

UCLA

UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

What We Talk About When We Do: On Knowledge Found in Conversation

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9bz0m4nm>

ISBN

9798247947493

Author

Sindhu, Sahiba Kaur

Publication Date

2026-06-01

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

What We Talk About When We Do:
On Knowledge Found in Conversation

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Philosophy

by

Sahiba Kaur Sindhu

2026

© Copyright by

Sahiba Kaur Sindhu

2026

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

What We Talk About When We Do:
On Knowledge Found in Conversation

by

Sahiba Kaur Sindhu

Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy

University of California, Los Angeles, 2026

Professor Alexander Jacob Julius, Chair

What do I know when I know someone and how do I know it? This dissertation is an answer to this question. Whereas I do not need to talk to someone in order to know about them, knowing someone essentially involves talking to them. If having a conversation with someone is how I get to know them, then my knowledge of someone is not the knowledge I have about them but rather is my knowledge of what I can do with them. Following G.E.M. Anscombe, we know that practical knowledge is the knowledge I have of what I am doing. In this dissertation, I show how my practical knowledge of the conversation I am having with someone is my knowledge of that person insofar as this is how I am getting to know them.

The dissertation of Sahiba Kaur Sindhu is approved.

Joshua D. Armstrong

Barbara Herman

Calvin G. Normore

Alexander J. Julius, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2026

Table of Contents

On Daniela Dover's "The Conversational Self"	1
Dissertation	26
Section One	26
Section Two	29
Section Three	33
Section Four	34
Section Five	36
Section Six	38
Section Seven	45
Section Eight	63
Section Nine	66
Section Ten	68
Section Eleven	70
Section Twelve	72
Section Thirteen	78
Section Fourteen	82
Section Fifteen	94
Section Sixteen	99
Section Seventeen	113
Section Eighteen	115
Section Nineteen	127
Section Twenty	144
Section Twenty-One	154
Bibliography	166

Acknowledgments

Thanks, of course, to AJ Julius for doing this with me.

Thanks to Barbara Herman for making me lose the answers I thought I had, and for showing me how to find my way back to better ones. Thanks to Calvin Normore, from whom I learned as much about teaching as I did about philosophy. Thanks to Daniela Dover, Josh Armstrong, and Katie Elliott for all they taught me through their own work.

Thanks to Megan and Devon, my friends I did philosophy with most in my time here. Thanks to my friend, Ashna Madni, along with other staff in the department, Doug Myers, Wil Jones, Isamara Ramirez, and David Pastor, who helped me out in innumerable ways over the years. I learned a great deal in the UCLA philosophy department and I am very grateful to everyone I met and learned from in my time here.

Thanks to Robert Bird. He was my teacher and adviser throughout my undergraduate education, and it is hard to imagine I would have gotten as far as I have in this train of thought without him. He is no longer here with us, and he was on my mind as I was working on this.

Thanks to my friends I lived in a co-op with in 2021-2022. Thanks to all the wonderful people I met in the philosophy department at the University of Vienna in the summer of 2022. Thanks to the UCLA women's water polo club team. Thanks to the community at the 580 Cafe.

Thanks to Ricardo and Ding for being my philosophy friends in other departments. Thanks to Nick and Jinsun for working in the library with me everyday for months at a time. Thanks to my friends Luna and Divya who I saw on most days for much of the time I was working on this. Thanks to my roommate Claire.

Thanks to my beloved family, my mom and dad, Nuri and Shivi, my sisters, Nimrita and Devina, my brother, Arjan, my brother-in-law, Travis, my niece, Kareena, and my nephews, Ishaan and Zarek, for caring for my well-being and happiness throughout the time I was working on this and always.

Thanks to my late grandfather, Manjit Singh, who wrote many of his own philosophy books and introduced me to philosophy. Thanks to my sister, Devina, for introducing me to even more philosophy and for encouraging me to go to graduate school to do it.

Thanks, most of all, to my comrades in the union, to those in the movement to free Palestine, and to everyone working to stop the U.S. war machine, especially here at this university.

Vita

2023 C. Phil in Philosophy, University of California, Los Angeles

2020 M.A. in Philosophy, University of California, Los Angeles

2014 B.A. in Economics and Fundamentals: Issues and Texts, The University of Chicago

On Daniela Dover's "The Conversational Self"

Before I started writing my dissertation, I started working on a paper about Daniela Dover's *The Conversational Self*, published in 2022 in *Mind*. I was familiar with this paper because I took a few classes with Daniela Dover while she was in the process of writing it when she was a professor at UCLA. I did not end up finishing this paper because the work I was doing on it eventually became my dissertation. Nonetheless I think it makes sense to first present the material I was working with before I began writing my dissertation to provide some material context for how this project came about. What follows then is what I have to say about Daniela Dover's *The Conversational Self* and from there follows my dissertation.

I.

Daniela Dover's "The Conversational Self" begins by asking the question: what is the distinctive sense in which we can get to know each other by talking to each other? That is, what is the special sense in which I can know someone through conversation? The idea is that I can say I know someone in the same way that I can say I know a subject matter such as plants or where the library is, but what is the difference, if any, between what and how I know what I know when I know about plants and what and how I know about what I know when I know a person? That is, what specifically do I know when I say I know someone and how do I know it?

Although Dover begins by asking this question, she ultimately does not answer this question because she has a different priority. Insofar as she takes it to be the case that people can be changed by conversation, she wants to know what kind of person I have to be in order to be

open to being changed by someone in a conversation. She then ventures on the path to figure out who I need to be in order to know someone rather than going on the path to figure out what it means to know someone.

In my dissertation, I want to answer the question Dover introduces but does not answer in her paper. That is, I want to know what I know and how I know what I know when I say I know someone. The stakes at the heart of this question, I think, are captured by G.E.M. Anscombe's distinction between practical and theoretical knowledge introduced in *Intention*.

Anscombe says that contemplative, or by other names, observational or theoretical, knowledge, as mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, is the knowledge I have about something which is one and the same as the knowledge I have that something is true or false. Modern philosophy, according to Anscombe, generally has an "incorrigible contemplative conception of knowledge," that she sought to rectify by undertaking a study of practical knowledge in her essay *Intention*. Practical knowledge, she says, is the knowledge I have of what I am doing.

In the context of the discussion on knowing someone, we can make sense of Anscombe's distinction in terms of the difference between knowing about someone and knowing someone. Knowing about someone involves knowing facts about them or developing an understanding of them on the basis of learning facts about them. This would therefore be theoretical or contemplative knowledge insofar as it is factual knowledge about the subject matter, where the subject matter in this case is someone.

In contrast, knowing someone is not my knowledge about a person but rather is something I can do. That is, I can know someone by getting to know them, and I can get to know someone by having a conversation with them. Therefore, I can know someone by having a conversation with them. If practical knowledge is the knowledge I have of what I am doing, then my practical knowledge of the conversation I am having with someone is my knowledge of that person insofar as this is how I am getting to know them. I will prove this in my dissertation.

Before I do this, I will present Dover's paper so that we can begin to see the sorts of problems one runs into when trying to understand what it is to know someone and how we get to know them. Understanding Dover's paper is helpful in getting the lay of the land of my dissertation insofar as my dissertation is indirectly in conversation with many of the questions and problems she raises in her paper. Moreover, although she does not answer the question explicitly, some of what Dover says seems to suggest that she takes knowing someone to be theoretical knowledge. Seeing this will also then provide some helpful contrast and context to the understanding of knowing someone as practical knowledge I will present in my dissertation.

II.

Daniela Dover's "The Conversational Self" is not an ordinary philosophy paper in the sense that she uses the paper to set a kind of programmatic agenda for the academic field of philosophy. Dover takes issue with the fact that philosophers ordinarily develop metaphysical theories of the self that implicitly valorize different ways of living. In other words, what philosophers present to be a neutral, metaphysical, or truth-seeking practice is ultimately

normative and therefore disingenuous insofar as these theories prescribe visions for how people should live.

To remedy this problem, Dover wants to consider the idea of reversing our order of priorities. She suggests we instead begin reflecting on our experience of relationships and our aspirations for them and then develop our theories of the self on the basis of this kind of reflection. That is, she wants us to forgo any delusion that we can derive a theory of the self without thinking about how it works in practice. Dover is not yet sure whether she endorses this idea, and so her aim in this paper is to think through the advantages of this strategy.

With this aim in mind, Dover wants to think through the conversations we have in the context of friendships as a site for this sort of reflection because these conversations can be understood as a possible paradigm of how we should relate to each other, or as we say, how we should live together. Engaging in the style of conversation she has in mind is, what she calls, “interpersonal inquiry.” We engage in interpersonal inquiry whenever we speak to each other in order to understand each other, or as we say, “get to know each other.” Although we can get to know each other by doing any number of things together, such as dancing together or building something together, Dover says talking to each other in the form of interpersonal inquiry is one of the best ways we can get to know each other. Implicit here then is the idea that friends are always in the process of getting to know each other through their conversations with each other.

Just as Dover thinks that different metaphysical theories of the self implicitly valorize different ways of living, she also thinks that different ways of engaging in interpersonal inquiry valorize different theories of the self. If we take seriously the idea that how we engage in

conversation is supposed to be a microcosm for how we live together, then it follows that Dover thinks the relationship between “who I am”, or the self, and how I want to relate to people, or as we say, “live together,” with people is a two way street. In other words, how I relate to people tells us who I am, and who I say I am should tell you how I think we should relate to each other as people. The former of these two explains why the way I want to talk to my friends, or as she says, engage in interpersonal inquiry, should tell you about my “self,” and the latter of these two explains why any metaphysical theory of the self I posit as a philosopher should tell you how I think we should relate to each other as people, or again, as we will say, “live together.”

If who I am, or what we call the self, and who we are to each other, or what we say is how we live together, is mutually intertwined, which means each bears upon the other, as Dover suggests, and how we talk to each other is how we live together, then it follows from these together that how we talk to each other tells us who we are, and vice versa. Given this, Dover wants to present a model for how we should talk to each other if we want to become the kinds of people who can live together, and she thinks that the kinds of people who would want to live together with other people would want to engage in conversation in the way she envisions to be ideal.

With this aim in mind, Dover asks three questions about conversation. First, what are we doing in conversation? Second, what role does conversation play in what we are doing in general: in our lives and in our relationships with each other? And third, what makes for a good or bad conversation? To answer these questions, she wants to limit the scope of her discussion in this paper to conversations that take the form of interpersonal inquiry, which are the kinds of conversations we have in the context of friendships.

This is, again, because Dover thinks that these kinds of conversations are a paradigm for how we interact when we live together. How people go about interacting in these kinds of conversations should tell us who the people in those conversations are in their relationships with people. Answering these questions then is how Dover plans to figure out whether it is possible to develop a theory of the self by first reflecting on the experience of the self in relationships.

III.

What then are we doing in our conversations with friends, or what is Dover's response to her first question? She thinks the aim of these conversations is to try to understand each other in the way that someone who was curious to know about some subject matter would go about trying to understand whatever they are intellectually curious about. That is, I would be curious to know about my friend in the same way that someone who was curious about plants would want to know about plants, and I would exhibit the same patterns of behavior towards my friend as someone who was curious about plants would display in their relationship to plants. For example, a person who is curious about plants would try to find out about plants by reading about them, talking to other people who know about them, and observing them. The depth of their curiosity would be shown by whether they ask more questions about what they have learned so they can find out more.

The difference, however, between trying to know plants and trying to know someone is that in the latter case, I can go straight to the source by talking to that person in a way that I cannot talk to plants to find out about them. Based on Dover's reasoning, this means that

someone trying to find out about someone can ask them questions about what they have to say in order to find out more about them in a way that you cannot when your curiosity is about a subject matter rather than a person. Conversations of these kinds, she thinks, are characteristic of friendship because we are curious to know our friends.

Another sense in which understanding someone is akin to understanding a subject matter, according to Dover, is that my understanding of someone can increase in depth the more I learn about them. My understanding of a subject matter can increase in depth if I engage in the process of understanding that matter in the way that a scholar who reads Kant tries to understand Kant. The process of understanding something in this way is an iterative process, which means that I update my interpretation of them as I keep on learning more about them.

A final reason why she thinks that understanding someone and understanding something are similar is because both require the same sorts of skills and talents to find success in understanding. She thinks a person trying to figure someone out will encounter the same sorts of ups and downs in their endeavor as a person trying to figure anything out, which would include the emotions that are endemic to the process of discovery itself, such as surprise, wonder, and frustration. The kind of person who can successfully figure out a subject matter is also the kind of person who can get to know a person well since all of these are, at bottom, activities of understanding.

Despite these reasons, Dover thinks that the analogy between getting to know someone and getting to know a subject matter is limited by the fact that our pursuit of knowledge in these two cases is guided by different aims. She says that when I want to know some subject matter,

then my curiosity will be satisfied once I figure out whatever I was in pursuit of learning. In contrast, she thinks my desire to know a person is not guided by an aim to find out what I learn about through conversation but rather to be able to talk to them about what I find out about them. From this, we can infer that knowing someone essentially involves being able to talk to them, according to Dover, in a way that knowing something does not. This then is one reason to think that the desire to know a person is not akin to a desire to know a subject matter.

Another source of disanalogy between getting to know someone and getting to know a subject matter is that the former is an ethical practice in addition to being an epistemic one, according to Dover. If, as said earlier, interpersonal inquiry can be understood as a possible paradigm of how we should relate to each other, or as we say, how we should live together, then we are vulnerable to the same ethical risks and temptations we bear in our attempts to talk to each other as we are when we live together. This means that I could wrong you by misunderstanding you or subordinating you when I talk to you in the way that I could if we were living together. What it would mean to misunderstand you or subordinate you would depend on the conversation we were having just as would be the case of what it would mean for me to do X or Y if we were living together.

A final reason Dover gives for thinking that the knowledge I have of someone is not the kind of knowledge I have of some subject matter is that knowing someone involves practical knowledge. For example, knowing someone well means that I know what street they live on, but I also know how to cheer them up. The former is theoretical knowledge insofar as it is my understanding *that* something is true, whereas the latter is practical knowledge insofar as it is my

understanding of how to do something. Knowing something only involves theoretical knowledge, whereas knowing someone also involves practical knowledge, according to Dover.

With these disanalogies in mind, Dover concludes that the kind of knowledge I can have of someone is different from the kind of understanding I can have of a subject matter. Her explanation for this can be boiled down to the fact that the knowledge I have of someone essentially involves talking to them and this knowledge involves practical knowledge.

Thus, although Dover gives us reasons for thinking that the kind of knowledge I can have of someone is different from the kind of knowledge I can have of a subject matter, she does not go so far as to say what the kind of knowledge I have of someone is. In my dissertation, I want to do the latter. That is, I want to answer the question: what kind of knowledge can I have of someone by talking to them that is essentially different from other kinds of knowledge?

