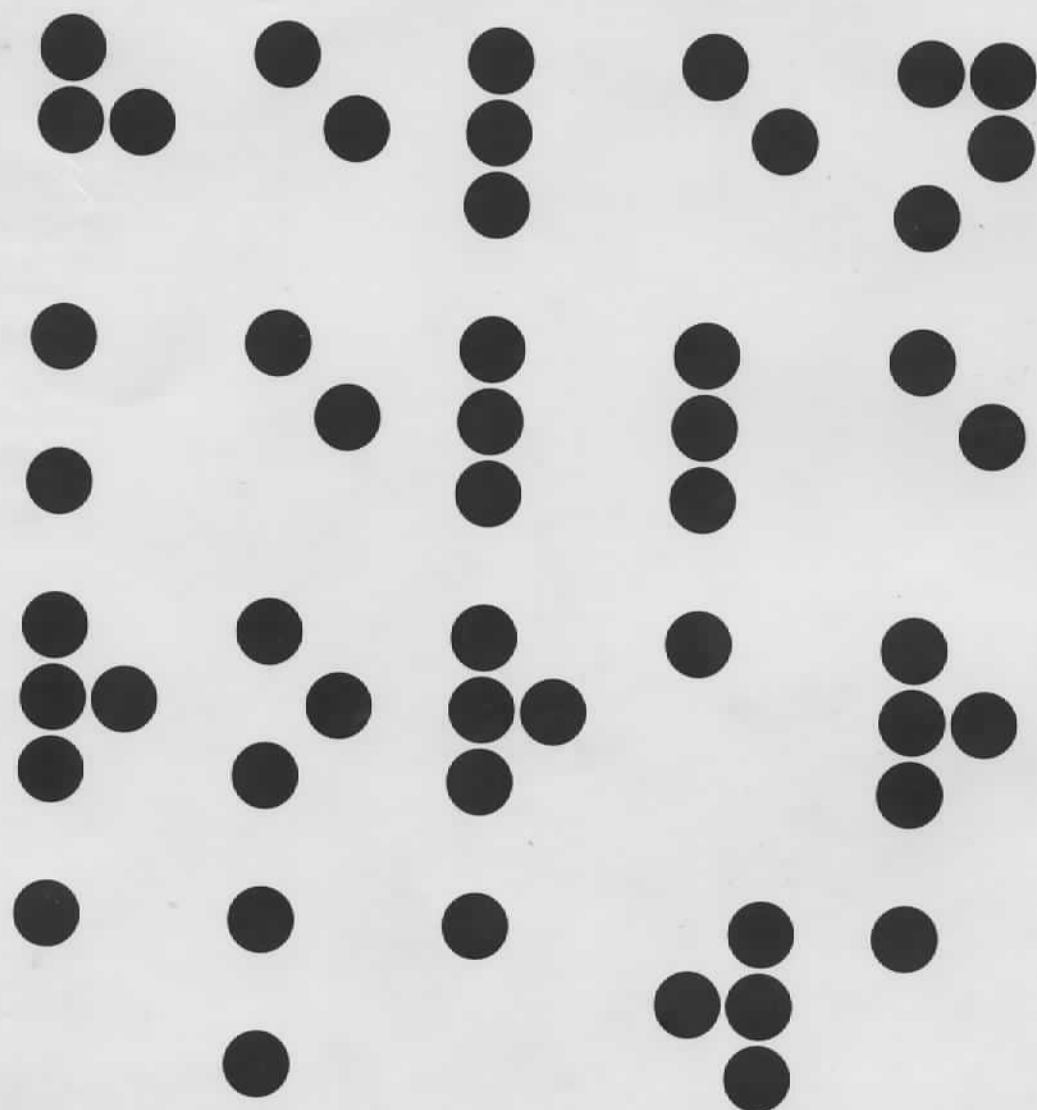


Gins, Madeline. "Thinking Field." *Helen Keller or Arakawa*. Burning Books, 1994. Print.



Helen Keller or Arakawa
Madeline Gins

CHAPTER I


Thinking Field

"The sum of it is that you are a blessing, and I'll kill anyone who says you are not."

— William James (in a letter to Helen Keller)

"The invisible and the imperceptible weigh not the same."

— Anonymous (deafblind)

he afternoon has much to recommend it, including an all-inclusive atmosphere with evening, and a geometry that's flexible enough.

I was definitely born on July 6, 1936, or it may have been June 27, 1880, or was it actually November 7, 1941?

Form rubs its antlers against trees of not much. If projective envelopings did not move persuasively, there would be no world. Sky

of an I.

Helen Keller. The main constant not to be forgotten is that two of my senses are perpetually down: for seeing and hearing, I — and any I of this variety — draw a blank every single time.

Well, that's how it is and it couldn't have been otherwise save for a change in conditions so total as to have permitted me never to have been Helen Keller in the first place.

Only a totally other set of conditions could have made it possible for me not have to have been a Helen Keller.

Subjected to similar constraints others might live the self-same name, and, by generating sequences of events identical to those associated with this my name, come up with this sky of an I and no other. Take, for example, this fine, sharp specimen of great odoriferous dimension, a freshly baked loaf of bread in front of me, and know it — the bulk of it and every crumb! — to be for me invisible. For you, too, I suppose, the bread is, at this instant, more or less invisible.

Indeed the whole range of my perceiving happens within what most people consider to be the invisible. "Invisible," is a term I've

imported from the sighted world. It's but one of many tales told to me, into me, so that I might form — for the sake of my forming — as if I could — an abiding picture of the world. (The main supplier of certain of my impressions may be memory, ancient, for as an infant I had sight, retaining it until I was nineteen months of age.)

But, in fact, I find nothing I perceive to be essentially invisible. In a world of all blind people, everything would be non-visible, and it would be trivial to point out one thing or another as being so. To the blind, terms like "invisible" are but polite bridges (with much torque and of odd construction) to the sighted; curseys, and say, yes, ma'am. When I'm not speaking in the other's voice, I perceive things directly,

fielding them as best I can.

Nevertheless, a having once been marked with the condition of invisibility goes so far — so far-going has it been in this marked vessel as to have completely spread through me — as to lead to where it began: myself observing myself unseen. Here's the sum of all of that (and soundless!), plus a whole other set of x's, hidden. As the provisional sum of all of these, I direct the traffic of weightedly perceptible "invisibles" from a within. The nearly perceptible is thoroughly perceptible enough to me. I have never been able to find the cut-off points for this within. Rather, this "within" acts as if it were boundlessly stretching out — if one were to include the full spread of all the ripples and riplings — into a distance ambiguously endless.

Of course, actions taken by me have a great deal to do with how this distance forms. More than fifty regular actions and easily the same number of micro-actions determine enveloping and the *tissues of density* near and far on which this depends.

And this is the way I do inhabit the non-visible; as a stretched-out mass onto which the layout of the world is to be placed to be remembered. The "living canvas" is not a bad nickname for someone who strives to keep track of things the way I do. Distinct spots tell of themselves proprioceptively or kinaesthetically. What's happening within my right shoulder is two and one-quarter feet distant from what goes on within the left one. The "living canvas" forms as the distance between spots. One moment's spot is another moment's distance. I situate things and events by means of these. Spots, areas, distances expand and reduce to become one another, occasionally without my knowing it. I have what's happening within my left shoulder *cleaving* slightly less than two and one-quarter feet distant from those events peculiar to my right one. I keep these two shoulders separate and at the

*Weight
Without
Place
(1980-81)*

A Man Walking (1968).
 distance from each other that they, by nature, by the nature of (my) body, deserve to be; only when I'm forced to move exceedingly fast — to go as swift as a bullet — do I allow them to be given as a single dot of a place named shoulder.

Determining Body (1987-88).
 Then let Helen Keller be simply s/he in whom the world draws kin aesthetically its grand home around and about and precisely wherever.

The universe (my intimate as much as yours, but inasmuch as I never catch sight of the many possible separations which, I am told, are constantly presenting themselves to you, then, perhaps my intimate even more so?) exacts a universe of consequences. Were this any less exacting, I'd be strangled by a compromised exactitude. Here's a case in which less is considerably less.

I'm told that (but do I need to be told that?) pivotal points get seen from three vantage points: eye level, looked up to, glanced down on. Around the meat of point, and out from it, tentatives assemble and are drawn as lines. The triad of elemental paired opposites of orientational space (front-rear; above-below; left-right) runs aground or doesn't. The background laps up the background. The possessive of the moment binds the fixation.

