.*, 104.
  78. I would like to thank one of the anonymous readers for drawing my attention to Merleau-Ponty's work in this respect as well as Morton Schoolman who suggested that Whitman also provides an account of turning that focuses on 'how another appears visually' so that the body and its affects come into play.
  79. Cavell, *Cities of Words*, 330.
  80. Crossley, in his discussion of Merleau-Ponty and Foucault's respective positions, draws a distinction between the former's emphasis on the body as lived and the latter's as inscribed, while maintaining that these positions can be construed as complimentary. I agree with this reading. See, Nick Crossley, 'Body-Subject/Body-Power: Agency, Inscription and Control in Foucault and Merleau-Ponty'. *Body & Society* 2, no. 2 (1996): 99–116.
  81. This line of argument could then also be developed so as to open up onto a consideration of 'emergent agentic capacities' within and across lifeworlds, as Coole suggests. See, Diana Coole, *Merleau-Ponty and Modern Politics after Anti-Humanism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 176.
  82. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 62.
  83. Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005), 180 (emphasis added).
  84. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 65.
  85. Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 180 (emphasis added).
  86. Foucault, *Government of Self and Others*, 66.
  87. Cavell, *Philosophy the Day after Tomorrow*, 181 (emphasis added).
  88. This also has further implications. It is not only that the response cannot be pre-determined but also that responsiveness—the responsibility to respond—is required no matter where the demand originates from and even regardless of the character of the demand. That is, an ethos of responsiveness requires a considered response, rather than a turning away (as Cavell argues Rawls does in cases where no institution can be shown to be responsible for an injustice) or a suppression of the demand/source of the demand. A similar point is developed

- by Kompridis in his discussion of receptivity as ‘a reflective state of judgment’. [Nikolas Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 207.] I discuss the relation between responsiveness, judgement and exemplarity further in, Aletta J. Norval, ‘A Democratic Politics of Acknowledgement: Political Judgment, Imagination and Exemplarity’, *Diacritics* 38, no. 4 (2010): 59–76.
89. For Foucault as for Cavell, virtue is an important dimension of the practice of manifesting for another. Foucault emphasises courage in the case of *parrēsia*; Cavell suggests that his could be aligned to a virtue ethics, so long as one did not work with a pre-specified set of virtues to be achieved. Kompridis also treats receptivity as a cognitive and affective capacity to be developed and intensified (Kompridis, *Critique and Disclosure*, 59.)
  90. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 16.
  91. Gros, ‘Course Context’, 382.
  92. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, 55.
  93. This is not to say that Khulumani’s activities do not also have radical implications. They do—witness the international court case seeking to establish corporate guilt for aiding and abetting the apartheid regime its abuse of human rights. I discuss this case and the manner in which the case it brought under the Aliens Tort Claims Act broadened out discussion of the unfinished business of the TRC elsewhere. See, Norval, ‘No Reconciliation Without Redress’, 311–21.
  94. For a discussion of the importance of staging in politics, see, J. Rancière, *Disagreement* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). For an important analysis of the role of images in such moments of appearance, see also David Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).
  95. I discuss the idea of redress at work here in Norval, ‘No Reconciliation Without Redress’, 311–21.
  96. A similar process is underway today in Tibetan resistance politics.
  97. I have developed this argument elsewhere in more detail, drawing on Rancière’s work in particular. See, Aletta J. Norval, ‘Democracy, Pluralization and Voice’, *Ethics and Global Politics* 2, no. 4 (December 2009): 297–320.
  98. Both cases are also *generalisable*, thus fulfilling one of the conditions Cavell sets for taking something as an example of an Emersonian perfectionism (*Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xviii–xix).
  99. I discuss Wittgenstein’s account of aspect dawning in relation to democratic identification and political change in Aletta J. Norval, *Aversive Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 105–40.
  100. This is what Owen calls the processual character of perfectionism. (See, David Owen, ‘Democracy, Perfectionism and “undetermined messianic hope”’, in *The Legacy of Wittgenstein: Pragmatism and Deconstruction*, ed. C. Mouffe and L. Nagl (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 139–56. Cavell argues that his interest in ‘paying attention to the ways in which the initiating impulse to the further self may present itself in different temperaments of thought’ arises precisely from the kind of perfectionism he seeks to adumbrate, namely, one that does not envisage and even deplore ‘the prospect of arriving at a final state of perfection’. (*Cities of Words*, 315).
  101. Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*, xix.