To answer this question, I want to follow the same path Dover already set out in “The Conversational Self.” She begins by asking what the difference is between understanding someone and understanding a subject matter. Thus, I too want to inquire first into what, if anything, is the difference between the two. For example, if Dover is right in thinking that the knowledge I have of someone essentially involves talking to them, and it is also true that I can talk to someone about a subject matter, then I wonder: is it possible to get to know someone by talking to them about a subject matter?

Dover herself says this much later in her paper. Specifically, she says we can learn just as much about each other, if not more, in a conversation where we are talking about other things – such as religion, politics, etc. — as we would in a conversation about ourselves. Thus, she thinks

we can learn about each other by talking to each other even if the subject matter of our conversation is not strictly about ourselves. We can infer from this that Dover thinks we engage in interpersonal inquiry whenever we learn more about each other by talking to each other, where talking about each other is not required to learn about each other.

If this is right, then how do we make sense of the difference between understanding someone and understanding some subject matter if I can get to know someone by talking to them about something where my understanding of what I learned about that subject matter would thereby be one and the same as my understanding of the person who I learned that subject matter from? I will respond to this question in my dissertation.

IV.

Having explained her conception of understanding someone, which is what she takes us to be doing in the practice of interpersonal inquiry, she then goes on to respond to her third question, which is what it takes for us to have a good conversation. In particular, she wants to know: *who* can I have a good conversation with?

Dover thinks we can have a good conversation with anyone we are willing to be open or vulnerable with, and insofar as we are generally most open with our friends, then our best conversations are most often with our friends. However, if we happen to be avoiding each other, then a conversation can be difficult even with a friend insofar as we are not being open with each other. Thus, she concludes that the litmus test for whether I can have a good conversation with

someone is if we have enough mutual trust, goodwill, and interest in one another to be willing to enter into difficult conversations with one another.

This means that even if the conversation we are having is not a difficult one, we are in a position to have a good one with each other if we have an openness towards each other that is characteristic of people who are capable of having a difficult conversation with each other. This litmus test explains why our friends are the people we are most capable of having good conversations with since we are unlikely to be capable of having a difficult conversation with anyone we do not care about, such as a stranger, or anyone we need to please, such as people we depend on for our survival like employers.

Dover's point then is that we do not have to be friends to have a good conversation but rather that friends are in the best possible conditions to have a good conversation. In light of this, I want to ask: what makes for a good conversation regardless of who my interlocutor is?

Although Dover might be correct about the fact that we are more likely to have good conversations with our friends for a variety of reasons, it is also true that we are just as capable of having a good conversation with anyone. Thus, we should inquire into the criteria that make for a good conversation and doing so would entail articulating the criteria for what makes the words we are saying to each other a conversation in the first place. This is another inquiry I seek to address in the dissertation that follows.

Returning then to Dover's analysis, after she specifies that good conversations often take place among friends, she goes on to specify why we cannot actually learn about each other in the sorts of conversations colloquially understood to be the sorts of conversations where friends

attempt to learn about each other. These conversations often take the form of exchanging monologues about ourselves to each other. Dover thinks we cannot actually learn about each other in these turn-taking conversations because, at any given time, we are foisted into the role of either speaker, or the authority, or listener, or audience.

Even if we take turns playing the role of authority and audience of each other's perspectives, these conversations are not ones where our different perspectives can be brought into contact with each other if we are not in a position to inquire into or respond to each other's perspectives. We cannot therefore properly learn about each other unless our conversation is a context where we are open to receiving and offering perspectives on what the other has to say about themselves, according to Dover.

When we do this, we do what Dover calls "taking each other seriously." This means we "seek each other's input" on each other's perspectives by asking and answering each other's questions about our perspectives on ourselves and each other, "abdicate our interpretative sovereignty" by being open to changing our perspective of ourselves and each other on the basis of what we learn from each other's perspective, and that this process is reciprocal, which means we both partake in seeking input from each other and abdicating our interpretative sovereignty to each other on that basis.

We can infer from Dover's analysis that the problem at the heart of conversation, or the crux of what makes it possible for a conversation to go well or not, according to Dover, is that we can end up misunderstanding each other thus defeating the aim we have whenever we engage in interpersonal inquiry, which is to understand each other. Dover argues that we misunderstand

each other when we form perspectives about each other on the basis of what we say to each other without basing our perspective on input from each other about our own perspectives on ourselves. Likewise, she thinks we are also equally capable of misunderstanding ourselves insofar as we fail to receive input from each other about how we perceive each other on the basis of what we say to each other.

From this, we can infer that Dover thinks that understanding someone, where that someone could also be myself, means forming an accurate perspective of that person on the basis of what we learn about them in conversation. By the same token, she thinks that someone can learn about how we perceive ourselves on the basis of what we say in a conversation. Overall then, she thinks a good conversation is one that lends itself to developing an accurate perspective on ourselves and each other. We do this by inquiring into each other's perspectives on ourselves and each other and the world and thereby developing our perspectives on ourselves and each other and the world on the basis of what we learn from our inquiry. Implicit then in her analysis is a demarcation between understanding someone and understanding the conversation I am having with them.

The fact that Dover thinks that my understanding of someone is separate and distinct from my understanding of the conversation I am having with them is further confirmed by the fact that she takes interpersonal inquiry to be a distinct kind of conversation where the aim is to understand each other. Thus, her demarcation between conversation and what she calls interpersonal inquiry confirms that she does not take understanding each other to be the aim of conversation in general but refers to the aims of a genre of conversation specific to friendship.

In my dissertation, I consider Dover's distinction between understanding someone and understanding the conversation I am having with them, or the idea that my understanding of who someone is can be separate from what I understand from the conversation we are having with each other. My analysis, however, leads to the conclusion that insofar as the conversation someone is having is a part of what they are doing, and understanding what someone is doing is a part of understanding that person, then I think there is no sense in which understanding the conversation that a person is having is not a part of understanding someone. Insofar as understanding the conversation I am having with someone is how I can understand that person, then I think understanding my conversation with someone is one and the same as my understanding of them. I demonstrate that these are one and the same in the first part of my dissertation.

V.

Another core part of Dover's analysis of conversation is the idea that we can change who we are through the practice of interpersonal inquiry. That is, she thinks we can come to understand ourselves through the process of understanding each other in a conversation and that understanding can then change who we are in unanticipated, unforeseen, and even untraceable ways. However, she also thinks the possibility of changing through conversation is not a guarantee.

That is, she thinks that whether or not we change through our practice of interpersonal inquiry depends on how we go about engaging in our conversation with each other. Specifically,

she thinks we can change only if we adopt an attitude of openness towards each other that then enables the sort of self-transformation conversation can distinctively fulfill. As already mentioned above, she calls this attitude “taking each other seriously”, where doing this means that I see you and myself on the basis of how you see me and yourself, and I learn how to do this from talking to you.

We can understand this idea by way of an analogy to how reading *Lolita* is to see how Humbert Humbert sees Lolita for myself. Someone who read *Lolita* and was immediately repulsed would not be taking the book seriously. In the same manner, you cannot take someone seriously if you are repulsed or if you try, in any shape or form, to distance yourself from seeing their perspective as your own. Doing so even a little bit would be a failure to be open and therefore would disable the possibility of being changed by the person you are talking to. In contrast, when I take your perspective without judgment on the basis of what I learn by talking to you, then I can change without ever knowing the contours of your influence on me because I am not making plans or judgments about what to do on the basis of what I can now see.

Although I find Dover’s analysis of openness and the possibility to be changed by others through this attitude to be compelling and even accurate, I wonder whether conversation can distinctively produce the kind of self-transformation Dover is talking about. Is it not possible to be changed in the way Dover is talking about by reading a book or taking a class or just living life in the way Dover is talking about? What is it about conversation that essentially makes the kind of self-transformation she is talking about possible?

I do not provide an answer to this question in my dissertation. However, I do inquire further into the kind of change essentially or distinctively afforded to people engaged in a conversation. Whereas Dover's analysis of conversation involves a theory of how a person can change through a conversation, my dissertation involves a theory of how a relationship can change through conversation.

As I will go on to show, I think a relationship changes when the people in it irrevocably change how they interact with one another, thereby changing themselves by changing what they are doing together. Since the kind of change I am talking about is essential to conversation, I do not think change requires any particular attitude or quality in character. Conversation alone is sufficient for a person to change as I understand it in the dissertation that follows.

VI.

After she addresses the subject of self-transformation, Dover then inquires into the matter of who I should care to understand at the level of depth required for the kind of relationship she has in mind. Dover thinks I should avoid getting to know anyone who is unwilling to take my perspective on myself into account in their perspective on me. Likewise, I should avoid talking to those who are unwilling to take my perspective of them into their perspective on themselves. Altogether, she thinks I should be in relationships with those who are open to revising their own perspective of me and their own self on the basis of continuously learning about each other's perspectives on each other and ourselves through conversation. She thinks the sort of people who

have this attitude towards me in conversation are those who would be willing to engage in difficult conversations with me.

For Dover then, the idea is that we should only get to know people when they are open to me insofar as they would be prepared to have the sorts of conversations required of us once we are that level of depth in our relationship. This is because she thinks I have the best conversations with people who I already know deeply and I should get to know anyone who seems willing to build the kind of relationship in which we can have the sorts of conversations she has in mind. Thus, for Dover, good conversations take place in the context of a relationship already at a peak of depth that enables the possibility of engaging in a kind of difficulty we would not with strangers or acquaintances or anyone with whom I did not already share a high level of trust, safety, and vulnerability.

While I think an analysis of Dover's kind is worthwhile in its own right, a good conversation is not a unique or impossible ideal in my line of sight but rather is an entirely ordinary everyday phenomenon that I can have with anyone, even strangers. In fact, I take most conversations to be good and so my analysis of conversation does not center around what makes for a good one. Instead, my dissertation defines what a conversation is, its form, and how it works.

Whereas Dover takes the capacity for good conversation to be a function of the depth of the relationship in which it takes place, I think any conversation is capable of depth and in fact every conversation essentially travels or moves towards depth as it goes on. This means I do not have to be in a deep relationship with someone in order to have a deep conversation with them

even if it is also true that relationships become deeper through multiple conversations with someone that travel towards depth. This will be demonstrated in the dissertation that follows.

VII.

After she addresses the matter of who I should engage in interpersonal inquiry with, Dover then turns her attention in the rest of her paper to what might motivate someone to engage or withdraw from this practice with someone. To address this matter, Dover considers two characters as illustrations of opposite extremes in their approach to interpersonal inquiry, one extremely reluctant to engage in the practice and the other extremely willing.

These are intended to be extreme examples but Dover thinks most people display the sorts of tendencies her two example characters display in the extreme. The first is Mr. Bridge, a middle-aged male protagonist from a novel, who claims to know very little about other men but knows himself very well. He feels pride because he has “kept himself” and therefore has “not once dressed up in a costume.” He doesn’t feel he has anything to discuss with anyone.

Dover says that it is not just that this man knows so little of other people but he does not even care to know other people. Mr. Bridge has a certain kind of psychic stability afforded to him from the fact that he does not have to reckon with contrasts between how he sees himself and how other people see him. We also know he does not take people seriously given that he assumes he already knows other people well enough to get by. Retreat from interpersonal inquiry in this way secures a kind of social stability, according to Dover, insofar as interpersonal inquiry makes it difficult to “go on as before” in a way that one can if one does not care to talk to people.

Mr. Bridge, and people like him, Dover says, are afraid of interpersonal influence. He wants to ensure that what he feels, thinks, sees, or believes is a consequence of his own sensibility and not that of some other man. His fear of losing himself, so to speak, to other people, or to end up “dressed up in a costume” as something other than himself, leads him to retreat from knowing other people altogether, and to even celebrate this rigidity.

I think Dover is correct in her analysis of people like Mr. Bridge. Those on the spectrum of engaging in behavior of this sort might mask their fear of getting to know people with the sort of arrogance Mr. Bridge displays, but I think a deeper understanding of how conversation works, which is what I offer in my dissertation, can at least begin to offer an explanation for why people like Mr. Bridge might be scared to get to know people. Perhaps on the brighter side, clarity in our understanding of how conversation works can also dispel our fear of it. Ideally, the best outcome is that we can begin to see that this is what we are here to do and so can be more faithful when doing it.

On the opposite extreme, Dover presents the character of Hannah Upp who is a person who forgets who she is for days or weeks at a time. She is loved by family and friends because of her interpersonal openness. This is illustrated by an anecdote: She arrived at college raised as a devout Christian, and when she came to college, she met a girl who was Hindu, who asked Upp whether Upp thought she was going to go to hell since she wasn't a Christian. Upp “lost it” when she was asked this question, and her friend remarked: “whereas another person might try to defend her beliefs, Hannah is the kind of person who would take a question like that and turn it on herself and think about it and come out the other end a different person.”

The idea is that Upp could have merely given a disinterested answer referring to Christian doctrine about what entails going to hell, but Upp immediately saw her new friend's question as one that could change her own self-understanding. She did this because "she turned the question on herself," by which, this means that she saw what significance the question might have for her life practically or for what she might make things to mean for herself. In other words, Upp saw that the question was not merely asking her matter of factly whether or not her new friend is going to hell, but more implicitly was asking her: what does it mean that you are a believer of a faith that designates me as someone who could or could not go to hell?

That is, Upp immediately saw that this was not a question about Christian theology but rather a question about herself. The only way she could see that is by seeing her friend's perspective expressed through the question, and thereafter, looking at her friend's perspective as expressed through that question from her own perspective, and thereby understanding that this was a question about herself as much as it was about Christian theology. Since Upp was capable of responding to that more practical question implicit in her new friend's question, then that signals that she had immediately integrated her new friend's perspective into her own, and this was displayed in her response. Upp is capable of being open to her friend playing a role in changing her understanding of herself, and that's how people should be in general, according to Dover.

Thus, Upp understands the question her friend poses to be a turning point in her life insofar as she can see what the question means for what she has been doing in her life so far, and, at the same time, her response shows that she understands what she must go on to do from what she has learned at the moment the question was posed to her. Turning points are an observable

phenomenon many of us have seen in our own lives or have at least seen in the movies. I think these turning points take place when we can see the significance of something said or done in light of everything that has happened so far in a conversation, in a relationship, or in a life and thereby go on to act in light of that significance thereafter.

Although Dover does not name it, her analysis of Hannah Upp introduces the idea of a “turning point” which I will address at length in my dissertation. Dover takes Upp’s capacity to find and act on the basis of what she learns from talking to people to be a mark of the openness of Upp’s own character. In other words, if Upp was a different person, someone who was not so readily available to act on the basis of what she learns about what she is doing through her conversations with other people, then, on Dover’s account, Upp would not have experienced her friend’s remark as a turning point in her own life.

Dover is correct in her assessment that Upp’s openness enables her to act on what she learns from what her friend says to her and that without this quality in her character, she would not necessarily act in this way. If Upp is supposed to be an extreme case in Dover’s example, then could this phenomenon occur in the life of a non-extremist normal person? Dover does not answer this question but my dissertation does insofar as I show how turning points commonly occur in our conversations with people. Thus, anyone willing to be open enough to get to know someone by talking to them can see a turning point in their conversation if they are willing to get deep enough into the relationship. How this works is shown in the dissertation that follows.