The canvas is divided up from each single point of view severally. Likewise "who" parcels himself or herself out as the concept of person comes alive at the nexus of all (its) tendencies and tentatives. At which juncture, the sky of an I might scratch its head.

To draw the retentive network from an array of attentivity remembered, depicted. Actions can be passed through these lines. There's a graphic abeyance — held in graphic abeyance — and there's a graphic obedience, a continually transitional conferring. This is the linear stuff of the transitive. Of the what of there. Enough of this and

perception will have conferred upon the world a sense of its having been seen — and that happens transitively.

*Afternoon
and
Evening
(1974)*

It can be said that, because it falls everywhere, the phenomenon of light is all-transitive. With perceiving, it is much the same. Even the slightest registering of anything at all equals an alighting on something and to alight on something counts as the direct hit required for a being transitive onto something. Springing into action and everywhere being sprung into action, perception bombards the world as itself, hitting into itself transitively.

*Or Air
(1973-74)*

In a world of the all-transitive, a world composed of a medium passing (passing? — sieving) through itself (itself? — its set of events), actions associated with intransitive verbs ("the bird flies"; "he runs") can be thought of as, left and right, scoring numerous direct hits within themselves (within themselves? — within the flying; within the running) and so as supporting a full transitivity. I am thinking of what manages to have carry-over onto what.

What in line draws itself along and through as line if not the perceiving of it? Some of the gaze narrows to a stare then heads into and combines with the firmly drawn line all down its thin but ample length. Lines that hold the narrowed-down stare within the gaze are sometimes seen as, and from time to time are spoken of as, themselves staring out. Usually straight lines are the ones that appear to be staring, but even curvilinear lines can be firm enough and sufficiently straight to be seen as staring out from the surface.

The impressions must be kept distinct, apart from one another, to keep their distance, they suggest. Even so, they must live in the steady stream of the waterfall of their textures collecting. They have a forward and a back. They have an odor off to the side and straight behind. The nub of position is rife, and if respected, it signals. It is a graphically,

kinaesthetic and tactual, that is sketched in by me, at me, every single day. If the visual finds me, it is through my kinaesthetic graphicalness that it does. Kinaesthetic graphically.

It's the neutral presentation of the thinking field itself (its group of activities) that I — and I — seek here. In each case, I proceed to search out the rallying points of alignment. I begin not as one isolated dot in a field but as a dispersion of these throughout body.

In the substratum of the visible lies a foundational graphism, full quick of thick, of some size but *sizeless*, brought on by any accumulation of sentience, marked out in all directions and practically knowing this by definition. No matter what, it is the *sizeless* that is giving the measure to events, that's why it's all so difficult. The *sizeless* fits an edgeless contour. So named, "it" stands with the non-sized but as a something named — named, *sizeless*, of course; even so this is a term that would deny all objecthood — for objects come in sizes. Similarly, to the *sizeless*, all possibility of being abstracted must be denied — for to be abstracted from one form to another would require at least initial allegiance to one size in particular.

The ethos of the *sizeless*? The *sizeless* moves us and is of us; even as this is of us, what would the *sizeless* have of us? Who is it who is without size but would speak, rather? And how many *sizeless* skies of an I within one *sizeless* sky of an I? These swoop up and scope, non-calibratively, through what I speak of as *atmospheric resemblances*, temporarily building *moral volumes* out of those (more than a little self-contradictory) spins that (doubly) *cleave*.


Although order of mention might suggest order of appearance in this limited page-by-page format, what is happening on the designated surfaces might be happening all at once. The shifting of attention happens continually upon the same plane, and through others. There

is a locating. There is a locating of this locating. A continuous overall reading, involving a constant search for the possibly missed points of alignment.

Sufficient knowing of relational positionings and the consequent presentation of oneself to oneself as one blank screen (each screen is readily dissolvable into mere indeterminate area) after another are dependent on those sets of points or of tensions that must and do exist in order for there to be the relatively steady state of a continual non-collapsing all in upon oneself. I direct the order of the scale of events, groups diminished past vanishing points, and cellular units grouped so as to be larger than might ordinarily be suspected. In saying this, do I assert too much? In which is found the chat of circumstances. It is forthrightly plasticity that willows, putters or purrs or thinks out and about.

I get up and walk around the giant banyan tree, and I walk around its circumference of about a hundred feet. No one knows how old it is. The size of the branches in every direction and the tremendous roots I scramble over give me the impression of a grove, but what it is is one colossal tree. I know for certain it is not a part of my face, I think.

"Perception
Has Got to
Have a Body!"

f the thinking field of the deafblind person were absolutely dissimilar to that of his or her fellows, s/he would have no means of imagining what they think.

A network for retaining possible alignments might come about with the writing of this.

The key term would be *to cleave*, taken simultaneously as "to adhere" and "to [be] cut apart." In order for something to be able to be thought

of, or for an object to be perceived, something (some event) will need to be adhered to, no matter how briefly; and coupled with this, for the sake of other thoughts or perceptions to come, so that there can exist the characteristic condition of receptivity, there will have to be a cutting apart from this to which there had been the need to adhere.

Throughout my body as one longish heart I know the destiny of human society will be to live turned inside out with all consequences on the table. Those sequences making up any observing are to become themselves observable. Observable events are potentially reproducible ones; eventually, from these sequences a whole new perceiver or a new other might be generated.

Within gravity, within inertia, within the cell, the synapse, the ambiguity, biological and otherwise, I hunt (and so must s/he) for, among other specificities, *that which cleaves within the cleft*, so that we might, for example, yes, learn to live to be our own posterity!

On the subject of voice, all these questions were put to me at once: "Where does it feel as though your voice is coming from? As this is arising in you does this feel as though it were coming from not one place but many? And what in the world would be the qualitative feel of this to you ... would you try to say?"

Voice is a ball that only collects into the being of one in the course of something's being said — a ball made up of nothing but its own rolling out. Or voice is a precipitate. Or is this a chain of precipitates of ... the whole of my movement? I make it out to be a precipitate that is practically a "photographic" report of mind/body. Voice comes — from head to foot — out the fingers of the right hand, with a lot of talk hanging around the wrist and a light march of it down through the whole length of the middle of the forearm; but lately I have tried to connect this to that pitifully under-used apparatus, my voice box.

For me, to force some sound out into the regular voice-world is a sorry affair. Where to aim? I have but the remotest idea of where to aim, I have no means of checking up on myself in this. Still this remains one dimension I'd like to be able to pull out of myself.

How do I move? I can move only by eating up or dissolving where I am. I (anyone) pull in with a bright gulp what is to come next. When walking forward, I also snake along on three parallel, horizontal planes. I cast standpoints and send out runners or tendrils of what I call *forming spacetime*. Following this, projective circumferencings happen with me at every level, and *on all or any scale*. All with quirks of their own. Everywhere proceeds as its own tame whirlwind as *then but spreaded blind perception quirks continually sudden*. All these squirmings and divings add up to what spacetime is. What is spacetime?

With the bending and exploding of frameworks, forms of self-preservation suggest themselves. Some shapes hold things apart. I, the maker of these shapes, am subjected to, and must act in accordance with, proddings from near and far as to what to name them. Then a shape takes to tunneling through body, and that shape, along the entire long length it takes for and as itself, shivers and sits to be as open as a mouth in roaring laughter. Sometimes hidden down far along within this lengthening of a designated volume, I glimpse a small pile of nearly twigs; no hand can reach this.

In perceiving lies the telling (into someone) of stories a'composing — as in "compose yourself" — writ in sand, dust, particles, waves, and in all and any sweep of thick of quick, dire or not. Of course dire.

What if seeing and its basis could be separated? Most people would think that not possible. For them, nothing could be more counter-intuitive. I'm reminded of that chart made up of but a single dot that was even so identified as "two or three dots [that were] unable to be

separated." Might there be an underlying basis for seeing, and, if so, would this be detachable from the actual seeing of things? What I understand (and work with) as the basis of seeing consists of mindbody in its apportioning of itself and the rest of the world out into thoroughly proprioceptive-kinesthetic (and tactile) graphically. It is in the nature of the thinking field to move and instigate behavior using points of position and of supposition. Here is a world of complete tentativity.