My dissertation then can be said to be a study of how turning points work in conversations, relationships, and life. As mentioned earlier, the sort of change Dover talks about

in her paper is self-transformation or personal change through conversations in the context of interpersonal relationships. I have already mentioned that in contrast, I am interested in how a conversation can change the people who partake insofar as the conversation changes their relationship, or how they interact with each other, in an irrevocable way. In the same vein, there is a difference between how Dover thinks about a turning point in Upp's life from how I am thinking about turning points in conversations in my dissertation. Whereas Dover shows how Upp is personally transformed through her conversation with her friend because of the openness in her character, my dissertation will show how our relationship to each other can be transformed through a conversation because of our willingness to talk to each other.

VIII.

Dover finally turns then to consider how we should conceptualize the self on the basis of this understanding of interpersonal inquiry. To do so, she asks a curious question: she wants to know what sorts of philosophers Mr. Bridge and Hannah Upp would identify with or perhaps would like if they were to read contemporary philosophy. This question makes sense in light of her earlier remarks about the fact that different theories of the self implicitly valorize different ways of living.

Dover thinks Upp would be drawn to Judith Butler, a philosopher who she thinks acknowledges the ways in which we help constitute one another. She sees Butler as operating within a relational constructivist picture within philosophy. Relational constructivists talk about the ways in which we are made and unmade by one another for better or worse. In contrast, she

thinks Mr. Bridge would find himself at home among the contemporary analytic philosophy tradition such as Christine Korsgaard. Dover describes this tradition of thinking as “auto-constructivist,” a tendency within analytic philosophy to see the self as self-made via psychological processes of choice, deliberation, valuation, interpretation, or narration.

As we should already know, Dover thinks Butler and Korsgaard are talking about the self in different ways because they have a different conception of what sorts of people we need to be to live together in justice and peace. Whereas Korsgaard thinks our capacity for rational self-governance stands between us and moral depravity, Butler thinks it's our ability to attend and connect with one another. Just as she prefers Upp over Bridge, Dover also prefers Butler over Korsgaard.

Dover finds Butler's moral vision appealing because she suspects that it is the pleasure Butler derives from connecting with others that she values this, as opposed to other possible values as grounds for ideal ethics and politics. In other words, it is not that Butler values connecting to others because she thinks that doing so would produce a better world, but rather the reverse: that it is the pleasure and value she finds in connecting to others that tells us that this is the way to an ideal ethics and politics. Her experience of pleasure and value in the world tells us what is good about it, and that is what Dover wants us to do: to find pleasure and value in the world and ground our theories of ideal ethics and politics in what we find.

I think Dover is definitely onto something in her brute characterization of Butler and Korsgaard as people and the sorts of articles they end up writing for their jobs on that basis. At the same time, I think there is something to be said for the fact that their research in philosophy

is in entirely different subject matters. Whereas Dover is properly a scholar of the self, Butler is more a scholar of gender and perhaps can be sociologically identified as someone who is “queer,” whereas Korsgaard is more a scholar of Kant’s ethics and perhaps can be sociologically identified in the world as someone who is “a liberal”.

We have to grant then that Butler’s conception of the self will fit into the world of how queer people think and for whom gender is a central subject matter to think about, and this is because this is a part of who Butler is and what she is doing in the world. In contrast, Korsgaard produces auto-constructivist theories of the self because this fits into her picture of Kant’s ethics as a part of liberalism. Insofar as Korsgaard is a liberal then it would make sense that Korsgaard would have a liberal theory of the self. It should be no surprise to us then that philosophers are producing the views that fit into who they are and what they are doing in the world insofar as everything we say is a part of what we are doing, and insofar as this is what these philosophers are saying, then it should tell us what they are doing in the world. The idea that conversation is a part of what we are doing, and we are therefore generally talking about what we are doing, is an idea at the heart of my dissertation.

All in all, Dover thinks we should embrace a view of the self in which we play a role in constituting each other, and if we do this, then we will be drawn to the vision of conversation where we take each other seriously. She thinks if we see the value of interpersonal influence and so want to be changed by each other, then we can become the kinds of people who owe who we are to each other.

I like Dover's vision. But she has so far only told us what kinds of people we have to be in order to want to talk to each other. And if we listen to what Aristotle has to say about this, the only way we can become these kinds of people is by talking to each other. The question then is: how do we talk to each other, and what happens when we do? I will answer these questions in the dissertation that follows.

Dissertation

Section One

There is a difference between knowing about someone and knowing someone that is made obvious in the following. Suppose A and B are friends, and B and C are friends, but A and C are not friends. Even if A and C might know of each other from both independently talking to B, they can't really say they know each other if they do not talk to each other. All they can say is that they know about each other through B. This tells us that knowing about someone is not what it means to know someone. So what is it that A+B and B+C know that A+C do not know? What is it that B knows that is not merely one and the same as what A and C can learn from talking to B about each other?

Let's consider a conversation to begin to understand in what sense we can know each other from talking to each other that is not knowing about each other.

A: Do you know of anything fun we can do for Halloween?

B: Do I look like someone who would know of any parties?

A: Yes, actually you do.

B: Well, I am flattered, but in any case, I don't.

In an interaction such as this one, the two friends learn about each other when they inquire further into what the other says. For example, by inquiring further into what the other has

said, (1) A learns that B is surprised to discover that A would think that B would potentially know of fun things to do for Halloween. (2) B learns that A thinks that B is someone who would potentially know of fun things to do for Halloween. By inquiring into the meaning of what was said, they develop a deeper understanding of what was happening between them when one of them said to the other “do you know of anything fun we can do for Halloween?”, had they not inquired into it.

If A+B learn about each other by inquiring into what they said to each other, and therefore develop their understanding of the meaning of what was said by talking about it, then how is this different from the sense in which we learn about each other in a conversation where we do not engage in this kind of inquiry?

For example, do A and B learn about each other in their conversation in a different sense than C and D do in the following conversation?

C: Do you know of anything fun we can do for Halloween?

D: Yeah, I heard E is having a party we could go to.

C: ok, let's go!

The difference between the conversation between A+B and the conversation between C+D is that in the former, A+B inquire further into the meaning of what is being said between them, and they conduct this inquiry through the conversation, whereas C+D are simply talking about their plans to go to a party together. Thus, the subject matter of the former conversation is

the conversation they are having, or each other, insofar as the conversation is an inquiry into what they take what they are saying to mean to each other, whereas the subject matter of the latter conversation is making plans for Halloween.

It seems, on the face of it, that A+B learn about each other through their conversation in a way that C+D do not. Why might we think this?

If this were true, where the truth is that there is a distinction between the sense in which A+B are getting to know each other through their conversation in a way that C+D are not, then we might infer that learning about each other through conversation would require us to talk to each other about whatever we are saying to each other. By doing this, we develop a deeper understanding of what we are saying to each other than we would if we did not inquire further into what we say to each other. Put simply, the hypothesis would be that learning about each other requires us to understand the conversation we are having with each other, and we do this by inquiring into what we are saying to each other. In other words, we can learn about each other by understanding the conversation we are having with each other.

In response to this, I want to say that although we might say that we learn more about each other when we talk about what we are talking about, or when we talk about the conversation we are having, and so develop a deeper understanding of the conversation and ourselves through doing so than we would otherwise, we can still learn about each other just by talking to each other as C+D do in their conversation. For example, in this case, D learns that C wants to do something fun together for Halloween, and C learns of a party they can go to together.

Section Two

In both of the conversations we discussed so far, the people who are talking to each other are a part of the subject matter of what we are talking about. Can we learn about each other when we are not a part of the subject matter of what we are talking about? Let's consider the following conversation:

E: Have you heard of any good Halloween parties happening this Friday?

F: Yeah, there's one at C's house.

E: What time is it at?

F: 7:00pm.

In this conversation, E+F are not talking about each other in the sense that they are not talking about their desire nor plans to go to a party. Instead, the conversation is about the Halloween party itself. But even when we are not talking about ourselves, we tell each other about ourselves through what we have to say about whatever we are talking about. Thus, F learns that E wants to know what Halloween parties there are on Friday and at what time, and E learns that F knows there is one at C's house.

From this, we can infer that we can learn about each other even when we are not a part of the subject matter that we are talking about.

From everything above, we can say:

1. We learn about each other by understanding what we are saying to each other in a conversation.
2. We learn more deeply about each other when we understand what we have understood in our conversation with each other.
3. We ourselves do not have to be a part of the subject matter of the conversation in order for us to learn about each other through a conversation. Conversation alone is sufficient for us to learn about each other.

In each of the conversations above, and in conversations in general, we are not only learning about each other but we are also doing something together. Of the conversations shown, this is most obvious in the conversation between C+D.

C+D quite literally makes plans to go to a Halloween party together by talking to each other. C understands what D says to be an invitation to E's party and makes this understanding explicit by saying "ok, let's go!". But A+B also do something together in their conversations with each other.

Let's look at the conversation between A and B again.

A: Do you know of anything fun we can do for Halloween?

B: Do I look like someone who would know of any parties?

A: Yes, actually you do.

B: Well, I am flattered, but in any case, I don't.

In a conversation such as the one above, they learn about each other by inquiring further into what they have said to each other, as already mentioned, and so on this basis, we can say that the more they talk to each other about what they have already talked about, the more they learn about each other.

However, insofar as they are talking to each other, they are not merely learning about each other from what they are saying to each other, but they are also doing something together by saying these words to each other. But what are they doing?

Whereas the conversation between C+D was clearly a conversation where they made plans to go to a party, and so they did something together, what specifically are A+B doing in this conversation?

In this particular conversation, when B asks A: “do I look like someone who would know of any parties?” B's question makes explicit that A is asking B whether B knows of anything fun happening on Halloween. Even if this would be implicitly understood between them had B simply responded by saying “no,” B's inquiry into A's inquiry makes it possible for them to make the fact of this interaction alone, the fact that it has happened, meaningful between them.

When B responds by saying “Yes, actually you do,” then they have mutually acknowledged to each other that A chose to inquire about things to do for Halloween from B. What it means between them, and the nature of what is explicit between them, will depend on the tone, the context, who they are, and who they are to each other. Inquiring into the meaning of what they are saying to each other then is an attempt to understand the conversation between them, where understanding the conversation means understanding what it means for them to say what they are saying to each other by talking about it.

Let's look finally at E+F again.

E: Have you heard of any good Halloween parties happening this Friday?

F: Yeah, there's one at C's house.

E: What time is it at?

F: 7:00pm.

If A+B are understanding the conversation they are having with each other by talking about it and C+D are planning to go to a party together by talking about it, then what are E+F doing in their conversation?

I want to say that E+F are having a conversation, which means that they are understanding what they are saying to each other. We understand each other when we know what we can say to each other on the basis of what has already happened between us. For example, E can only inquire into the time of C's party once it has been established that C is having a party that they can go to, and E can only have a party to go to once E inquires about what they can do on Friday night from people that they already know. If we are understanding each other correctly, then we know what we can say to each other on the basis of what we have already said to each other. Consider, as an alternative, if F implied he knows of C's party but I am not invited. This would mean that it would not be possible for me to inquire about the time of the party because it was not mutually understood between us that this is something I can inquire about from what we have already talked about.

We would have a misunderstanding if I did inquire about the time of the party when it was not understood that this is something I could do. If I did act on the basis of this misunderstanding, there is no sense in which we could continue the conversation unless we understood what we misunderstood between us, and so we can say that having a conversation means understanding each other, which we do when we know what we can say to each other on the basis of what we have already understood between each other.

If we have shown that C+D are doing something together in their conversation, which is that they are planning to go to a party together, and A+B are doing something together in their conversation, which is that they are understanding the conversation between them, then more basically, both A+B and C+D are also, at once, doing the same thing together in both of these cases, which is the same thing that E+F are doing, which is having a conversation. In other words, having a conversation is essentially doing something together, which means that no matter what else we are doing in a conversation, we are always basically having a conversation. In the case of A+B, the conversation they are having is about the conversation itself, and in the case of C+D, the conversation they are having is about planning to go to a party together, but in both these cases, what they are doing together is having a conversation.

Section Three

If, as I have suggested, that I understand someone when I know what I can do with them on the basis of what has already happened between us, and insofar as I am doing this whenever I am having a conversation with someone, then I am getting to know them by having a conversation with them.

I can get to know someone by talking to them or doing things together with them, where talking to someone is one of the things I can do together with them. If we are talking to each other, then we are understanding each other, and if we are understanding each other, then that means we know what we can do with each other on the basis of what has already happened between us, which means we are getting to know each other.

For example, suppose you missed your train, and you tell me this, and I drive to pick you up at the train station without you asking. You can only know that I would welcome this action from what has already happened between us in the relationship, and understanding me would mean that you do this on the basis of the fact that you know you can do this. You would know this on the basis of everything we have done together before, which would include all the conversations we have had.

Section Four

If the above is true, where I understand someone if I know what I can do with them on the basis of what has already happened between us, then this would imply that I understand someone in a conversation if I know what I can say to them on the basis of what we have already said to each other. Insofar as I cannot talk to someone unless I understand them, then I understand anyone so long as I am talking to them. If all of this is true, then this would pose a difficulty for a distinction I posed earlier, namely one between understanding each other and understanding the conversation we are having with each other.

Earlier, I suggested that the conversation between A+B is distinct from the conversation between C+D because in the former, they are talking about what they are talking about, which

means they are trying to understand the conversation they are having with each other by talking about it, whereas in contrast, C+D are having a conversation with each other but they are not talking about what they are talking about. C+D are merely understanding each other by responding to what the other has to say to them. Thus, I had concluded that A+B could be said to be understanding each other by understanding the conversation they are having with each other, but C+D are merely having a conversation, or understanding each other.

However, what I have most recently suggested implies that it is not possible to understand each other unless we understand the conversation we have already had with each other. If understanding each other means that I know what I can do with you on the basis of what has already happened between us, and understanding each other in a conversation means that I know what I can say to you on the basis of what I have already said to you, then there is no sense in which we can understand each other, or know what we can do with each other, without understanding the conversation we have already had with each other, meaning that we understand everything we have already said to each other.

For example, we would have a misunderstanding if I ask you what time the party is at when nothing in our conversation implied that you were invited to C's party. This means that understanding you requires understanding the conversation we have already had. Insofar as I want to keep on talking to you, or getting to know you, then this would require clearing up this misunderstanding which would require us to understand the conversation we are having with each other.

Given this, we need to revise the understanding of the conversation between C+D made earlier. Although C+D do not talk about what they are talking about explicitly by inquiring into

what the other means by what they have said, there is no sense in which they can have a conversation, or go through the process of understanding each other, if they are not, at once, understanding the conversation they are having with each other. Thus, inquiring further into the meaning of what the other is saying is not required to understand the conversation we are having with each other since understanding each other by talking to each other is both necessary and sufficient to do this.