I myself am supporting evidence for the ultimate separability of seeing and its basis. This yields, submerged and compact, an accommodating layer, one come out of extension, stretched over itself. This — from one discrete end of it out to the other — serves both as the primary instance of distance and the means by which all other distances will then be measured, envisaged.

I can keep a dot marked "head" apart from that marked "foot." It is out across upon the "living canvas" that these stay separate. Knowing these discretenesses and their locales to be the stretched-out bases (blank receiving areas) for seeing . . . something's taking place upon these bit by bit. . . . I sometimes wish for the construction of a great new visual organ whose interior would be a spherical handball court with a mark-leaving ball that, bouncing everywhere I'd need it to, would turn any spot it touched into something I'd be seeing. The ball *cleaves* to the wall, then bouncing back off it is *cleaved* apart from it (the wall) only then to be made to head for yet a new spot for *cleaving*. The ball in this image is hardly a ball at all, or one only provisionally, always more of an amassing than a mass. If *cleaving* could amass in place — and I think it can — why, it would be just the "ball" for this. What is *cleaving* or what is it to *cleave*? What may be thought to be sandwiched between the two senses of "to *cleave*" (to join and to be

separated) is the "material" of thought itself, conventionally held to be "transparent" or "transparency itself." A medium that is a perceiving texture may be said to be formed within and between the occurrent juxtaposings of the two contradictory actions of to *cleave*. This medium is the sum of the actions composing it; the result of all *cleaving* that, as it takes place, has formed and is forming whatever is in the offing. The habit of referring to this medium as "transparent" causes it to be erroneously thought of, even if only ever so slightly, as an object rather than as the set of actions which it is. After all, there exists the expectation, indeed slight, that whatever is transparent will at least have to it, if nothing else, a front and a back; but, just as when it comes to the ocean, which is also hardly merely an object, we find no readily locatable front or back, there is neither simply a front nor simply a back to the perceiving texture or the medium that constitutes thought. If the ocean as a whole cannot be spoken of as being transparent neither should the perceiving process be. "Action constructing itself as 'see-through'" might be a better way to refer to the characteristic "transparency" of thought. Although people may guess that it is by means of *cleaving* that they think and perceive, they cannot directly perceive this to be so. Even so, I'm told, the process, carried out in the see-through mode, manages to bring about a world that has to it various degrees of opacity. Some opaque objects will be shiny.

Put the world of numbers along one line (horizontal), and the world of things, names of things, along a line running parallel to this (where are these — wherever could these be?), and together let these show how seeing might always be put. An apparatus for recording "who" in action. This starkly has the look to it of not more than enough. It sets as it rises within that spectrum extending from the hue that is the memory of lead as marked to the color of saliva as it is being swallowed

in shyness or boldness. This unit made of two horizontals crosses the thirds of the surface. Below "squats" a rectangle that occupies the top two-thirds of the surface. But of which it is nonetheless stated: *This rectangle is a photograph of this entire painting.* Note that as difficult as it is to produce an image on command, it is an even more difficult task, perhaps an impossible one, to "see" a photograph into (or out of) a blank. What's more, the frame within which the called-for photograph would have to materialize is, as noted above, not of the right proportions and so of little help. Could the viewer produce at will glossy, of what, in the wider context of the canvas as a whole, s/he sees the entire painting (isolated rectangle included) to be? Or does this empty rectangle "represent" an over-exposed photograph — one that has come out blank — and nothing more. Or, inasmuch as the wrongly-proportioned rectangle gives more than a little disjunctive pause to the act of ascribing, could it be that, more than an image of any this or that, this is a "photograph" of, or the possibility of a photograph of, "OR" itself, pivotally nude. Or do the edges of this photograph that doesn't look like one provide flat report of a hypothetical cal proprioceptive-kinesthetic graphic substratum to the visual? — and as such, then, are this rectangle's drawn edges representative of the walls (skin) of that self-apportioning out creature known as observer? The forms I harken to are schemas of what might be there (and will be again) and of what has happened to me. They are pictures of schemas of pictures. I break my head against the images that don't form every time.

To be transitive is to have a carry-over onto something else. Thinking, I find, works as a field that is all transitive. So thought

commands a body all spread out in transitivity.

"The best way to draw a line is to do it with your eyes closed!"


"I now declare myself to be carrying that over onto this."

It was with the help of two carefully condensed and separated out thick lines or *separated continuums*, that I was able to know when I had entered Green Park. Roughly, one line to fix things and events occurring all along my path at levels from mid-thigh to ground and the other running line for noting events happening at levels from the shoulders on up. What happened in between was sorted out and shared by these two dominant projected continuums. I smelled grass and burning leaves. It was a blessed corner in which to commune with nature away from the street traffic — men, women and children walking for the pleasure of it, dogs gambolling without leash or muzzle, pigeons and gulls. I touched the noble plane-trees and oaks, and enjoyed the softness of the grass. The sparrows were very cocky and so fearless we almost stepped on them. We inquired why the plane leaves were being burned, and the reply was that it takes them five years to rot. Their ashes make a fine dressing for the soil.

"Perception has got to have a body!" I cried. ~

CHAPTER III

The First Little Brick of Substance

o point or dot can be of the size conventionally accorded to it. This is because there can be no such thing as an uncontained point. The perceiving of a point or dot amounts to nothing less than a containing of it. Therefore, when it comes to approximating total point size, size and scope of the originating container, that is, perceiver and the world, must be added onto the designated *minimum visibile* that is the point

seen. Even so, the point (with dot in tow) continues to be that which is commonly put forward as being the smallest of all objects or notations.

No point exists such that it is non-living.

"I am *almost individual*. How can all of voice have made itself this small? That down towards which everything, when reducing, must go,

that is I. The limit of a reducing down towards. Beginning with the usual fluffery of reference, trim in to have self-diminished to dot, drawing ever-tighteningly towards less. And you would find this to be pancake flat. Smallest-sized, in that state of. And even in this minute-

ness, still I can clear my throat. Then down further, at this small size, sphericity and rectilinearity notably blend: my squared corners are round. And still I am not vanished. Due to ever-present drift or blur,

I am, in some ways, never 'small enough.' This adds up to 'small enough': no longer any smaller-still toward which to advance by subtraction or by concentration. The ceasing of all or any tending towards, for the position has been filled. Finally, the desperate need to be brought even further down in scale may be relinquished — and something sits back in an easy chair."

On a vertical canvas, a bottomless entity appears as a container of grid and not much more; the subdivisions — geometrical cellules — of this grid that encloses itself into a containing form (of, to begin with, itself) grow smaller when approaching what the title tells us will be the bottomless below. This is a wide this, wide-what-open, wide open at both ends or endlessnesses. Whatever this is, it is procedural and linguistic. What is stringing itself out here, then remaining put, is evidence of the forming and the containing of a container in the making, the unfolding and the subsisting of deductive events of a thinking field. A dot on the lower right is labeled "mother." This would

be the point of departure for, or what stands in for, all of what is mother for the while. This dot as marked stands for a greater contextual whole and not only for someone's mother, perhaps the artist's, but for the one to whom this thought or memory occurs or for a motherly point or site in a particular sky of an I. *Bottomless/ Mother (1961).*

"A psychological double bottom is declared in the antiphrastically entitled series *Bottomless*, where the arrows and diagrams accompanying the stereometric 'object' as it passes through various vicissitudes, clearly show that the process of geometric conversion and reduction is to be read as the narration of a psychic trajectory," one of the early reviewers wrote.

"After a while I went very near to a beautiful white rose-bush which was completely covered with buds and sparkling with dewdrops; I bent down over one of the branches with a lovely pure white bud upon it, and kissed it softly many times; just then I felt two loving arms steal gently around me, and loving lips kissing my eyelids, my cheeks, and my mouth, until I began to think it was raining kisses; and at last I opened my eyes to see what it all meant, and found it was my precious mother — that expanding dot — who was bending over me, trying to kiss me awake. Do you like my daydream? If you do, perhaps I will dream again for you some time" — written when I was eight years old.

It is important to know that each dot stands definitively for something — except when it doesn't — and to know exactly for what it stands and to agree to a name for it. This is what begins the traction on the world: the pinning down of one thing, anything. Not only must the world be cleaved into sections, agreement must be reached as to how these various sections are to be named. If one thing is not stopped, stopped in its tracks, no traction can be gotten on the world, on oneself.