Section Five

Thus far, I have tried to show that knowing someone, or understanding someone, means that I know what I can do with them because of what has already happened between us so far. Things happen between us when we talk to each other and when we do things together. Since we are always doing something together whenever we are talking to each other, since talking to each other is doing something together, then things are always happening between us whenever we are talking to each other. From this, we can infer that to understand someone through a conversation means that I know what I can say to them on the basis of what we have already said to each other so far.

Earlier I also said that we understand a conversation through the process of talking about what we have already talked about. This means that we develop a deeper understanding of what we are saying to each other by talking about what we are saying to each other. Towards the end though I revised this to say that there is no sense in which we can understand each other unless we understand the conversation we are having with each other. Insofar as we are always in the process of understanding each other whenever we are having a conversation with each other,

then there is no sense in which we can talk to each other at all unless we understand the conversation we are having with each other. This implies that we do not have to explicitly inquire into what we are saying to each other in order to talk about what we are talking about. This is because we are always talking about what we are talking about as long as we are talking to each other since we can only say anything and everything that we are saying to each other on the basis of what we have already talked about.

If there is no distinction between understanding each other and understanding the conversation, then whenever we are having a conversation, we are understanding each other by understanding the conversation we are having with each other. Understanding a conversation means that I understand what has happened in the conversation so far, and insofar as I can only participate in the conversation insofar as I can say something on the basis of what has happened so far, then saying something meaningful in a conversation means that I understand the conversation I am having with someone.

If I can say I know someone by talking to them when I know what I can say to them on the basis of what we have already said to each other so far, and I can say I understand a conversation with someone when I know what I can say to them on the basis of what we have already said to each other so far, then the knowledge I have of someone through a conversation is one and the same as my understanding of the conversation I am having with them.

I think this is the sense in which knowing someone through a conversation is special. What I know through talking to someone is not merely what I learn about them through talking to them but rather is the knowledge I have of what I can do with them on the basis of what we have already done together so far. Since this is one and the same as my knowledge of the

conversation, then my knowledge of a conversation is practical knowledge, insofar as it is “the cause of what it understands,” which means that my understanding of the conversation is one and the same as my knowledge of what I can do with that understanding.

Section Six

Consider now the following conversation where we can further understand the understanding of conversation we have developed so far—

1 A: Do you know of anything fun we can do for Halloween?

2 B: Do I look like someone who would know of any parties?

3 A: Yes, actually you do.

4 B: Well, I am flattered, but in any case, I don't.

5 A: So what are you planning on doing that night anyways?

6 B: I might go visit my grandmother. Do you want to come with me?

7 A: Yeah, that sounds nice.

8 B: Well, it's not exactly going to be fun. She's getting kind of old and doesn't say much.

9 A: That's fine – we don't have to do something fun and, in any case, it would be nice to meet her.

10 B: Yeah, I'm thinking I might make her some food to take with me.

11 A: What are you going to make?

12 B: I'm thinking I'll make her some daal before I go. Maybe you can help me?

13 A: Yeah, that could be fun.

14 B: And maybe we can check out my friend's party after. He lives next door to my
grandma.

15 A: I knew it!

The conversation begins with A asking B if B knows of anything fun they can do together for Halloween. B takes A to be looking for something that would be conventionally understood to be fun to do on Halloween, like go to a party. B expresses this understanding of A's question by inquiring whether he looks like someone who would know of any parties. A directly responds to B's question by saying "yes, actually you do". The conversation could in theory end here insofar as they have completely mutually understood what they were trying to understand between themselves, which includes (a) whether B knows of anything fun to do for Halloween, and (b) whether B looks like someone who would have this information.

In line 5, A changes the subject from talking about whether B knows of anything fun to do for Halloween to instead talking about what B is doing on that night anyways. Lines 5 to 7 are straightforwardly about A and B making plans to go to B's grandmother's house together on Halloween night. In fact, we can understand lines 5 to 7 to be a micro-conversation within the larger conversation insofar as it could stand on its own independent from what comes before and after.

This is because the subject matter of that micro-conversation is self-contained, which means that everything that A and B are trying to understand about each other in lines 5 to 7 can be entirely understood by what they are saying to each other within the scope of these lines (namely, lines 5 to 7): A wants to know what B is doing that night, and B's response to that question provides A with what A was looking for. B also then asks another question, which is whether A wants to join B in his plans for that night, and A completely responds to that question, by affirming that she does want to join B in his plans. Lines 5 to 7 is, therefore, a complete conversation on its own.

On the basis of this exact same reasoning, we can see how lines 1 to 4 makes a complete conversation on its own – (1) A wants to know whether B knows of anything fun to do for Halloween, (2) B wants to know whether A thinks B looks like someone who would know of something fun to do for Halloween, (3) A responds completely to B's inquiry, and (4) B responds completely to A's inquiry. Thus, we can say that lines 1 to 4 make for a complete conversation in the same way that lines 5 to 7 are as well.

In both of these micro-conversations, B asks A a question on the basis of what he learns from the question A already posed to him. B's questions then are attempts to learn more about what A is doing by asking B about whether he knows of any fun to do on Halloween in the first micro-conversation and his plans for that night in the second micro-conversation. This makes B's questions in both cases a part of the same subject matter as A's questions, and thereby is what makes it so that B's responses can be said to be a part of the same conversation as what A has just said to B. Thus, they complete their conversation when they have mutually understood

everything they have to say about the subject matter they mutually understand themselves to be talking about.

Although lines 5 to 7 are a self-contained conversation in the same way that lines 1 to 4 are, there is more to the story of the conversation in lines 5 to 7 insofar as we can get a deeper understanding of what's going on in lines 5 to 7 by referring to what already happened in lines 1 to 4. That is, B's invitation for A to come along with B to his grandmother's house in the second micro-conversation is significant in light of the fact that A already asked B whether B wants to spend time together that night in the first micro-conversation they already had.

Thus, although B's invitation can be understood on its own in a straightforward manner within the scope of what's going on in lines 5 to 7 alone, the meaning of his action makes more sense in light of what has already happened between them in lines 1 to 4. B correctly picks up on A's intention in asking B about his plans that evening in line 5 by referring to the conversation they already had in lines 1 to 4. Since A already suggested to B that A wants to do something together on that night in their initial inquiry, then it makes sense to read her inquiry into his plans for that night as an extension of the conversation they are already having.

In fact, B's invitation restores a kind of equality to their relationship by reciprocating the gesture A already made by inquiring into A's Halloween plans. By inviting A to what B was already planning on doing, B is showing A that B wants to do things together with A just as A wants to do the same with B. Thus, although lines 5 to 7 is a conversation in its own right, it is nonetheless an extension of the conversation they are already having given that it develops what is going on between A and B in lines 1 to 4. A's inquiry into B's plans on that night changes the subject matter from "Halloween plans" to "B's plans for that night," which shows that A's

inquiry into B's knowledge of what to do on Halloween is personal rather than impersonal. In other words, A's second inquiry shows that A is curious about B and not just what B knows about the subject matter A is curious about, namely fun things to do for Halloween.

Given that there is a change in subject matter in lines 5 to 7 from the subject matter at hand in lines 1 to 4, these two micro-conversations can be understood as two separate conversations even if the second conversation makes more sense when considered in light of the first conversation and therefore can be understood as a development of the first conversation.

Nonetheless, these two separate conversations become a part of the same conversation when B says in line 8: "Well, it's not exactly going to be fun. She's getting kind of old and doesn't say much." This response to what has happened in lines 5 to 7 refers back to how the conversation initially began and functions as an invitation to make sense of the two conversations in light of one another. Since the first conversation was about whether they could do something fun on Halloween together, and they made plans to do something on that night in the second conversation, there remains an ambiguity about how to make sense of what just happened in the second conversation in light of what already happened in the first conversation.

Line 8 is B's invitation to clarify this ambiguity and therefore make explicit that the second conversation was a development of the first conversation. This is done by making sense of what they have understood in the second conversation in light of the first. When A responds by saying, "That's fine – we don't have to do something fun and, in any case, it would be nice to meet her," in line 9, then the two separate conversations become one and this renders that conversation complete insofar as the ambiguity in whether the second was a development of the first has been clarified.

Lines 10 to 13 also stand on their own given that they cover a single subject matter completely mutually understood between A and B in the span of these lines alone. This makes lines 10 to 13 its own micro-conversation. As in the case of the previous ones, the meaning of what is going on between A and B in this micro-conversation can be better understood when we consider what is happening here in light of what has already happened so far. If A and B have mutually understood that visiting B's grandmother is not going to be fun in lines 8 to 9, then the conversation in lines 10 to 13 can be understood as a development of this subject matter insofar they are still looking for a way to do something fun together on that night.

That is, A began this conversation as an attempt to find a way to do something fun with B and they have instead agreed to do something other than this. In this vein, the conversation in lines 10 to 13 can be understood as an endeavor to restore the equality between them given that, in lines 8 to 9, A conceded to doing something other than what she said she was looking to do in line 1. In light of this, B is doing something about what he learned in line 1 about what A was looking to get out of this conversation. A's response: "Yeah, that could be fun," in Line 13 shows that she understands this from what has happened in the conversation they have just had.

Unlike the multiple micro-conversations that lead up to them, lines 14 and 15 are distinct from the rest of what has been said up until this point because these lines are not a self-contained conversation capable of standing independently from everything that has led to them. In other words, we cannot make sense of the significance of what B and A say to each other in the span of this exchange without the context of the whole conversation. This is because A's response to B in line 15 does not refer to the meaning of what B has immediately just said in line 14, as most responses in conversations ordinarily do, but rather that A's response in line 15 refers to the

meaning of line 14 in light of everything that has happened between them since line 1, which is to say in the entire conversation as a whole. Whereas people ordinarily express an understanding of what was immediately just said to them in a conversation through their response, A's response in line 15 is distinct from all the other responses said in the conversation so far insofar as this response demonstrates an understanding of what B just said to A in line 14 in light of everything that has transpired between them up until that point. Line 15 then is significant because anyone who understands what is said in this response demonstrates a mutual understanding with anyone who understands what has been mutually understood between A and B in lines 1 to 15.

Moreover, line 15 is significant not only because it expresses an understanding of the conversation as a whole but also because line 15 cannot make sense to someone who does not already have an understanding of everything that has been said so far until line 1. That is, "I knew it!" does not make sense as a response to line 14 alone nor can it make sense in light of some larger part of the conversation. Rather, understanding line 15 requires an understanding of the significance of line 14 in light of how everything said so far makes sense as a whole altogether. Thus, even though lines 14 and 15 cannot stand alone as a separate conversation in the way that the micro-conversations that lead up to it can, together these lines render the many micro-conversations they have had along the way as a part of a single conversation they have been having all along.

If, as I have been saying, knowing each other is knowing the conversation we are having with each other, then I think the conversation in the example shared above is an example of two people knowing each other by knowing the conversation they are having with each other. A and B cannot misunderstand each other in a conversation such as this one because everything they

say to each other depends for its meaning on what they say immediately in response to each other and on the conversation as a whole. Thus, there is no ambiguity left between them about what they meant by what they said in any of these lines insofar as the conversation is only complete once the conversation resolves the ambiguities born from the conversation itself.

Section Seven

Someone keen to inquire further into the argument above might wonder whether there still remains some ambiguity in the conversation just discussed. If we're trying to figure out what's going on between A and B, we might wonder if there is more going on here than what we can understand on the basis of understanding the conversation above by observation alone.

For example, we might wonder: (a) Was the conversation an elaborate set up for B to ask A to go to the party in a clever way, or did he only think to ask A to go to his friend's party with him once they already made plans to visit his grandma? (b) Can we read B's way of asking A to the party as B teasing A? (c) Was the invitation to the party a genuine surprise to A?

In light of these questions, let us consider the conversation again to see which of the above ambiguities we can resolve upon further analysis.

We can see that A wanted to go to a party, but B said he did not know of one and thereafter went on to make plans with A to visit his grandma that night. Despite this, once A and B have made plans to visit his grandma, B suggests he does, in fact, know of a party which thus contradicts his earlier claim to not know of any parties. This leads A to say, "I knew it!", which points to the significance of this invitation in light of the very beginning of the conversation

when A expressed that she assumed B would know of a party for them to go to and everything that was said thereafter.

A's remark in line 15 can make sense to us as observers of the conversation. We can see how it makes sense for A to say "I knew it!" in light of the fact that B demonstrated what A hypothesized about B from the beginning – that he would know of a Halloween party for them to go to. A's remark then demonstrates the significance of what B has just said in light of the conversation as a whole, and thereby ties the whole conversation together. By saying one thing that makes sense in light of the entire conversation as a whole, this remark brings A and B, and also we as observers, onto the same page insofar as the fact that we can understand the significance of this remark tells us we are all on the same page in having understood everything that has happened so far to be a single conversation.

A saying "I knew it!" would not make sense to someone unless they followed the conversation all the way through — understanding this remark requires someone to understand what happened in lines 1 to 4, and also then to understand lines 5 to 14 in light of what happened in lines 1 to 4. Moreover, what A says in line 15 could only be meaningful to someone who has made sense of how each of the micro-conversations they had in lines 1 to 14 make sense in light of each other. Thus, only a person who understood everything that happened until line 15 could understand why it would make sense for A to say "I knew it!" in line 15.

Line 15 is also definitive of the conversation because this response marks the juncture at which we can now say that A and B mutually understand that they have mutually understood everything that has been mutually understood between them up until this point in the conversation. This means that we, as mere observers of the conversation, can be on the same

page as A and B insofar as we also understand what they have understood between themselves because we can make sense of the significance of line 15 in light of what happened in lines 1 to 14 in the same way that A and B do. We are, therefore, all on the same page about what is going on in this conversation at least, even if we do not know the history of the relationship prior to this conversation, and we all know we are on the same page because line 15 would not have made sense to us if we had not understood what happened in lines 1 to 14.

A and B are understanding what is happening between them in the conversation they are having because they not only demonstrate an understanding of each separate conversation they are having with each other but they also demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between these conversations as demonstrated by what they say to each other in lines 14 and 15. By the same token, this means that until someone says something in the conversation that demonstrates their mutual understanding of the fact that what they are saying to each other is a part of the conversation they are already having, then it remains ambiguous whether what we are saying to each other is a part of what we were saying to each other before this. For example, it is not until line 15 that A and B are on the same page about the fact that the multiple micro-conversations they have had with each other so far are all a part of the same conversation.

Moreover, although it is necessary for someone to say something that demonstrates their understanding of how each micro-conversation they have had so far is a part of the same conversation in order for everyone to get on the same page, doing this alone is not sufficient insofar as anything said in a conversation that can actually accomplish this requires someone to say something that could only make sense to someone who understood how each micro-conversation they have had so far is a part of the same conversation they have been having

along. Otherwise, there would be no demonstrable proof of the fact that they are on the same page about the conversation they are having.

For example, saying “I knew it!” would be unintelligible as a response in the conversation for anyone who followed along for only a part of the conversation A and B are having. Thus, anyone who understands Line 15 for what it means proves that they have understood everything said so far to be a part of the same conversation, and insofar as it is not possible to understand this as a response to line 14 without having understood the conversation as a whole, then Line 15 successfully removes the ambiguity of whether everything said so far is a part of the same whole and thereby successfully completes the conversation A and B are having with each other.

This also means that A and B live in ambiguity about whether and how what they are immediately saying to each other relates to what they were saying to each other before. They remain in this ambiguity until the conversation ends. This is because they cannot tell whether and how what they are saying to each other follows from what they have been saying to each other until they complete the conversation they are having with each other by saying something that makes sense in light of the whole of what they have been saying to each other. That is when the ambiguity between them is resolved.

Since A and B, or any people having a conversation with each other, can only say something that would make sense in light of the whole of what they have been talking about when they have understood how everything that has happened between them follows from what already happened between them, then they cannot complete their conversation until they have arrived at this understanding. The only way to resolve the ambiguity between them then is to

develop their understanding of the conversation they are having by continuing to talk to each other.

To see how this works, consider, for example, if A and B stopped talking to each other at the end of line 4. This would be a complete conversation because everything they have said to each other in the span of lines 1 to 4 has been mutually understood between them within the scope of these lines. Then, consider, in contrast, a hypothetical scenario in which A and B instead stopped speaking to each other at the end of line 2. This would be an incomplete conversation because they have not yet arrived at a mutual understanding of what they have said to each other in the span of lines 1 to 2.

Since B's response in line 2 does not answer the question A posed in line 1, then the conversation remains incomplete at the end of line 2 since neither A nor B has given the other a reply to what the other has just said. That is, B has not yet told A whether he knows of anything fun to do for Halloween by the end of line 2. At the same time, B has introduced his own query by the end of line 2 that then also needs a reply from A in order to complete the conversation.

Completing this conversation then requires a reply to two separate parts that need to be understood between them: (1) whether B knows of anything fun to do for Halloween, and (2) whether B looks like someone who would know of any parties. Since A does not respond to what B is trying to understand in line 2 until line 3, and B does not respond to what A is trying to understand in line 1 until in line 4, the conversation is not complete until the end of line 4.

Thus, even though B's query in line 2 is about A's query in line 1, B's response to A introduces a separate matter, making it so that there are two matters that need to be resolved in order for them to complete the conversation. That is, they can only complete the conversation

once B tells A whether or not he knows of anything fun to do for Halloween, on the one hand, and when A tells B whether he looks like someone who would know of any parties for them to go to, on the other hand.

Given this, one might wonder whether it is possible to bracket two separate conversations as co-occurring in the span of lines 1-4. For example, since B does not respond to A's query in line 1 until line 4 and A responds in line 3 to B's query in line 2, then could we bracket lines 1 and 4 together as a separate conversation from lines 2 and 3?

If we take another look, we can see that this would not be possible. Even though 4 is a response to a query in line 1, lines 1 and 4 do not make sense alone together just as lines 2 and 3 also do not make sense alone together, even though line 3 is a response to line 2. This is because each reply said in the span of these lines depends for its meaning on the whole of what happens in the course of lines 1 to 4.

From this, it follows that even though two separate matters are introduced in lines 1 to 2 of the conversation, the conversation resolves itself to be about a single subject matter that spans the entirety of lines 1 to 4 insofar as each part of what is said in the span of these lines makes up the whole of what is being talked about, which is the subject matter of the conversation.

We can generalize what we have learned from this to say that we can be trying to understand multiple matters in our conversation, but insofar as each reply in the span of the conversation depends for its meaning on each and every reply, then everything said up until the conversation is over is nonetheless a part of the same subject matter insofar as each part makes up the whole of what is being talked about.

Thus far, we have distinguished incomplete conversations from complete conversations. However, we have not yet inquired into how we can tell that we have begun doing something together that requires us to finish what we have started. That is, how do we know we have unfinished business, which is to say that we have left each other hanging from what we have already said to each other?

Consider, for example, a hypothetical scenario in which B's response in line 2 showed that B did not understand what A was trying to say to B. For example, suppose they were at a noisy train station when A posed her inquiry to B, and B did not hear A and so in response, he said, "huh?". In order for A and B to continue speaking to each other in this scenario, they would have to clarify what A has just said to B in order for the conversation to continue. This is because B has not yet understood what A has said to him, and so even though they have exchanged words, they cannot be said to have begun a conversation yet insofar as they have not said any words that demonstrate an understanding between them.

Consider, in contrast, how B's response in line 2 to A in our original conversation example shows that B has understood what A said to him in line 1. When B asks A whether he looks like someone who would know of any parties, he shows that he understands that B asked him if he knows of anything fun to do insofar as the response he gave makes sense in light of what A has just said to him. Even though B does not give A an answer to the question she was asking him, his response nonetheless expresses an understanding of the question A was asking him.

When we compare the hypothetical misunderstanding to the original conversation in lines 1 to 2, we can see that the hypothetical A and B standing in the train station might have mutual

awareness of the fact that A has something to say to B. However, insofar as B has not yet heard A, then they have not yet begun the conversation even if A has already said the words she has to him in line 1. In contrast, A and B in our original conversation example have already begun speaking to each other because they already have an understanding between them where the understanding they hold in common is what A has said to B. We know this because B's response to A demonstrates an understanding of what A has said to him.

Although completing the conversation they are having would require B to give A an answer to the question she has posed to him, we can nonetheless see that they are at least on their way to completing it insofar as B has shown A that he understands what A is looking for in the conversation she is having with him. We can generalize this to say that we have begun a conversation whenever a response demonstrates an understanding of what we are trying to understand by talking to each other, and the conversation is not complete until we arrive at a common understanding of whatever we have been trying to understand through the conversation we are having with each other.

Once we complete a conversation, or when we have arrived at a common understanding of everything we were trying to understand, as A and B do at the end of line 4, then we have no choice but to change the subject, which is to say, to begin a new conversation, if we want to keep on talking to each other. Line 5 then is the beginning of a new conversation between A and B because they are no longer trying to understand what they were talking about in lines 1 to 4 and are therefore talking about a new subject matter.

Anyone following along in the conversation since line 1, as we have been doing, can see how line 5 would make sense as a follow up to the conversation A and B had in lines 1 to 4.

However, no matter how confident we may feel in our understanding of how line 5 ties into the conversation A and B were having in lines 1 to 4, the relationship between the new conversation and the old one remains ambiguous until A and B actually talk about what the relationship between the old and the new conversation is.

A and B do this in line 8. That is, this is when they clarify the ambiguity in how the conversation they are having now relates to the conversation they were having before. When B says, “well, it’s not exactly going to be fun. She’s getting kind of old and doesn’t say much,” he is connecting the subject matter of the previous conversation to the subject matter of the new conversation. Once they do this, it then becomes possible for them to continue talking about both of these subject matters together at once thereafter.

For reference, here is the conversation example again:

1 A: Do you know of anything fun we can do for Halloween?

2 B: Do I look like someone who would know of any parties?

3 A: Yes, actually you do.

4 B: Well, I am flattered, but in any case, I don’t.

5 A: So what are you planning on doing that night anyways?

6 B: I might go visit my grandmother. Do you want to come with me?

7 A: Yeah, that sounds nice.

8 B: Well, it’s not exactly going to be fun. She’s getting kind of old and doesn’t say much.

9 A: That's fine – we don't have to do something fun and, in any case, it would be nice to meet her.

10 B: Yeah, I'm thinking I might make her some food to take with me.

11 A: What are you going to make?

12 B: I'm thinking I'll make her some daal before I go. Maybe you can help me?

13 A: Yeah, that could be fun.

14 B: And maybe we can check out my friend's party after. He lives next door to my grandma.

15 A: I knew it!

We can see above how in line 8, B specifically recalls the fact that A wanted to do something fun. He does this indirectly when he, also indirectly, inquires into whether visiting his grandma would count as something fun to do. Line 8 then is applying what he learned from the first conversation A and B had to the conversation they are now having. By doing this, he makes the subject matter of the first conversation a part of the subject matter of the second conversation. Once A responds to B in line 9 by confirming that she understands how the subject matter of the previous conversation is a part of the subject matter of the conversation they are now having, then they are on the same page about the fact that the two separate subject matter they were talking about before are one and the same subject matter.

We can better understand how this process works, namely the process of figuring out how the conversation we are having now relates to the conversation we were having before, when we see how A and B go through this process again in lines 12 to 13. In line 10, B mentions that he is

planning on making some food to take with him when they visit his grandmother on Halloween. A then follows up on this in line 11 by inquiring further into his cooking plans. This sets B up to share what he plans to make for his grandma and then to invite her to do it with him in line 12. A agrees to do this with B in line 13 and connects the conversation they are having now to the conversation they were having before by calling these plans “fun.”

Although, by the end of line 13, A and B end up doing what they set out to do by making some fun Halloween plans, there is no way for them to tell that they are on their way to doing this by the end of line 10. At this point, all B has done is mention his plans to cook something for his grandma but actually making these plans requires them to talk some more to figure out how what they are talking about fits into what they were talking about before. That is, they only get to the point of making these plans after A inquires into B’s plans and B thereby extends an invitation to A so that they can now do together what he was planning on doing alone. It is only once they have talked about this together that they can then go on to figure out how what they have done relates to what they were doing before.

If what they were doing before was talking about whether B knows of anything fun to do for Halloween, and now they have, in a separate conversation, made plans to cook some daal together for B’s grandmother, then A shows that she understands what they are doing now to be a part of what they were doing before when she calls these plans “fun.” This then is the sense in which A and B, but also people in general, figure out how what they are talking about relates to what they were doing about before.

By the end of line 13, A and B have mutually understood how what happened in lines 5 to 7 built upon and developed from what happened in lines 1 to 4, and how lines 8 and 9 tied

everything that happened up until that point altogether and so made lines 1 to 9 a single conversation. They have also made some more plans for that evening in lines 10 to 13. On first appearance, Line 14 seems to be an extension of the spirit of the conversation in lines 10 to 13 since B is further extending the plans they have already made in this response. While this is true, Line 14 is not merely an extension of the conversation they are having in lines 10 to 13 insofar as it carries a deeper significance than anything that has been said so far in the conversation.

Anyone who joined the conversation late and so only saw what happened between lines 10 to 14 would merely register what has happened in line 14 as an attempt to extend the plans A and B are making for Halloween that night. However, someone who followed the conversation from the beginning of line 1 could see how line 14 carries a deeper significance in light of everything that has happened so far in lines 1 to 13. The deeper significance of line 14 is shown in A's response when she says "I knew it!" in line 15, and so we can understand the significance of Line 14 by developing an understanding of the significance of line 15.

Line 15 is a categorically different kind of response than anything said up until this point in the conversation. This is because this response could only be meaningful to someone who understood everything that happened in lines 1 to 14 and, on this basis, could only then see how it would make sense for A to say "I knew it!" Line 15 is unique in comparison to everything else said in the conversation because it is not merely an immediate response to what was said in line 14, as most replies in conversations are. Rather, in line 15, A is responding to the significance of line 14 she can see in light of everything that happened up until that point. For example, if we were to take any of the replies said in the span of lines 1 to 14, we could at least understand what was being said in light of how it was responsive to what had been immediately just said in the

conversation. Line 15 is categorically different from these other responses then because it does not make sense as an immediate reply to Line 14 but rather only makes sense to someone who was a part of the whole conversation and so can see the significance of line 14 in light of everything that led up to it.

It is only possible for A to say what she says in line 15 to B on the basis of the mutual understanding they have developed through the conversation they are having. That is, it is only because she understands that they have been through the process of understanding the same conversation they have been having together that she can then say line 15 with the trust that he would understand its significance. She can only have this confidence because she understands that he has understood the conversation for what it meant because he has been a part of it in the same way that she has. Since they both have been a part of the same conversation, then they both understand how each micro-conversation relates to and develops from the ones that came before it and thereby makes it possible to speak to each other on the basis of their mutual understanding of each of these separate micro-conversations altogether as a part of the same conversation.

The fact that A can say “I knew it!” to B in line 15 means that we can unequivocally say that they have mutually understood everything that has happened between them in lines 1 to 15 to be a part of the same conversation. This is because there is no sense in which line 15 could be significant to someone unless they understood the conversation as a whole. Whereas every other reply in the conversation may only be partially understood by those in the conversation because they are still in the process of understanding the conversation they are having, line 15 is unique because it can only register as totally meaningful to anyone who can understand it because it

expresses the total mutual understanding A and B have already arrived at through the conversation they have just had.

Line 15 is also special because anyone observing the conversation can have the same understanding of its meaning insofar as this meaning is available to everyone who has followed along in the conversation the entire way. Every response other than line 15 found in the conversation is essentially ambiguous because it depends on the conversation as a whole for its meaning. In contrast, Line 15 can be unambiguously understood by anyone who understands how every micro-conversation A and B have had up until that point turned out to be a part of the same thing, or the same conversation, and so makes Line 15 a brute expression of that meaning, or the meaning of the conversation as a whole. For this reason, people like us, which is to say, people who are not A and B, can be said to be on the same page as A and B about what A and B have understood between them in the conversation they are having as long as we can understand the meaning of line 15.

The fact that we are all on the same page about what we understand at the end of line 15 also means that we can also all be on the same page about what we do not understand, or what remains ambiguous, unanswered, or “in between the lines” of what is happening in this conversation. Thus, the ambiguities born from this conversation, or the questions I mentioned in (a-c) at the beginning of Section Seven are not a random assortment of questions a person could in theory have about what is going on between the two here but are in fact born from what we do understand about what is going on here.

Once we all mutually understand that everything that happens between A and B in lines 1 to 15 is unequivocally a single thing, then the ambiguities we are left with become about the

deeper meaning of what is going on in lines 1 to 15 as a single thing. Doing so requires us to make sense of what it means for A to have said line 15 to B in light of everything that has happened between them so far.

Up until A says what she says in line 15, the ambiguity between the two is about what is going on between them in the course of what they are saying to each other. Once that ambiguity is resolved as it is in line 15, then we, namely A and B and any observer of the conversation, is left with the ambiguity of the deeper significance of whatever A and B are doing here, or how this conversation potentially fits into the history of their relationship, which leads to the kinds of questions posed in (a-c) above in the beginning of Section 7.

To understand this, let us go through and address each of the ambiguities I mentioned at the beginning of this section one by one.

(a) Was the conversation an elaborate set up for B to ask A to go to the party in a clever way, or did he only think to ask A to go to his friend's party with him once they already made plans to visit his grandma?

We would only think to ask this question because of how the conversation between A and B played out. That is, this ambiguity is born from our retrospective understanding of the conversation we arrive at in line 15. Had B straightforwardly invited A to his grandma's house and then to his friend's party, we would not be wondering about this. Rather, this ambiguity is born from how the later events in the conversation are juxtaposed against the earlier events, or the fact that B surprises us by having knowledge of a party for them to go to despite having denied that he has this knowledge earlier in the conversation.