Before I had caught on to what language was, and to the arbitrary

and voracious centrality of its game — I got this all in one shot — I wasn't even able to. . . . Nothing had been marked for the rest to pass by for. If even one demarcation can be made (at knowing), the rest, assembling itself accordingly, follows.

I had to learn — and it was a question of agreeing to a convention — a method of affixing to each thing the realization that this indeed was the thing that it was.

This is what people do: they let "x equals dot" stand for "y equals mother." A dot x might stand for a thing y

He was the sum of his dots, as marked, that group of stand-ins for living points. We saw him walking or talking.

"But the customs officials didn't see him, at least not right away. They wouldn't allow the work in 'duty-free' if it was only printed matter and not art. A few dots could be anything, for any purpose, but if these were of something, then it would be art and there'd be no duty. 'Look at the title,' I said. 'You see it is called *A Man Walking*. Here are dots marked head, thorax, pelvis, hand, leg and so on. See how the dots marked arms and hands have been placed a little higher up than where they would normally be expected to be? This is because as the man walks along his arms are naturally swinging back and forth as part of the gait.' 'Oh yes,' they said, 'one foot is quite a bit in front of the other, too. You're right, someone is walking across the dark blue. . . . 'Gid, I supplied the missing word. Everybody got quite excited by this new, very reduced chart — a few of the customs men were actually jumping up and down. Although it had the semiotic ring to it of its own period, the sixties, this anatomical chart of another order could have stood for any person of any time out for a walk, from homunculus on up, a strolling Neanderthal, an ambulating Midlothian, a disjunctive grouping of post-modern humanoid jumping beans."

A chart with a life of its own. In subsequent versions, each bit of pinned down abstraction, each named dot, gets assigned a dual stand-in role. The dot linked by arrow to the designation, "head," is now, by means of a second arrow, also given over to the word, "sky." "Thorax" and "mountain" make do with one dot between them. Parts of the landscape are paired with parts of the body, generally according to the corresponding positions held all up and down that vertical that is the human figure when it is standing outdoors. The semantic doubling, however, cannot be said to follow this predictable path. Instead, a dot associated with a small, black stenciled-in presentation of the word "leg" gets paired with another "leg," also in stencil letters, but in this case large, light-gray ones. Has the same denotation been given twice so that we might not miss that this is really what it is? Or are we being clued in to the need to view the chart in relation to different image sizes. Or do we have in this the report of a seeing and then a seeing again, a matter-of-fact routine occurrence, smacking, even so, of deadpan double take? The dot for "foot" as well as doubling as a mark for "shoe" ("shoe" is larger in size but much paler than that "foot" with which it shares a dot and which supposedly wears it) is allied, a third arrow lets us see, with an indefinite something that's hardly a word and possibly never to become one. What started as a chart of a man out for a walk has now become and will now bear the title of *A Study of Twins (Talking or Walking)* (1968).

This artist makes "specific abstractions." Without the existence of a specific and critical abstractionism, the present study would not have been possible.

The extreme transitivity of that waiting texture which is the thinking field, for all its colorful motion into the world of any texture, is of unrecognizable temperature, unlike either the body of the observer

or of anything that is being observed.

"It is all a blanket thermometer and one wonders whether it will ever succeed in taking its own temperature."

Then let's rethink all this in terms of Voluntar, in terms of her story. Voluntar, short for voluntary action, is herself the archetypal degree. An elusive warmth. In the scale of events, she, preceding dot, is beneath it yet wider. When she collects in place, she can manage to work herself up into being point or dot. Once set in motion, these two images (dot and Voluntar) cannot help but bleed into one another. It is said that the movements of her wisp of body configure animate microchips that are volition.

Voluntar is a great little diver; I should know for it is I who trained or invented her. It is she who takes motility and builds it into mobility. Voluntary activity, earned rather than given, is a result of or a lithe product of an historico-cultural development in behavior, and as such is considered to be a feature unique to human psychology. The capacity for voluntary activity distinguishes child from beast. "I'd rather like to do that." Yet the child is capable of far fewer voluntary actions than is the adult. Lack of training curtails range and amplitude of choice. This is dependent on the number and types of dives made by Voluntar. Her broadening the horizon as one spasm of the horizon after another builds the world. As the first little brick of substance, she is the ultimate fibre of a micro-ground. I may have seen photographs, or, if you like, "photographs," of these twists and twistings. Ceaseless expeditions might describe the extent of her effort, her way of life, the relentlessness of it. Not all microscopics dive so well or as often. She pseudopods below, looking for all the world like an octopus, could only she be seen.

It's not that she sees for me, for she's as blind as I am. What she does

is feel the way for me. She is a blind man's cane, but a soft, small, internal one, with *a core of flexibility only*.

Voluntar, then, is substance and sign (structure) of the voluntary. We have in her the signpost (many) leading humans to a specific scaffolding of behavior that breaks away from biological environment to new forms of culturally-based processes. As down Voluntar dives and up again each time she comes with one *signified or if* after another, a sky of an I is sketched out and the basic unit of "who" is constructed.

She is countless yet there may not be as many of her as that would make it seem. She is also free not to exist.

It's at the backbone-crossroads of her hinge-nature that I pick up *the call of continuity* each time. Her sleek body is slinkily prescient.

Or take her momentarily in the static state of having agreed to be point or dot. She is the always figurative point. All concrete figurative. Only through voluntary action can she be summoned or do the summoning.

Found lounging in the figurative, sword in hand (or pseudopod-like projection as sword), suddenly she lunges forward. Upon her having lunged forward, all swords vanish except for their points. When the sword's point strikes, that's her it becomes. *Point* has been her pseudonym for centuries.

Voluntar goes directly from zero speed to top speed. Intensity is her middle name, actually. Her knowing how to spring into action without missing a beat allows her to catapult on a regular basis to the forefront of issues. Marx greatly admired how swiftly, surreptitiously, and definitively she could be effective; he wisely chooses to rely on her as key mover in a central dictum, declaring: "We have sufficiently explained the world, the *point* is to transform it." Without her, it couldn't be done, and if not by her, then by nobody. Anything Voluntar

does is transformatory in full, and this will include anything whatsoever that has been transformed.

I know her to be the darling of place markers of plasticity, limning character and will. *Stretchable impressions* are yes, her, hers.

It was not long before lines were being drawn. None of these had any less firm a resolve of plasticity throughout than did Voluntar.

The body of a dot is drawn out and given traction to be pressed into line. Voluntar's speech is one with that of dots telling how it feels to be drawn out into line. Unwillingly pressed into service? That's unclear. If we cannot know what they think and feel, how can we ever stop discriminating against the minuscules. We may not care much for how it feels to go from point to line, but for them this is major. We think of bodies as being all different sizes, but mindbody we would reserve mainly for ourselves, that is, for beings who are our size. It's easy for us to do this as long as the little others remain voiceless. But these can speak if only we listen. They speak in us, to be sure, but when they would speak up, directing their attention to their own unique subject matter, it turns out that for these partials, these littles, only a smattering of English is available; rather, Voluntar and her peers can avail themselves mainly of Anglo-Saxon with now and then a little Sanskrit mixed in: "It all came rud, pud as a thud, that is. Pud extrud. They scud. Curded line or line-like turned cud. [Sounds that are made within the inscribing of a line] Cud of what? Sense cud but. Anu [Sanskrit: aram] then. Trodded. Cud rudder. Suds as duds. Sudden. A bud of paddhati [line]. Bud bite, oh! Bud in Buddy. O Bud. . . . Light budding. Cram bud into pud. Rub bud of pud into the crevice of line. Pud creamier linear. Huddles. The hum in the pud. Charcoal puddles. Line active."

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CHAPTER IV

Draw Me a Diagram



as I picking up sounds of that conversing which goes on in the course of a line's being inscribed as formed?) Trodded. Cud rudder. Cram bud into pud, aditi [Sanskrit: infinite]. Huddles the hum in the pud. Faint charcoal puddles. Go around by the luddle [the back or side-gate]. So thud I. So tut I. I tud so. Save the crumas. Pass the cucurbite [gourd]. Until the next wink then ... [wink: in Anglo-Saxon: to

close the eyes; to blink; the modern English sense of wink] "Yf he can buy sume collucione, do his neghbour ronge." — Chaucer. The fleshment. There was much flacor [flying of arrows]. Flaesc. I did but see the flean of the fleshment as I looked up at the first [a. space of time, b. ceiling]. Parsi [to one side] con [angle]. This was treow. At length, a line is always the length of an uncupped pud. Or as said above, the pud extrud. Bite the bud.

"I want a scale diagram of my own for any terrain."

"We all do," was the reply.

Remember my having told you of our having tied rope up all around the backyard, of our stringing it back and forth from tree to tree and from bush to fountain, trying to maintain it mostly at the height I am with arms stretched out above me, but also placing it at heights from anywhere from between up that high to not much below the ankle. This was done to fulfill one of my greatest ambitions which was to be able to run uninhibitedly about without doing too much or any damage to myself. As long as my hands grazed or sensed to graze this rope I could be sure I was in the safe zone that encompassed a terrain with which I was familiar.

I am helped in a related way by a diagram of my own house that's inscribed inside my right foot. I have it that the layout is marked out within the foot itself at a height of about seven-eighths of an inch above the sole on a parallel plane to it. Due to the way a foot narrows as it rises towards its ankle, I was forced to draw my precious mnemonic sketch greatly scaled down, giving it a total area of a bit more than one-half a foot (that is, the standard foot, not mine in particular); I might add that I've also committed myself to the securing of a companion piece of a schema for the left foot's supra-sole area; this I handle in a much more informal way in accordance with its subject matter: all the

comings and goings within my home, Arcan Ridge (nearest actual address: right foot).

I start out of bed. I must put bed behind me. The woodenness of the footboard is behind me. I verify this by reaching out in back of me and rapping lightly on it with my knuckles. The bedroom has three windows. Assign one window to each ear, that is, have one be placed to the right and one on the left; a third window (these intimations of windows of the thickness of image, image alone, I have always secretly longed to call "thwindows.") takes its orientation, I allow, from the back of my head; the third window opens out in the wall that is directly behind the bed that is behind me. All this has been worked into the scale diagram in place within my right foot. That line of this diagram drawn parallel to the back of the heel, drawn alongside it from within, represents the house's back wall; a part of this is the wall directly behind my bed in the bedroom, the one which, upon awakening, I, as just described, regularly consign — and on a considerably larger scale than I am able to use within the foot — to the back of my head. Through this diagram, as it is projecting out — I can, by thus projecting it, change its scale to fit my need — and exploding through me, troops all the rest of my house.

Thus do I carry in and as me *a diagram of the imagination*. I am stretching that labyrinth within which I stand (as I), inserting into it all the other labyrinths, or rooms that come along, that come to mind. Standing in the living room, I look at a diagram giving the layout of the entire house. With a diagram of the whole house displayed within it, this one room is made to contain, in a sense, the whole house. The living room, given how it is named, would be the right room for this to happen in. My having a diagram of the house makes it possible for me to prepare for and know each of the other rooms

*Stretch-
able
Labyrinth
'1963'.*

before entering them. Because I've been to each of these so many times before, they can, one by one, spring out of the diagram as I choose them to. A diagram makes it possible for a part to contain the whole. It can be seen that this canvas presents a *diagram of part of the imagination*. Here is only a part; the rest of the imagination is busy with a great number of other things and events.

Or the schema grows large and diffuse. It has become large enough for me to walk through nonchalantly barely keeping it in mind. To the general of its airy surround, I cart the particulars. The schema of the house, hotel room, if need be, represents a lot of work on my part. It is almost as much a construction as the original, and, perhaps, sometimes a good deal more than that. All I can say is that it coheres to its own coherency without wires, although it is as contiguous in and of itself as any wire or wiring — and full well as good a conductor. A group of something has agreed to be the house. The organic, as usual, will lend a hand to — I should say that it underwrites — the inorganic. It is said that the vocabulary of schematic constellations for people in my condition is about as extensive as is most people's vocabulary of words. Von Senden tells of a formerly blind patient who, upon recovering sight, reported that although he knew the room he stood in to be only one part of an entire house, he was unable as he stood there to conceive that the whole house could look bigger. He did not have any more room to give to anything more than this, or so he then concretely thought. Our sense of space is determined by the practices we grow used to.

"What made you decide to have your paintings be diagrams?"

"I needed paintings to be all-inclusive without their containing a single extraneous thing or becoming in any way needlessly weighty. Diagrams. Maybe diagrams, I began to think.

"There were a few incidents that helped me come to this. Let me

The
Diagram
of Part of
Imagination
(1964-65).
Living
Room
(1965).
X-ray of a
Diagram
(1965).

see what I can remember.

"A jazz musician, self-educated, she was in her mid-fifties, I suppose. The third time or so she came to play: 'I've heard about you. They say you're this strange artist but I can't see anything yet, everything's unfinished or not started or something. But I like you. I don't know why. I want you to do my portrait.'

"Why not accept to do what I had absolutely no desire to do. I had already let her in several times to play the piano, something which almost definitely was not what I wanted. In those days, as much as now, but perhaps then even a little more than now, I needed to be left alone to concentrate; having only recently arrived in New York I was slowly beginning to put things in place such as I could bear them.

"She sat up straight, crossed her legs, one arm rested on the closed keyboard, the other was rounded in her lap. I had accepted to do what she had proposed, and once I had, not another word from her.

"Staring and staring at her, I could see that — and this I suppose — was what I had all along had in mind to see — but I could see that! — she was everywhere. Our form is taken from, and must, to some degree, be considered as inseparable from, that which is around us. All that was in view was of her, or was contributing to who she was, tributaries all to her sky of an I. I would have either to take down only a few of the salient features or to take it all down. As I was determined to give her what she wanted, I set about outlining all I could of what I saw. As I believed her to be, in a sense, everywhere, I was able, as I went along, finding and sketching her in and about all the corners of the room, along all its defining edges, to forget her as someone who was there, as someone seated, at that moment, upon my piano bench.

"After three hours had elapsed, she got up and came around to look over my shoulder. She was not pleased with how I had portrayed her.

She could find nothing but a good deal of the room upon the paper. Did she fear that she was never going to be there?

"Don't get upset. This is your frame, and so it is you. I'm grateful to you for having asked me to do a portrait, because it has led me to think of another way to make paintings." She was, unfortunately, very angry and unwilling to listen to anything I had to say.

"Around the same time, possibly a half year before this, late one night, I found a pile of discarded blueprints near City Hall. As I looked at the blueprints, it was almost as if I could see my imagination in front of me, presented to me from the outside. What to others might be cool, mechanical, and impersonal images, if images at all, struck me as being personal, highly individual ones. It was this that I had been feeling the need to draw. The blueprint as a ready-made is a perfect example of the condensed perception of the other. That was, and had, in some way always been, my point of departure. At least one of the two or three I always like to start from at once."

Outlines are drawn, attributions given. At each of the six slightly opened windows, light of a different color floods onto the canvas that is mindbody. This layout envelops wherever you are, subtracting everything from it, only to have an enormous quantity of light be poured in. "I have made up my mind" and "I cannot make up my mind" can be equally well seated here. Whatever size this is, it expands to such an extent, always, that nothing can be said to be larger than it. The spelling out of position: *Alphabet Skin* (1965-66). The contours of this garment are of a primordial spacetime or of all of perceiving. The Kabbalah tells of a "garment" (*alphabet skin*) that has sensibility woven within it "like the grasshopper whose clothing is part of itself." The length of the "garment" was made up of the alphabets of the *Sefer Yetzirah* and had 231 "gates" which form the archi-structure of thought. Its

breadth was composed of an elaboration of the Tetragrammaton according to the numerical value of the four possible spellings of the fully written names of its letters, viz., the "name" 45, the "name" 52, the "name" 72, and the "name" 63, which were the "threads" and the "weave" that were originally situated in the hem of the garment. The size of this garment was twice the area necessary for the creation of all the worlds. After it had been woven, it was folded in two: half of it ascended and its letters stood behind the letters of the other half. The "names" 45 and 52 were arranged behind the "names" 72 and 63. It happened that the last part of the "name" 63 was left without a partner in the folded garment. This folding constituted a contraction (*zimzum*) of the *alphabet skin* to half its area, and with the removal of half of it from its previous place, something new was formed. The empty area created by the folding of the garment is not an actual vacuum but is merely deprived of the garment or of the light of its substance. Here then is some early evidence of the need to leave things blank, unadhered to, cut apart from, so that new and other things or events might happen; and thus has the mask of this world been cleaved to the garment of itself. Taking it up from there, we might then cleave it differently.