We can only begin to make sense of this juxtaposition once we understand everything that happened in the span of lines 1 to 15 to be a part of the same whole, and insofar as this does not happen until line 15, then this is when this ambiguity is born. When we arrive at line 15 in the conversation, we are then naturally led to wonder whether B planned this surprise in advance or whether the events as they unfolded led him to invite A in a way that he would not have had the conversation gone otherwise.

We can generalize the point here to say that the ambiguities we live in are genuine and objective problems born from our history of living together. Given how this conversation went, it makes sense then to wonder about whether B's party invitation was premeditated or spontaneous. Had the same invitations been presented in a conversation of a different form, we might not wonder about this at all. By the same token, once we get to line 15, and therefore have arrived at an understanding of the meaning of the conversation in lines 1 to 15, it makes sense for anyone who followed this conversation to live in the ambiguities born from this conversation insofar as they are informed by our gaps in understanding, or what we can say we genuinely do not know about what we have come to know through the conversation we have already had with each other.

(b) Can we read B's way of asking A to the party as B teasing A?

As in the case of ambiguity (a), ambiguity (b) is also born from the retrospective understanding of the conversation we acquire in line 15 when we understand how the various parts of what A and B are saying to each other in lines 1 to 15 make up a singular, whole conversation. As already mentioned above, the gaps in our understanding become clear in light

of what we now understand once the ambiguity is resolved in line 15. Regardless of whether B planned to surprise A with an invitation to the party or whether he decided to extend an invitation to the party in the midst of the conversation, it is only once we are certain that lines 1 to 15 are one thing, or one conversation, that we can begin to make sense of what it means for B to have responded as he did sequentially in response to what A said in the ways he did as all adding up to a behavior we would describe as “teasing.” That is, this description “teasing” becomes available to us only once we make sense of how everything that happens in the span of lines 1 to 15 fits together, and insofar as we cannot do that until we understand how it all fits together, as we do in line 15, then line 15 is when ambiguity (b) becomes something we would be curious about in light of what now know.

(c) Was B’s invitation to the party a genuine surprise to A?

As in the case of ambiguities (a) and (b), ambiguity (c) is also born from the clarity we find in line 15 that then gives rise to a new set of problems born from the gaps we find in our clarity. A’s response in line 15 expresses the fact that B’s invitation to the party is a genuine and objective surprise in the world of the conversation they are having. The surprise is genuine and objective because it does not predictably follow from what happened in the conversation leading up to it.

In fact, quite the opposite, B led A and anyone else observing the conversation to believe that he did not know of any parties to go to. Given the history of the conversation then, B’s knowledge of a party for them to attend is indeed a surprise to A and to everyone else involved as an observer. Thus, A’s response to B in line 15 confirms that it has been mutually understood

between them that B's invitation is objectively a surprise to the conversation, and this is shown in A's verbal expression of surprise when she exclaims, "I knew it!"

Once it becomes possible to understand everything that has happened so far in light of B's surprise as we do in line 15, then, the question of whether or not it was a genuine surprise to A emerges from how the events unfold. That is, the clarity we find in our common understanding of B's invitation as a surprise in line 15 also, by the same token, highlights the gap between A's understanding of the events as they are unfolding and any observer of the conversation who is not privy to the history of A and B's relationship before line 1.

Noting this gap, we might then start to wonder whether A potentially knew that B was actually bluffing in line 4, and so she already knew he had a party for them to attend up his sleeve in a way that we, as observers of the conversation, could not know because we were not privy to the conversations they had leading up to the one we can see and on the basis of which she could make such a judgment. Ambiguity (c) then is born from the fact that we do not know the deeper significance of what is going on in lines 1 to 4, and this becomes apparent to us when that conversation ends up mattering to how the conversation ultimately unfolds.

Overall the point here is that ambiguities are born from every conversation in light of our mutual understanding of that conversation. We arrive at a mutual understanding of our conversation when we can see everything said in a conversation as a part of the same whole. This makes it possible to know the meaning of each of those parts in light of our understanding of the whole. This clarity then shines lights on our gaps in understanding. Whenever we arrive at newfound mutual understanding, we then live in ambiguity born from that mutual understanding,

as we do with respect to ambiguities a, b, and c in light of the mutual understanding we find in line 15 of the conversation. We then live in this ambiguity until we find our way to another mutual understanding that resolves those new ambiguities.

Section Eight

In Section Seven, we considered whether some ambiguity in the conversation remained despite the fact that the conversation itself cleared up many ambiguities between the two. In response, I showed how the ambiguities we are left with at the end of a conversation are born from our mutual understanding of the conversation itself. The gaps in our newfound clarity produce new ambiguities that we can then go on to resolve by continuing to talk to each other.

Given what we found in Section Seven, I now want to consider the ambiguities the conversation had at the beginning but are cleared up through the unfolding of the conversation itself. That is, what do A and B not know at the beginning of the conversation that they then go on to learn through the course of the conversation?

We learn more about the relationship between A and B by observing what they can understand about each other without saying. This tells us what they already know about each other, and on this basis, we can learn more about their relationship than what we learn from what they are explicitly saying to each other in the conversation they are having.

For example, in line 2, B infers that A is looking to go to a party as shown in what B says to A in line 2. At the same time, it remains ambiguous whether: (a) A is talking about “A and B” when referring to “we” in line 1, (b) whether B assumes that A is looking for a party because of

what he already knows about A or as a matter of what is conventionally understood to be “fun”, (c) what the context is for A asking B this question, and (d) the tone of B’s response to A’s inquiry. Some of ambiguity (a) is possibly resolved in line 3 when A accepts B’s inference since she does not undermine B’s equation of “fun” with “parties”, but ambiguities (a-d) still remain.

We find further ambiguity in line 3 insofar as it is unclear whether A is being earnest or ironic when she tells B that he looks like someone who would know of a party for them to go to. In line 4, we learn that B is receptive to the inquiry A posed in line 1 insofar as he is flattered that she thinks he seems like someone who would know of a party, but we still cannot read the tone. We also learn that he says he does not know of any parties even though A just said in line 3 that he looks like someone who would know of some parties. It remains ambiguous if there is any basis for A to have expected or not expected this response from him. We cannot yet know whether A was genuine in expecting B to know about something fun to do for Halloween that night.

In lines 5, 6, and 7, we learn that A and B know each other well enough that A can ask B what he’s doing that night, that B can invite A to come along with him to his grandmother’s house, and that A welcomes that invitation. This can then go on to inform what we understand to have happened in lines 1 to 4. That is, we now know that A already knows B when she asks him whether he knows of anything fun they can do for Halloween and that they have some kind of history that precedes the interaction shown in lines 1 to 4.

Given that B extends an invitation to A to join him in his plans in lines 5 to 7 after the interaction they already had in lines 1 to 4, we might be inclined to infer that A’s first question at least implied to B that she was open to spending time together on Halloween. We know we are

correct to make this inference when in line 8, B says “well, it’s not exactly going to be fun,” which confirms that this conversation is a part of the conversation they were having in lines 1 to 4. Thus, it makes sense to infer that what A and B understood line 1 to mean is something like: “Do you know of a party to go to together on Halloween, and do you want to go to it together?” given everything that has happened until line 8.

In line 8, we learn that B cares to make sure that A is okay with not doing something conventionally understood to be fun on Halloween since he seeks to clarify that their plans might not match the tone of what A was going for that night. In line 9, we learn that A is fine with spending Halloween not doing something conventionally fun and seems at least okay with the idea of spending time with B’s grandma that night. In lines 10 to 13, we learn that A and B are open to spending more time with A beyond the visit to the grandma’s, but we, as observers, do not know whether this is ordinary or unusual for them.

In line 14, we learn that B does, in fact, know of a party they can go to, but we do not know why he did not share this information in line 4. We can hypothesize that he possibly did not think of it until later, or that he wanted to confirm that A would be open to spending time at his grandma’s before extending the invitation to go to the party after. Alternatively, we might think that this was an elaborate set up to eventually ask A to go to the party for Halloween but also to do these other things together (cook together, go visit the grandma), and this was a charming way to do what otherwise would have been an ordinary case of making plans for Halloween.

In line 15, we learn that A had some reason to think that A’s action in line 14 was in line with what she could expect of his character. Even if she was surprised by what he did, she could

nonetheless still have also expected this of him retrospectively because of what she already knows about him. We can conjecture that, given her response in line 15, she either knew he would know of a party based on her knowledge of B from before this conversation, or that something in what he said earlier betrayed that he was lying about not knowing a party. Although the meaning still remains ambiguous, we learn that they know each other well enough that what he did in line 14 was in line with what she knew of him before. In other words, we know that what he did in line 14 was meaningful not only in light of this conversation but in light of the relationship they already have to each other.

Section Nine

The analysis of the above conversation was meant to illustrate that knowing someone is more than knowing about someone, and this is because A and B know each other in a sense that we cannot know either of them even if we observed the conversation they are participating in for themselves.

By having this conversation, A does not merely learn that B is someone who visits his grandma on Halloween, cooks dinner for her, and is friends with his grandma's neighbor. These are things A could know about B if she merely observed B having a conversation with someone else or could learn second-hand by observation. Although A and B surely learn these kinds of facts about each other by talking to each other, there is a sense in which they distinctively know each other by talking to each other that is more than what they learn about each other. That sense is that by talking to each other, they also learn what they can say to each other on the basis of what they learn about each other.

Because B is someone who A already knows, and potentially knows as someone who might know of a Halloween party, she can begin a conversation with B about something fun they can do on Halloween. Because B learns that A wants to spend time together on Halloween, he can suggest that they go to his grandma's house together. Because B knows that A is open to spending time together in general and also wants to do something fun that night, he can suggest cooking together. Because A has said that she thinks B would know of a party at the beginning of the conversation, she can remind him of this fact at the end when he eventually invites her to one.

Everything they can say to each other in the course of the conversation is only possible because of how they already know each other, where knowing each other here is not knowing about each other but rather knowing what they have already said to each other. We can say the same thing again more simply then as: knowing each other means we know what we can say to each other on the basis of what we have said to each other, and insofar as what we have said to each other is something we have done together, then knowing each other means we know what we can do together on the basis of what we have done together.

For example, knowing that we usually go to the library together everyday means that we can expect the other to say that they won't be there on a day they won't be there because of what we already know about each other. I know then that I can ask you, "why didn't you come to the library today?" because of what we have already done together, whereas it would be strange to ask you this question if what we have already done together had not made it possible for me to say these words to you. Knowing someone does not mean that you know that they go to the library everyday but rather that you can say something to them on the basis of this fact because

of what you have understood between yourselves by talking to each other. This is the sense in which we get to know each other by talking to each other that makes this kind of knowing each other distinct from other ways in which we can know each other.

As another example, if in the course of the conversation, we change the subject but can also go back to talking about what we were talking about before in the course of this new conversation we are having, then we have mutually understood that what we were talking about before is a part of the same conversation that we were having earlier. Knowing that we are having a conversation then is not a psychological fact we bear in our minds but something that is demonstrated by our capacity to relate what we are talking about now to what we were talking about before.

Section Ten

Is there a psychological piece to this story? Sometimes, someone might be going along with the other person in a conversation. In other words, we might not always psychologically be on the same page even if we are on the same page in the conversation. This is because there is no sense in which a conversation can continue unless we are on the same page but that does not say anything about where we are mentally. This means that one person might be catching up to the other person when they are talking to each other, and the people who are talking to each other might not necessarily even be aware of these differences in psychology as they are talking to each other. It could also be that a person who thought they were leading the conversation might retrospectively understand that they were the one who learned something in that conversation even if they took themselves to be the person leading the conversation.

For example, suppose you change the subject and I do not necessarily want to change the subject when you introduce a new subject matter and I just go along with it. You might already see a connection between what we are talking about now and what we were talking about before, but I am catching up, so to speak, in figuring out how what we are talking about now relates to what we were talking about before. I might then learn of the connection between what we were talking about and what we are talking about now only when you say it. For example, A might not know why B is talking about making food for his grandma until he invites her to join him in his plans. She is, in this sense, “catching up” to what he knew before her, which is that he already had the understanding that these were plans he would invite her given what already happened in the conversation between them. This understanding becomes mutual when she can see this in the conversation, but insofar as this was what B had in mind before A did, then he was, so to speak, psychologically ahead of A in the conversation.

We can generalize this idea to say that people might be at different stages of understanding in the midst of the conversation at different points — sometimes, person X might know where the conversation is headed before person Y, and person Y will therefore be catching up to what the person X already knows, and at other points, both people might not know where the conversation is headed and this might be true even of someone who thought they had an idea where it was going at the beginning of the conversation. The idea is that people will have different levels of understanding at any given point in the conversation about what is going on immediately at that point, but if a conversation goes well, then everyone will end up on the same page or at the same understanding at some point, and this is when that conversation can be said to be complete.

For example, we know that the conversation in lines 1 to 15 is complete because there is no sense in which both people cannot be on the same page about what happened between them if they understand line 15. This is because there is no sense someone could understand line 15 unless they understood the conversation as a whole, and there is no sense in which A could say line 15 unless they had mutually understood everything they had mutually understood to be a single conversation by this point. This means that even if they were at different points in their understanding during the conversation psychologically, as would be the case if say B knew all along that the conversation was headed to what he said in line 14 in a way that A did not, we can say the conversation is complete because they are on the same page or have the same understanding of what has happened between them at the end.

Section Eleven

In “The Conversational Self,” Daniela Dover writes about how we get to know someone, but her account of getting to know someone is quite different from the one I have provided above. For Dover, we can get to know a person in the same way that we can get to know any subject matter, such as plants or the location of the library. I could have a better or worse understanding of a person in the same way that I could have a better or worse understanding of plants or the location of the library. At the same time, she acknowledges that there is a difference between knowing about plants and knowing someone insofar as knowing someone also involves practical knowledge. For example, she thinks knowing someone means you might know how to cheer them up, and this would be on the basis of your understanding of them as a person, or

knowing what they are like, why they are the way they are, and the conditions that made them the kind of person they are.

Contra Dover, I think that we do not know how to cheer someone up because we understand that person, but rather that knowing how to cheer someone up is tantamount to what it means to know a person. Thus, for Dover, knowing a person is something that involves both epistemic and practical knowledge, but as I understand it, knowing a person is practical insofar as I can only know them if I know what I can do with them, as I would if I did something to cheer them up and we mutually understood that I was cheering them up by what I was doing. For Dover, I have an understanding of a person that underlies my capacity to do something like this with them, whereas I am saying that my understanding of a person and my capacity to do something with them is one and the same.