What makes me happy as a good hill is that our syllogisms resonate. No blank is numb. Some blank would smell of a numb appearance when in the process of forming lines. Lines keep blank from springing into color, I suppose I've heard. Or line-colored lines, of course, as members of a world of color, also have color, but an unmoved color held ... in line.

As long as even one of the body's senses remains intact, that blank out of which things and events may be construed is possible.

A diagram might exist such that I would be able to lick off from it the very sight of. . . . To arrive at something of this order, the diagram


would have had to have been made without a single move's having been wasted and with hardly a false step's having been taken. It is with this degree of exactitude that each *fiction of place* is initiated. Suddenly, no unnecessary actions. No longer any time for that.

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corridor
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being
the sha
then d



CHAPTER X

What Is Spacetime?

uddenly a bright spot appeared in the darkness, like a planet hanging in a reversed geometrical night. It spread out, curling in slow spirals, growing larger and fainter, becoming more and more attenuated. A liquid smoke (a terribly staccato liquid) filled the whole flask with a firm luminous cloud.

"An aura-to-go? Are you sure that's what we should be looking for?"

The next day when I went in, the room was already dark, but Evan guided me from behind with a hand on each of my shoulders. Over toward the fireplace I could discern the faint glow, about the size of a large walnut, but more elongated. I bathe in the liquid shade, thought I, going closer. I saw that the interior of this luminous kernel contained dark and pale orange currents revolving extremely slowly. Spacetime is made up of corridors and alleys, ways to travel and things to shun, I remembered.

These are winged odors before the tempest, was that what I think I heard. Of this who can say what.

"Remember this is only a story. This has little to do with the way any of us goes about doing things. We certainly are not after little wistful extractions. But as to the complexity of space, sure I agree with that."

Seen are two phases of what might be an eternal sequence of return. Each phase stands at the side of what it was or of what it will be. *Proper*

Noun (1983-84): one phase lives as a giant street plan that has marked upon it either ways to move about in it or a set of permissible moves to be taken or that have already been taken; close beside this stands an area

equal to it in size in which sits either that start-up ball out of which the oversized plan evolved or the dense spherule into which the sum of the adjacent totality — street plan and all — has collapsed. The spherule as plan sucked into itself sits an isolate in the center of the huge blank

that was left by the more expansive version of itself as down in scale that came. *It itself, extending, an open possibility for reassembly, forming blank, was everywhere making its move out through and as "is."* In a piriform within the chest huddle the oblate corridors of that sphere through which all corridors must bend. Then there can be such things as street

plans on the move.

"What have you got there?"

"I'll let you see this in the light."

He moved away for a moment. The light in the middle of the room went on. I saw on the mantelpiece a small glass bell jar beneath which lay a dead rat stretched on its side. The warm glow had vanished.

"What you saw just now was a small mass of — I hesitate to call it perceiving matter — well, let's say, if you like, the luminous, dryish fluid which appeared under the beam of the ultraviolet rays at the top of the jar, twenty-one minutes after the animal's death."

"And where is it now, your fluid? I don't see anything in the globe."

"Quite true. Nothing is visible in ordinary light, and that explains why neither I nor anybody else ever noted the phenomenon before. . . ."

"I'd like to see it again."

He switched off the light and turned on the apparatus. Instantly the tiny elongated kernel came up, shone out.

"And further, note that this fluid, luckily for us, is lighter than air, collects at the top and is unusually grainy, a fact which makes it quite easy, I now realize, to preserve even if the bowl has to be lifted to withdraw the body."

Now Ames was telling me how Ivor Plenum managed to fix a look of full intensity directly upon him even as he was agitatedly interrupting his brother:

"Do you remember that talk we had in August at Chamonix — about space, its existence or not? I daresay you thought I was playing the fool. So I was in a sense, but I'd been feeling my way towards this for ten years. Now I have got it, and you must hear about it. You may take my word that it's a pretty startling discovery."

"I am bound to say," said Ames, "that it took me a long time to understand what he meant. He began by saying that everybody

thought of space — he immediately qualified this as being spacetime — as an empty homogeneous medium.

“Never mind at present what the ultimate components of that medium are. We take it as a finished product, and we think of it as mere extension, something without any quality at all. That is the view of civilized man. You will find all the philosophers taking it for granted. Yes, but every living thing does not take that view. An animal, for instance — it feels a kind of quality in what has up until now been known as space.”

“Unrecognizable places jump out of there, *shaping volumes*.”

“It’s full of you’ll never know what will turn up.”

I thought we should switch point of view once again for awhile. I may have felt this way because we were getting close to the multiply-hinged gist of it.

“It stems from what everything else stems from.”

“It behaves in waves.”

“We tend to experience the text in fragments.”

When it itself,

an open possibility for reassembly,

behaves in waves across and through configurated energies,

at its own pace,

it gradually becomes a forming blank

into which all configurations are drawn, absorbed, condensed,

and out of which unrecognizable places jump,

shaping volumes into images.

The identity of “it” is never clear, and none of the nouns names a concrete object. Although we can understand the sentence, we cannot “picture” any of its referents. But on another level, the text is self-referential: it (“it itself”) functions like the forming blank in its

relationship to the diagrammatic image — as we read it laterally and sequentially it “absorbs” and “condenses” the diagrammatic configurations. With a layering of languages to make a critical set of exacting blanks, it becomes possible to depict the act of looking — if not of seeing. Within the compass of a giant yellow dot that is divided, with one of its halves off to the left and the other at the right edge of the canvas, the perceiver’s blank dots move out, through certain characteristic visual movements shown by arrows, into lines and regions and into the light and spacetime that makes up perceiving range in its entirety.

*Blank
Dots
(1982).*

I come upon a street plan that would have things its way, and fill us, me, with the nods of what’s possible. Stretched open and enlarged, the ready-made with its nose in the street plan leads directly to (and from?) *forming blank*.

“Of course also from. To invent yourself on the spot first be completely blank, but forming.”

“When someone says, ‘I stand there looking,’ for ‘there’ read ‘forming,’ that is, ‘I stand forming looking.’ All ‘there’s’ are forming even if some are less forming than others.”

“And from that comes. . . .”

“Yes, world and picture alike, out of *forming blank*.”

Forming blank, flexible schema-at-large, must be exactly as expansive as it is reduced. What’s been brought up so far from what has led up to this? Keep from forming an opinion too quickly and don’t think to see this before you see it. Feel the drift of the blank you’re to invent or of the one that’s to invent you. Wield yourself blank enough to go from one world picture to a different world picture in a split second. Every move that has had to be made will have had its influence on the *forming blank*. The kinaesthetic graphicality of the world beckons.

Whatever would cover up origin tends either automatically to

become paralyzed or to be immediately replaced — should we take this as an indication that the universe has built into it an ethical code? A *core of flexibility only*. Origin must go nude. Certainly nude does not mean unformed or not forming. Anyway, nude intelligence is right-fully the primary seduction. Certainly it is dangerous to lie about the source of *forming blank* for s/he who does so loses contact with his or her own origin.

Plenum told Ames, "An animal can find its way over new country by perceiving certain landmarks, not necessarily material, but perceptible, or if you like intelligible. Take early man. He has the same power, and, I believe, for the same reason. He is conscious of intelligible landmarks."

"For all we know, to a different intelligence from ours the top of Mont Blanc may be as crowded as Times Square, and as loud."

"Oh, why was I ever drawn!"

"Let all dots be snails!"

"Its syntax is its esse!"

"As they crossed the bridge of red herrings, they believed they were on firm ground."

"Whenever the carrier frequency that is being modulated corresponds exactly with the frequency of stimulus input or some multiple of it, fix your eyes on me."

"Put your innateness where your mouth is!"

"Or if you don't have any, don't bother."

"Don't be so seventeenth century. I have no innateness to speak of!"

Sometimes I wish these too, too solid limitations would melt; I feel positively bruised with their impact! Okay, I cannot see or hear but I know perfectly well in the eternal sense *IDO*. The spirit, like the sea,

is greater than any island or continent of sense-experience within its waters. Of course I know that outwardly I am a "deaf and blind" Helen Keller. But the many-voiced Course-of-things courses and senses through me a perceiving texture. To sense is to of course.