Another difference between my account of conversation and knowing someone versus Dover's is that, for Dover, we talk to each other so that we can understand each other, whereas I am saying that talking to each other is the process of understanding someone. Thus, my understanding of them is not something that conversation yields but rather that engaging in the activity itself means that I am understanding the person I am talking to. For example, although we might say that A and B understand each other better at the end of the conversation than they did in the middle of it, they can still say they understand each other in the middle of it on the basis of what they have already talked about, or the conversations they have had along the way to the one that makes them all fit together as one.

Section Twelve

What I have said so far amounts to the idea that the whole meaning of the conversation is contained in the practical knowledge of saying the things we are to each other. In other words, the fact that I can say what I am saying to you in the conversation we are having means that we have understood everything that has happened between us in the conversation so far that makes it possible for me to say those words to you.

For example, when A says “What are you going to make” in line 11, she can only say this to B because she has understood what B was saying to her in line 10, and B can only say “Well, it’s not exactly going to be fun. She’s getting kind of old and doesn’t say much,” in line 9 because he has understood what has happened in the conversation between lines 1 to 9. What is being said in line 10 then is built upon the history of what has already happened between them. Likewise, A can only say “I knew it!” in line 15 because she has understood the significance of line 14 in light of everything that has happened before it.

This means that even though we might not explicitly be talking about whatever already happened between us at every moment in the conversation, everything we are saying to each other can only be said because of what has already happened between us. For example, when A asks B: “What are you going to make?”, this is only explicitly about the food B is making for his grandma, but between them, they understand that they are talking about what B is going to make on the basis of the fact that they have already talked about what B is doing on Halloween, and they talked about that on the basis of the fact that A asked B what he is doing that night. None of this is explicitly being talked about when they are talking about what he is cooking, but it remains the condition by which they can say those words to each other. We can generalize this to

say that even if we are not explicitly making use of the history of our conversation every time we talk to each other, we nonetheless use everything we have talked about in order to talk to each other because this is how conversation works.

The fact that everything we say to each other contains the meaning of everything we have already said to each other explains how we can say things like “I knew it!,” as A does in line 15. That is, we can say something meaningful in a conversation even if what we say would not be meaningful in the immediate local context of the conversation without the full context of our shared history because the history of our conversation is always available for us to use to understand the conversation we are having now. Our shared understanding of the conversation as a whole, and everything we say in it as an instantiation of that whole, then explains how we can begin to talk about something we abandoned talking about long ago as long as we can show how what we are saying to each other now is a part of what we were saying to each other before.

By the same token, this explains why we have difficulty speaking to some people. It is difficult to speak to people with whom we mutually understand ourselves to lack a common understanding of our common understanding. For example, if you get mad at me because you told me we were supposed to meet at 7, and I thought you told me we were supposed to meet at 8, then we will have difficulty speaking to each other as long as we mutually understand ourselves to have a misunderstanding about what was said between us. We will have difficulty speaking to each other until we arrive at a common understanding of what happened between us or if and when we choose to let it go. This misunderstanding could, however, rear its head again if anything between us happens again that reminds us of what happened in this conversation again and so leads us to use this shared history to talk about it.

If talking to each other means we have arrived at a common understanding of everything that has already happened between us, as I have been saying so far in this section, then how is conversation not entirely predictable? If we mutually understand everything we have understood between us, then that would mean we have the same understanding about what we have understood between us so far as long as we are talking to each other. Shouldn't this mean that we should be able to predict how things are going to be between us on the basis of how things have gone so far?

For example, how do we explain phenomena like the ones that happened in the conversation example we discussed: (a) How is it that A could even ask a question to which B did not have an answer? Shouldn't she already know the sorts of questions she can pose to B to which he could give her an answer on the basis of her knowledge of the conversation they have had so far? (b) How is it that A could be surprised as she seems to be in line 15, when she says "I knew it!," in response to what B said in line 14? More generally, under what conditions can someone say something surprising to us in a conversation if we already generally know what we can expect from them on the basis of what we have already talked about so far?

When B fails to deliver on what A seemed to have expected of him, namely information about a party to attend on Halloween, they carry the conversation forward. We later learn that A was surprised when B said he did not know of a party to attend as is shown when at the very end she says, "I knew it!" Here, A shows that she did expect A to know what he has now revealed he does know, namely a party for them to go to on Halloween. Thus, she is surprised twice: first, when he fails to meet the expectations she had set on the basis of what they had already talked about, as is the case when he says he does not know of a party even though their previous

conversations would have suggested he would, and she is surprised again when he exceeds the expectations he set for her in lines 1 to 14 of this conversation. More generally, we are surprised by people when they say or do things that exceed or fail to meet our expectations of them, and we develop these expectations on the basis of what we have already talked about between us.

Knowing each other then means that we have a settled understanding of what the other person will go on to do at the next point in the conversation. At the same time, having these expectations does not mean I can predict what you will say or do. Rather, these expectations are shaped by my understanding of our conversation and so give me a barometer by which I can make sense of what you go on to do in light of what has happened between us. These expectations shape the scope of what you can say or do in response to what I have said to you, and although I can be surprised, disappointed, or have a range of emotional responses to what you say to me in response, we can continue talking despite this as long as what we say to each other contributes to our understanding of what we have already understood between us. For example, A might be disappointed that B does not know of a party, and although this might not make sense to her at the time, she can only learn how it would make sense if she keeps on talking to him.

If we better understand each other the more we talk to each other, is there a sense in which we can “get to the bottom” of a person? For example, there is a sense in which a Kant scholar can penetrate the depths of Kant and say she really knows Kant in a way that most people cannot? In other words, is the kind of knowledge a person has of their best friend akin to the kind of knowledge a Kant scholar has of what Kant has written? I think taking these to be akin to one

another mistakes the kind of knowledge I can have of my friend to be the kind of knowledge I can have of Kant.

The difference I think between the two is that knowing Kant is theoretical knowledge whereas knowing someone is practical knowledge. Understanding the work of Kant means that I arrive at an understanding, or a picture, I can hold in my mind, and that I can update by continuing to learn more. Although it is possible to study a person in this way and treat them like a character in a book and try to understand them the way I might understand Kant, the people we know in real life are ultimately not characters in a book written for us to study.

The people we actually know, and the people we can say to each other that we know, are only those people we actually talk to. Talking to them is not how we know them, but talking to them is what it means to know them. In other words, there is no sense in which we can know someone unless we talk to them, where the knowledge we have of them is not a consequence of talking to them but is one and the same as talking to them. I can say I know someone because I talk to them, and I can talk to them because I know them. This means that knowing them is not one and the same as what we know about them from talking to them. Although I can get to know about someone by talking to them, by observing them, or by hearing about them from someone else, I can only get to know someone by talking to them.

The understanding I have of someone is not what I obtain from having a conversation with them as would be the case if understanding someone was akin to understanding Kant. Rather, understanding someone is one and the same as understanding the conversation we are having with each other. Understanding the conversation means that I understand what we have

mutually understood between us, and so can say something to them on the basis of what we have understood between us.

This understanding is not theoretical insofar as knowing someone does not mean “I know XYZ things about person A” or “I know XYZ things on the basis of knowing person A” although these things may be true. Rather, knowing someone is practical which means instead that I know what I can do with them or say to them on the basis of what we have already said to each other and what we have already done together. Thus, even though I might gain some theoretical knowledge about that person, which would mean I know things about them that I could then say about them to another person who would then also know things about them, the person who I said these things to and who would then also know about the person I know cannot say they know the person I know in the same way. This is because that person cannot do the same things I can do with them because they do not know them even though they may know about them on the basis of what I have told them.

Although it is certainly true that I learn about someone when I get to know them by talking to them, in the same way that I could learn about Kant or plants, this is only a part of getting to know someone by talking to them insofar as what I know is not only what I learn from talking to them but more wholly and correctly described as the condition by which I can learn more about them by talking to them. For this reason, even if I were to relay all the understanding I obtained from talking to someone to another person, they could not know the person in that same way because they would not be in a position to learn more about that person by talking to them in the way that I could because they would not know each other in the same way that we know each other.

Section Thirteen

In Sections One to Twelve, I showed that (1) Knowing someone is not the same as knowing about someone, (2) I get to know someone by talking to them, (3) A belief in point 2 might lead someone to think that the knowledge I have of someone is a consequence of having talked to them and so what I know of someone is what I know about them from talking to them, (4) However, in contrast, I have shown that I know someone as long as I *can* talk to them or as long as I can keep the conversation I am having with them going, (5) I can talk to someone if we know what we can talk about with each other, and so (6) Knowing someone means I know what I can talk about with them. (7) If I know what I can talk about with someone if I understand the conversation we are already having with each other, then understanding the conversation I am having with someone is how I can know what I can talk to them about, and (8) If knowing someone means I know what I can talk about with them, then from this it follows that knowing someone, or understanding someone, is one and the same as understanding the conversation I am having with them.

If the above is true, then what is the point or significance of this argument? What is the salience in the distinction between having an understanding of each other on the basis of having a conversation with each other and an understanding of each other that is one and the same as our understanding of our conversation?

In response to this, I want to suggest that this distinction articulates the idea of self-consciousness in conversation. I think we are self conscious in conversation when our understanding of each other is one and the same as our understanding of the conversation. Any understanding we have that is less than this equivalence means that we do not yet understand

each other because we do not understand the conversation we are having with each other and vice versa. The stakes of this, I think, are that we can only move a conversation forward or, as we say, change the subject, while still continuing the same conversation we are already having once we understand each other, and this, I think, is one and the same as understanding the conversation we are having with each other. Thus, self-consciousness is how we move a conversation forward and begin talking about something new that is still a part of the conversation we are already having with each other.

We can begin to see how this is true by turning to consider the idea of self-consciousness in art. Following Robert Pippin, we can take Manet's painting *Olympia* as an example of this. Once we understand how Manet's painting is distinctively self-conscious, I want to use this understanding to understand what it means for a conversation to be distinctively self-conscious.

Manet's *Olympia* is a play on a classical Renaissance painting, Titian's *Venus of Urbino*. Whereas Titian aspired to render Venus as beautiful and for his painting to be seen as beautiful by the people who saw it in a museum, Manet's painting has no such aspiration, according to Robert Pippin who writes about this painting in his book *After the Beautiful*. In fact, Manet's painting is intended to be seen as meaningful for its lack of the traditional aspiration for a painting to be beautiful. This intention is demonstrated by the removal of elements that would have otherwise rendered the painting beautiful, while at once, also explicitly referring back to a painting that aspired to be beautiful. By doing so, the painting shows that it knows what it is supposed to be doing, but at the same time, does not do what it is supposed to be doing, and therefore expresses itself as a kind of refusal to participate in the norms of the social practice of art. In this sense, *Olympia* is "anti-idealizing" and "even ironic," he says.

For example, Pippin says Manet's *Olympia* displays no serious attempt at verisimilitude in the depiction of sensual properties. Olympia's skin looks dead and dirty in contrast to Venus' pink and lively looking skin. Whereas Venus' gaze is tender and looks as if it is directed at the painter who is supposed to be painting her, Olympia's gaze looks out at the viewer of the painting "as a kind of affront or at least challenge, "turned" in toto toward the beholder with a strange, flamboyant indifference to that beholder."

Given that the painting is supposed to be a play on Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, these features altogether demonstrate that Manet's *Olympia* does not lack beauty so much as it opposes any attempt to be beautiful. Given that the history of the painting up until this point has been the attempt to render the canvas beautiful for the sake of the pleasure of the beholder of the painting, then what is the point of Manet's *Olympia* if not what painting has been doing up until this point, Pippin asks?

Pippin thinks the look in Olympia's eyes, somehow simultaneously both vacant and yet challenging, expresses a demand of the beholder of the painting. That demand is to interrogate their participation in the social practice of what they have come to see the painting of Olympia looking for: namely, to gaze upon the painting in search of an aesthetic experience.

More broadly, the challenge displayed to Olympia's beholder and to every beholder of a painting after Manet is, according to Pippin, to reckon with the problem of working out what it means in the modern age "to paint gallery pictures for beholders, what assumptions about the mindedness of beholders (their expectations about interpretability and meaning) and the portrayal of human mindedness in the painting are relevant, now that various institutional contexts and assumptions no longer inform the interaction between painting and beholders as

they once did.” In other words, *Olympia* expresses the collapse of the social institution of art as it is being practiced in Manet’s time. Olympia’s gaze, facial expression, and body positioning challenge the beholder to interrogate their participation in this collapsing social institution by standing before the painting in search of an aesthetic experience that this painting, unlike all the other paintings before it, fails to deliver.

What makes Manet’s *Olympia* self-conscious, at least given what we have learned from Pippin so far, is that this failure is intentional. This means that the painting demonstrates that it purposely fails to participate in the norms of the social practice of art in its time by failing to deliver the aesthetic experience its beholder expects of the painting. In particular, the painting demonstrates that this is purposeful, or that it means to play a role in the collapse of the institution of art as it is being practiced in Manet’s time by failing to deliver on what it is supposed to be doing.

Thus, Manet’s *Olympia* at once expresses an understanding of:

(1) The role the painting is supposed to be playing in its interaction with the beholder according to the norms of the social practice given the history of art. The norm is for a painting to aspire to be beautiful in order to provide an aesthetic experience for the beholder who is there to see it. The painting acknowledges an understanding of the painting’s role by painting *Olympia* as a play on Titian’s *Venus of Urbino*, a painting that is supposed to be beautiful. By subverting the norms by which we would say that Titian’s painting is supposed to be beautiful, Manet’s *Olympia* demonstrates an understanding of these norms.

(2) The role the painting is actually playing in its interaction with the beholder. Manet portrays Olympia in the manner of her gaze, facial expression, and posture to be posing a kind of

challenge to the role she, as a subject of the painting, is supposed to be playing for the beholder, in the interaction between them.

(3) The role the painting is playing in the collapse of the institution as it is being practiced in Manet's time. The painting participates in and endorses the collapse of the institution. The juxtaposition of Olympia and her mannerisms against the context of Titian's *Venus of Urbino* demonstrates an understanding of the set of conventions that make up the social practice of art at this time. This thereby constitutes the choice to portray Olympia as he does as a refusal to participate in that set of conventions. In particular, Manet refuses to render an aesthetic experience for a beholder who is there to have one by looking at a painting in a museum.

On this basis of these three altogether, we can say that the painting is self-conscious because it demonstrates an understanding of the role the painting is playing in the interaction with the beholder in light of the broader art historical context.

Section Fourteen

If *Olympia* makes sense in light of Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, what did Manet's *Olympia* mean for the community of beholders of his time? Manet's *Olympia* (1863) plays with the idea of a classical portrait by portraying a play on Titian's classic portrait, *Venus of Urbino*, (1534). The subject of Titian's portrait is a goddess. Given that the subject of Titian's painting is supposed to be a symbolic ideal, he renders her in a way that expresses this fact. That is, the subject of the painting is rendered in a manner to be seen as beautiful. Her body shines under lighting that illuminates her so that she can be seen as elevated, special, and distinct from her otherwise domestic surroundings.