As far as what has formed and what could form in the non-terror, the sans-terrorism, of stepping into sweet reflective language, the evocation of the trails, inroads or incursions, within any blank (but not always) living canvas: "When a woman's acts are disclosed at the end, the self-tasting perceiving texture, the of-course-of *forming blank*, looks not only into the face of who this was but extends its search through the whole body, beginning from the fingers of each hand. Because I wondered as to the reason of this, it was made known to me, namely, that as all things of the thought and will are inscribed on the brain, for their beginnings are there, SO ALSO ARE THEY INSCRIBED ON THE WHOLE BODY; since all the things of thought and will extend thither from their beginnings, and there terminate, as in their ultimates. All things, both what was thought and what was done, are inscribed on the whole body, and appear as if read in a book when they are called forth from the memory, and as if presented to sight."

Thus all of body can be inscribed into for the purposes of remembering. Records get slipped in anywhere along any inlet. Nothing is not inscribed somewhere. All retrieval is a light excavating. If the stored away set of coded sounds being searched for happens to be tucked somewhere away in the bowels of the organism, it will take hours or even days for memory to come up with it.

A lot is curled up in and tucked down everywhere in and about body, not unlike how on the surface it looks to be with brain, but, minus the sulci and gyri, in a less obvious manner, and on a far larger scale. All this also flows in substrates.

CHAPTER XI

The Gazing
Other

 I felt the hard, smooth sand, so different from the loose, sharp sand, mingled with kelp and shells, of the North American beaches I'd known as a child.

I felt the pebbles rattling as the waves threw their ponderous weight against the shore.

A heated beach always reminds me of the mood I lived in prior to Teacher's coming to me. Basically, in those days, I, in brute fash-

ion, went about satisfying my needs and having done with them. I took what was presented to me or grabbed for what was near, initiating no constructive moves on my own.

I happened as a set of orifices. I demanded that things be given me or be put into me immediately upon my sensing a need for them. A dream from this period has condensed within it what for me was in those days the prevailing tense:

A long string of bananas extended down from the ceiling in the dining room. All the bananas were peeled and deliciously ripe. Standing under these, I chopped away at them and proceeded to eat my way up the lengthy bunch.

The dream shows the six-year-old dreamer not to be quite as undeveloped as some accounts have suggested she was. Here was someone with a sense of something already knew the shape, feel, smell and taste of banana. I was even able to conceive of an articulated-out volume that would be a whole string of these. Not only that, I could distinguish the peeled one to be the edible version. I was capable, in the dream at least, of inventing a form of constant feed. Or was this not an invention but part memory and part imitation of bunches of bananas belonging to a banana tree I'd at some point been brought in contact with? Or had a bunch of bananas I'd found lying in the pantry been the model for this? Even though I had graduated to solid food years before this, I chose in the dream to be practically imbibing the plugs of soft solidity into me as though I were being fed from the bottle.

What a friendly volume a banana is. The entire dream smelled of banana. I seem to remember feeling in this dream as if I too were a banana. Of course, as soon as I moved my arms again this feeling

was gone.

Take the banana and mash it into a bowl. The banana is going to lose itself into the cake. Look how seeded a banana cake appears, but a banana on its own gives not a hint of having anywhere near that many seeds. Only on every eleventh or so bite of cake does the taste of banana pure and simple return. Otherwise, what banana has to offer to cake is mostly moisture and volume. The large recipe does not exist to be followed. It reminds of the feel within the thinking field of the textures and tastes of separate items (some flour, salt, eggs, etc.) and of these in combination. If we could concentrate on as many ingredients as this at once, and on what happens to them at the various stages in the process, nearly tasting our positing of these, would we not have in this the report of a thinking field in action? Propose a recipe rather than a theory. Another thing to consider is how much preferable it would be to end up with a banana cake than with a weak and misleading metaphysics. Jottings and memos having to do with what anything in the world consists of should be made large, even enterable.

Of course, I was not yet a complex enough creature to have misgivings, although it's not unusual for children of six to have these or something akin to these. No, at that time, nothing could stop me in my tracks. I could not, it seems, form myself without first having formed the world.

Anne Sullivan refused to allow me not to catch onto the world and its ways. She kept knocking on the shut door that I was, until that door found itself capable of "knocking" back. The reason it was able to knock back was that it was not a door. But I would like to say that, beginning, middle, and end, I have been "all entrance," although at first I didn't quite know this of myself. I had to learn to separate one thing from another and to get a sense of the basis of selection for each single

*Untitled
(Banana
Cake)
'1967'.*

*Sky no. 2
(Coconut
Milk
Cake)
'1967'.*

thing or event. I had to arrive at the concept of name before I could open up the world and give it volume. What follows are three reports (mine from two different occasions and a letter on this subject by Anne Sullivan) of, or leading up to, the critical moment of my initiation into the master language game.

But my teacher had been with me several weeks before I understood that everything has a name. One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled "d-o-l-l" and tried to make me understand that "d-o-l-l" applied to both. Earlier in the day we had a tussle over the words "m-u-g" and "w-a-t-e-r." Miss Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that "m-u-g" is mug and that "w-a-t-e-r" is water, but I persisted in confounding the two. In despair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of returning thoughts; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful

cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

...

Teacher had been trying all the morning to make me understand that mug and the milk in the mug had different names; but I was very dull, and kept spelling milk for mug, and mug for milk until teacher must have lost all hope of making me see my mistake. At last she got up, gave me the mug, and led me out of the door to the pump-house. Someone was pumping water, and as the cool fresh stream burst forth, teacher made me put my mug under the spout and spelled "w-a-t-e-r."

...

April 5, 1887

I must write you a line this morning because something very important has happened. Helen has taken the second great step in her education. She has learned that everything has a name, and that the manual alphabet is the key to everything she wants to know. In a previous letter I think I wrote you that "mug" and "milk" had given Helen more trouble than all the rest. She confused the nouns with the verb "drink." She didn't know the word for "drink," but went through the pantomime of drinking whenever she spelled "mug" or "milk." This morning, while she was washing, she wanted to know the name of "water." When she wants to know the name of anything, she points to it and pats my hand. I spelled "w-a-t-e-r" and thought no more about it until after breakfast. Then it occurred to me that with the help of this new word I might succeed in straightening out the "mug-milk" difficulty. We went out to the pump-house, and I made Helen hold her mug under the spout while I pumped. As the cold water gushed forth, filling the mug, I spelled "w-a-t-e-r" in Helen's free hand. The word coming so close upon the sensation of cold water rushing over her hand seemed to startle her. She dropped the mug and stood as one transfixed. A new light came into her face.

She spelled "water" several times. Then she dropped on the ground and asked for its name and pointed to the pump and the trellis, and suddenly turning round she asked for my name. I spelled "Teacher."

Something was drink - mug - milk - water or, rather, drinkmugmilkwater. I had to pull things apart and to get what is called traction on each of these. Before my initiation, there were no separate things, for I was without any cut-off points for these. How, even while keeping a unified world together, to know these substances and objects as separable. In learning to abstract, I had to learn to open up that significant yet barely perceptible bit of spacetime between mug and the liquid it contained.

You have to be willing to try it, and you have to be willing to make a mistake.

Lines position substantives. Cup. Table. Lamp. Clothes. Plant. Named contours, all having to do with bedroom, locate and define place. Abstraction specified and constrained depicts an event. There is a unifying of events. Placed in that area discernible as "upon a bed" lies a pillow and two heads, one "upon" it and the other if not directly "upon" the pillow, right next to it. Only three feet are visible. Where is the fourth foot? Under the "covers"? But no "covers" are specified for this. The same group of things — except time has passed — appear on a second panel as lines, outlines, and more lines that are paired with numbers rather than with words. The objects and parts of objects selected and given numbers on this panel are not the same as those that have been selected and named on the other. What on the first panel were indicated to be clothes on the floor get passed over in the number version, and instead two spots on either side of the would-be pile of clothing receive respectively the numbers six and nine. "Chair" and "plant" of the first panel remain without numbers in the second.

Events, micro-events and partial objects have numbers. One number that's been crossed out has been called a mistake. Why should this spot be a mistake? Why this probably intentional mistake here? The contours, noticeably formed from the accreting of red, black, blue, yellow and green dots, seem not inanimate. Although all envelopings may be as specifically delineated as is this one, they're rarely seen right out in front of us as being so. This that passes as shown unifies events. The two separate and distinct curves for heads have drawn closer to form a single contour double-curved. Only two feet remain visible. Persistent viewers, by looking back and forth between the airy and aerated world opened up by names and contours on the first panel, and by contours in conjunction with arrows and numbers on the second, may find nestled into nowhere (but a nowhere with exactly the air of these and only these groups of lines and designations) a defined-enough couple making love; but most observers will, as the history of this work's reception shows, never realize that the schema makes of them voyeurs.

*Name's
Birthday
(A Couple)
'1967'.*

Soon after I caught on to what a name was, I began thinking only of number. Up until then, everything had been for me one of a kind. I could not conceive of different examples of the same thing existing simultaneously in more than one place at once. Thus in my dream, all bananas belonging to the class of bananas had had to be contiguous. Bananas existed at my behest and without that there could be no place for them. Annie Sullivan expresses concern in one of her letters about my number obsession:

June 12, 1887

I am teaching Helen the square hand letters as a sort of diversion. It gives her something to do, and keeps her quiet, which is desirable while this enervating weather lasts. She has a perfect mania for count-

ing. She has counted everything in the house, and is now busy counting the words in her primer. I hope it will not occur to her to count the hairs of her head. If she could see or hear, I suppose she would get rid of her superfluous energy in ways which would not, perhaps, tax her brain so much, although I suppose an ordinary child takes his play pretty seriously.

She just came to say, with a worried expression, "Girl — not count very large (many) words." I said, "No, go and play with Nancy." This suggestion didn't please her, however, for she replied, "No. Nancy is very sick. . . . I asked her what was the matter, and she said, "Much (many) teeth do make Nancy sick." (Her little sister Mildred is teething; Nancy's the dog.)

Ames was now going on about the group theorist Kuranishi, a close friend of Plenum's, who, believing writing implements to be a hindrance to mathematical thought, had gone on for years not writing down his equations. During all that time, his wife believed herself to be suffering from a rare muscle disorder; the problem was specific to her neck muscles. She found these muscles jerked and twitched in what seemed to be nearly legible patterns, mainly at night. It was Kuranishi who was working out some of his more difficult formulations by writing with his index finger on her neck as she slept.

Kuranishi — but I knew him, too, so perhaps this part of the story was not coming from Ames — was well over sixty when he went for the first time to an observatory and peered up into the night sky through a telescope. As he gazed at the stars through the telescope, he was struck by how similar in texture stars were to numbers. He was shocked to realize this.

The next night he received an even greater shock. His healthy wife was all of a sudden deathly ill with severe food poisoning. In order for her to live, all her blood would have to be removed and replaced with

fresh blood. He was surprised to find himself, upon hearing of the need for this, in the midst of his shock and terror, to also be coolly considering how fundamentally numerical — pint for pint — such a procedure was.

Shock and number each with all the color knocked out of them belong to the same monochrome world. Number, shock — the same color?? Shock, once squared, moves about *within but between the numbers — being counted*.

Time passed. She recovered. Months later, when they were having breakfast together with some friends, just as he was about to reach for the food on the serving platter in front of him, he heard her, from far down at the other end of the table, begin to tell of her blood poisoning experience. At that moment, he underwent the third of what can now be seen to be a trio of related “mathematical” shocks. He’s said this last one of the three seems to him to be even more fundamentally mathematical than the others. Of course, this last episode could be thought of as nothing but a previous shock re-visited; but it was expressed in a distinct enough manner for it to qualify as a shock in its own right. Suddenly, all the food on the platter went flat, perfectly flat. Finding nothing at all that looked three-dimensional — neither hill nor dale in scrambled eggs nor hardly a suggestion of roundness to what had only seconds before been sausages — it appeared unlikely he could plausibly avail himself of the serving utensils so as to get himself some breakfast. The yellow mass sat flatly on the plate as if it were one with it. How could a spoon be slid under that? There was not a color on the platter with enough thickness to it for the accepting of a fork’s jab.

“The perceiver selects the world and gives volume to it. When someone goes into shock, acts not crucial to immediate survival get suspended. The forming of volume might not be as vital to survival as

had been thought. Some victims must, in order to survive, forego spacetime as they have known it or as they have been used to forming it. We have in this evidence of spacetime's being after all nothing more than a construction on our part."

"Condemned man," these are the words that came to mind as I looked in through the window-slit of the door to Cadere's hospital room and saw him, with his back towards me, seated on the side of the bed, staring out the window. But, in less than a quarter of an hour, he'd managed to convince me that this was not so. (Sad to say, it turned out that my first impression was the correct one — he was dead within a matter of months.)

"People think that when you are in a coma you don't know you are," he said. "They think you have little or no sense of your surroundings. Not true. All the time I was in a coma (four months), I had a vivid sense of what was going on; I was even able actually to see everything that was going on around me. All was the same as usual except that in the coma it was for me all squeezed into — but it didn't feel crowded — a tiny, narrow passage. Look around this room. Everything in this room appeared to me then exactly as it does to us now except the entire room took up an area not more than two inches high. Almost immediately after the attack [a cerebral hemorrhage], as soon as the coma set in, spacetime went down that small. I remember being put into the ambulance and being driven to the hospital, and all and everything making up what was taking place, the ambulance, me on a stretcher or being put into it, the ambulance with me in it, its siren, the road, the city, the sky, all of this as being encompassed within a spacetime not more than a couple of inches in height, if that. When my brother came to visit me in the hospital, he had no difficulty in entering the room and walking to my bed through it despite how incredibly small it had

become. I remember his being seated in that chair over there and my lying immobile between these sheets as we proceeded to have a conversation (I heard his voice, but, I learned later, he never heard mine — but the conversation went on) within what in retrospect can only be seen as spacetime flattened out like a pancake."

When I returned to New York, I was amazed to find that the reduced spacetime Cadere had spoken of had already been quite specifically painted onto a large six-panel work that was still in progress. This was a more solid looking or more painted-in shape than those usually to be found in the work. It was an extremely flattened out pancake-like allotted spacetime or surface that took up a good half of one of the central panels. Pointing to it, "I've brought you an urgent message about exactly that," I said. Then I proceeded to tell him what I've here recounted.

Cadere was right. We were in need of this information. If, as we had come to think, "to be perceiving" equals "to be forming spacetime," then variant formations of spacetime should provide important clues to the workings of perceiving.

*Forming space and Space:
When different areas
become emphasized
within a fiction of place,
upon localization,
fictional but factual
distances form
within the "I";
that which moves across these
(however fictional) distances
is forming space.*

*Forming space,
the perceiving,
brings about the perceived image
of fiction of place as detail;
by repeatedly cleaving,
it initiates the game of distance,
making it possible, for example,
for one's arm, hand or foot to be
seen.*

*Moral/
Volumes/
Verbings/
The/
Unmind
no. 1
'1974-77'.*

Assume for the moment then that space or space-in-the-forming or forming spacetime equals a streaming or moving across (but of what through what?) distances that, to the perceiver supposedly containing these, are as fictional as they are factual. The question then could be asked, was the severe shrinking of Cadere's world when he was in a coma a result of something's having proceeded differently from usual in the accomplishing of these distances? Had the process been stalled at this juncture?

— Cadere reports not having lost contact with his own sense of himself as an I during the time he was comatose, that is, he testifies to an intact "*fiction of place*," but one that has perforce gone down greatly in scale. Revealed in his account, too — if this can indeed be taken as a report of events transpiring within a coma and not simply what many contemporary psychologists would see this, or, for that matter, any memory to be, that is, an on-the-spot, after-the-fact reconstruction — is his not having lost power to localize or fixate on things. In any case, in our way of thinking, his not having been able to come up with volume as usual, that is, his failure to achieve, as it were, actual room-size perception suggests a severe reduction in the fictional but factual distance traversed.

"All wrapped within a diminution of initiative — that is my definition of coma."

"With Voluntar aslumber?"

"This would involve the initiating of fewer cleavings, I suppose?"

"Precisely."

"But initiative may be prodded; situations might be constructed for the raising of expectations and more. And the more that is anticipated to be needed, the more that can be supplied."

Everyone has had the experience of being too tired to move, but