In contrast, in Manet's painting, the subject we learn from the title of the painting is Olympia. The painting appears to be a portrait insofar as Olympia looks straight out into the world outside of the painting like any other subject whose portrait is painted. She lays on a bed in the same way that Titian's Venus and other nude women in portraits of this time lay on beds posed upright as models for the painters who paint them. There is no background other than a wallpapered wall exposed behind some curtains.

Manet's painting is distinct from Titian's *Venus* because there appears to be not one but three subjects in the painting. The first is Olympia, the woman who looks out towards us, the second is a black woman who is dressed and posed as an attendant who gazes at Olympia, and the third is a cat who looks out towards us, the beholders, in the same way that Olympia does. Given that there is nothing going on in the painting other than these three figures standing in front of a wall, we might infer that the painting is a portrait of the three of them. But if this is true, then why is the painting not called *Olympia*, *[name of attendant]*, and *[name of cat]*?

Although Manet's *Olympia* looks like a portrait in the way that Titian's *Venus of Urbino* is, I think we have reason to think instead that we find ourselves in the middle of a scene when looking at this painting. Portraits are attempts to represent the people in them. For example, the lighting illuminating Venus' body and her posture indicate that she is sitting there to be painted by someone who wants to represent her in a painting. In contrast, although Olympia looks out in the direction of the beholders of the painting as subjects in portraits ordinarily do, the unnamed black attendant does not. The attendant does not pose for us to see her in a manner that people do when they stand for portraits, but rather she looks towards Olympia while bearing a bouquet of flowers in her hand. Even if it is likely that she did pose for Manet as a model in order for her to

render her as such, she is not supposed to be seen as someone who is posed as a model for a portrait but rather seems to be involved in an interaction.

The unrefined, ordinary clothes the black woman wears look typical for the sort of clothes an attendant or servant would wear during this time period. This, coupled with her facial expression, which reads as innocent, reticent, and emotionally distanced from Olympia, demonstrates that she is playing the role of an attendant, and from this, we can infer that she is delivering flowers to Olympia on behalf of someone else.

The fact that this attendant is in the middle of delivering flowers to Olympia, and either has shown Olympia the flowers already or is about to show her, undermines the painting's potential status as a portrait. Even if painting this scene likely required these two models to pose in the manner we see them displayed before us, and so required them to set up the scene in a manner akin to the way Venus is set up in Titian's painting, the painting is not a portrait because the intention in setting up the scene we see before us is not to portray the figures we see before us but to portray the interaction that is taking place before us. But what is that interaction? If Manet's *Olympia* does not merely depict the subjects we see before us but rather depicts those subjects in the middle of an interaction, what is taking place before us that an attendant delivering flowers would make sense in that context?

We have a clue in the form of another subject, namely the black cat. This should remind us of a dog sleeping at the corner of Venus' bed in Titian's painting, but there is a crucial difference between the dog in Titian's painting and the cat in Manet's. The dog sleeping in the corner of Venus' bed suggests that nothing out of the ordinary is taking place at the moment we find ourselves in the middle of the scene Titian has captured of what he sees before him as he

paints Venus. In contrast, the black cat stands still and upright in the corner of the bed gazing towards us. The cat, unlike the dog, is not resting which seems to suggest that there is something about what is taking place in that scene that calls the cat to action.

The black cat gazes upon us, the beholders of the painting, which is the same point at which Olympia is looking. In other words, both Olympia and the cat are looking at us, but if we take seriously the idea that what we see before us is not a portrait but an interaction, then from this, we can infer that Olympia and the cat are not necessarily meant to be looking at us, the beholders of the painting, but rather they are meant to be looking at the person who stands at the point someone stands in the world of the painting. But who could that person be?

To figure out who this person is, we can further examine clues in the painting that we have yet to understand. First, why is Olympia naked? Second, who would give this naked woman flowers, the flowers we see in the attendant's arms? Third, what can we learn from the facial expression on Olympia's face about who the person who gave her flowers could be?

As already mentioned, Olympia is not nude but naked. She wears shoes, a bracelet, and a necklace, which by juxtaposition, draws attention to the fact that she is not wearing any clothes. Whereas goddesses are often displayed without any clothes in paintings of this time, as we see even in Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, goddesses are not naked but nude because they are not human and therefore their natural state is to be without clothes. In contrast, Olympia is not nude but naked because she is a person and not a goddess. Therefore, she is supposed to be wearing clothes but is not. We know this because she adorns her body in other ways, such as by wearing things like shoes and bracelets which shows that she could in theory also wear clothes.

Given this, we can infer that Olympia is likely a sex worker given that she is naked, and the only relevant sense in which a woman would be rendered naked in this manner would be if she were one. In other words, a woman would not lay poised to be examined naked in the manner Olympia is unless she was working as a sex worker at the time. If she was not working, she would not be dressed or poised in the manner she is. If it is true that Olympia is supposed to be working as a sex worker and is also in the middle of an interaction that involves an attendant bringing her flowers from someone at this time, then we can ask: who would be bringing Olympia flowers while she is at work?

A sex buyer is the only reasonable answer to this question. If this painting is not a portrait but a portrayal of an interaction in which an attendant is delivering flowers to a sex worker while she is at work, and that sex worker and the cat both look out towards us, then they can only be looking at us because that sex buyer who brought her flowers must be standing in the world of the painting looking at her from the exact perspective we are now looking at her. In other words, we are the sex buyer looking at the scene before us, and this painting is not the portrayal of a subject but rather the portrayal of someone's perspective.

We can make the conclusion above because this story ties the various elements of what we see before us together. This conclusion I think is confirmed by the look in Olympia and the cat's gaze. Both of them do not merely seem to be looking at us, as Venus does, but in particular, they seem to be looking back at us. Looking back at someone expresses an acknowledgment of the fact that they are being looked at. Thus, they are looking out towards us so that they can be seen by us, but more specifically, their gaze registers the fact that they have already been seen and are expressing this understanding through their eye contact. Although Venus looks towards

us, she does so in a manner akin to someone who is looking at someone photographing or painting them. This is because her goal is to be seen by whoever is looking at her but that does not mean that she wants to show whoever is looking at her that she knows that she has been seen. In contrast, Olympia does not look out to someone but instead looks back at someone who is looking at her. This means she means to show that person that she knows she has been seen in her facial expression. Thus, her facial expression should express how she responds to how that person has seen her. What does Olympia's facial expression tell us about how she feels about how she is being looked at?

If we are correct in thinking that the person she is looking at is the person who has delivered the flowers to her, then Olympia neither welcomes this person nor turns them away. If she welcomed them, her facial expression would be positive or at least as neutral as Venus in Titian's painting insofar as Venus at least looks as if she wants to be seen. Olympia does not express a desire to be seen in her facial expression but rather expresses a kind of matter-of-fact reluctant acceptance of the fact that she is being seen. She does not posture herself as shy or avoidant of the circumstances but accepts them for what they are, and her facial expression matches her body language. That is, she looks back at us, or at the sex buyer there to see her, in the way anyone would look at someone they must interact with regardless of whether they want to or not. Thus, she wears a kind of personal indifference on her face, projecting the general persona of any worker merely doing their job for someone they do not care for, as if to ask, "what do you want?" simply because she must.

The attendant's facial expression also carries an expression of acknowledgment, but one directed at Olympia. Her eyes express her role as an attendant insofar as she seems to be waiting,

as attendants generally do, for Olympia's direction as to what she should do with the flowers. Just as Olympia seems to be waiting to see what the sex buyer wants from her, the attendant's facial expression carries a sense of anticipation about what Olympia will ask her to do. Despite the fact that both women are waiting on someone, where Olympia is waiting on the sex buyer while the black attendant is waiting on her, their difference in social position can also be understood through their facial expressions.

Olympia's facial expression seems to express the fact that she is involved in a kind of transaction. Her expression does not read as vulnerable, desperate, or needy but matter of fact, indifferent, bored, and vacant. In some ways, at least in comparison to the black attendant, it seems to render her in a kind of position of power insofar as she looks like someone who is waiting for someone to tell her what they want from her. Her power then comes from the fact that someone wants something from her, and she is willing to give it to them in the form of a transaction. This would explain why the flowers would not engender warmth in her response but indifference. Whereas Olympia is likely negotiating a transaction with someone who wants to have sex with her or interact with her in some way, the black attendant is likely in a more permanent and ongoing transactional relationship with Olympia if she is, as she appears to be, an attendant. Her facial expression is therefore softer than Olympia's, as if she is waiting for permission about what to do about the flowers but also, as it is captured in this painting, perhaps this is the general mood and character of her relationship to Olympia.

If we have developed an accurate account of the subject matter of *Olympia*, and it is true that this is not a portrait but the rendering of the perspective of a sex buyer in the middle of an interaction with a sex worker and her black attendant, then we might ask: why would Manet

choose to render the perspective of a sex buyer in a painting? What does rendering the perspective of a sex buyer do?

By rendering the painting from the perspective of a sex buyer, Manet makes the beholder of the painting self conscious of their own participation in the social practice of art insofar as the beholder stands in the same relation to the painting as the sex buyer does to Olympia. If the sex buyer in the painting is there to buy the experience of gazing at Olympia, and this is what the painting shows through the eyes of that buyer himself, then what difference is there between the beholder who is the buyer of the ticket to a museum that allows him to gaze at Olympia and the sex buyer who there to see Olympia? This is the question the painting asks of us as its beholders.

The point this play on perspective is supposed to show is that a part of the social practice of art is the practice of buying a museum ticket in order to stand in front of a painting to have an aesthetic experience. By rendering the perspective of someone who is buying the experience of seeing what we too have paid to see, Manet's painting makes us self conscious of the social practice we are engaging in as we are doing it.

At the same time, the reason why Manet's work was a momentous occasion and even irrevocable for the social practice of art is because his painting attacks a fundamental institution in the practice of art in museums as it even continues until today. Art is bought and sold by patrons, museums, and other investors and is an industry just like sex, oil, war, and universities. To say that it is an industry means that the practices that make up these institutions are fundamentally about buying and selling goods even when that good is supposed to be an aesthetic experience as art and sex are both supposed to be.

That look in Olympia's eyes requires the beholder of the painting to acknowledge this fact. Her look expresses to the sex buyer that she knows he is here to get sex, and in the same vein, her look expresses to the viewer of the painting that she knows we are here to get an aesthetic experience. Manet's art is self-conscious because it is talking about the interaction between the painting and the beholder of that painting, and insofar as someone can only understand what the painting is about if they are a beholder of the painting, then the painting has this meaning in virtue of what a painting is. In other words, a painting is essentially an object beheld by someone who is there to behold it, and insofar as Manet's painting is essentially about what a painting is essentially about, then a person can only engage with Manet's *Olympia* self-consciously. This means that, as a beholder of this painting, what I understand about the painting is one and the same as what I understand about myself as a beholder of that painting, and both of these are what I understand about the interaction I am having with that painting.

Up until Manet, the role of the beholder in the social practice of art remained invisible in the actual content or subject matter of what art was about. Whereas paintings are historically about depicting some subject matter from the painter's world, and the beholder of paintings buys tickets to museums to see paintings about this subject matter, or what the painter wants them to see, Manet's painting is about this social practice. Insofar as this social practice is what the beholder of the painting is participating in as they are beholding Manet's painting, and Manet's painting is about the beholder's participation in this social practice, then the painting, the beholder, and the interaction they are having with each other are all self-conscious because each is understanding one and the same thing which is one and the same as what they are doing.

In particular, the painting exposes the fact that this social practice is essentially built on a bifurcation between “the world of the painting” and “the world of the beholder.” If a museum-goer goes to museums in order to see paintings which are about the world the painter wants them to see, then the subject matter of all paintings essentially excludes the world of the beholder. Manet removes this bifurcation by creating a painting that shows how the beholder that the painting and the beholder belong to a common world insofar as Manet’s painting and the beholder looking at it are a part of that world.

Manet’s *Olympia* was the first time a painting was about the world of the beholder or the world of the museum. The materiality of this world, or the features of the world in which the beholder belongs, which is also one and the same as the world that eventually becomes a painting’s home, includes flat walls, museum tickets, museum guards, art conservationists and curators, curation and exhibits, crowds of museum patrons, financial investors, or in a word, capital. Even though paintings of Manet’s time and the time before him live in this world, paintings are never about this world until Manet. To make it possible to begin to talk about the world in which the painting actually goes on to live, Manet creates a painting that is fundamentally about the beholder’s relationship to the painting, and in order to do so, he creates a painting from the perspective of someone who stands in the same relationship to what he is looking at as the sort of relationship the beholder bears to the painting.

Given the analysis above, I think we can say that Manet’s *Olympia* is not just self-conscious because the painting is aware of the role it is playing in its interaction with the beholder of the painting in light of its art historical context. Rather, what’s also important is that the beholder too is self-conscious of their role as a beholder of the painting in light of the art

historical context when interacting with Manet's *Olympia*. However, since the beholder of Manet's *Olympia* comes to understand their role as a beholder of the painting in light of the broader art historical context through its interaction with the painting, then it is not just the painting alone or the beholder alone that we would say are self conscious alone. Rather, we would say that the interaction between them is self conscious in virtue of the fact that the interaction subverts the role the interaction is supposed to be playing between the painting and the beholder and instead poses the possibility of a new kind of interaction between paintings and beholders of paintings after having been through this one.

Through the interaction with Manet's *Olympia*, the beholder understands:

1) The role the beholder is supposed to be playing in its interaction with the painting according to the norms of the social practice given the history of art. The norm is for a beholder to stand in front of a painting in search of an aesthetic experience. By rendering *Olympia* as looking back at the beholder of the painting in anticipation of the conventional interaction that is supposed to happen between the painting and the beholder, the interaction between the painting and the beholder involves an acknowledgment of what the beholder of the painting has come here in search of and therefore involves an understanding of the norms of the interaction at that time.

2) The role the beholder is actually playing in its interaction with the painting. By rendering the painting from the perspective of a sex buyer instead of rendering the perspective of a painter, the beholder is no longer seeing a scene the painter has staged to be seen as beautiful. Rather, the beholder is instead a participant in the world of the painting insofar as what they see

is rendered from the perspective of someone who stands in the same position as they do in the world of the painting. Whereas the beholder conventionally plays the role of an observer in their interactions with paintings at this time, this interaction subverts the norm insofar as the beholder relates to the painting as a participant rather than an observer. Insofar as looking at Olympia as a beholder involves Olympia looking back at the beholder as a sex buyer, then this interaction involves the beholder's understanding of their role in this interaction.

3) The role the beholder is playing in the collapse of the norms by which they interact with art in Manet's time. The beholder participates in the collapse of these norms by interacting with the painting in a way that acknowledges the norms of the social practice of interacting with art at this time. By looking at Olympia from the perspective of a sex buyer, the beholder understands that they stand in the same relationship to Olympia as a beholder of a painting as the sex buyer does to Olympia in the world of the painting. Just as the sex buyer stands before Olympia trying to buy an aesthetic experience, so too does the beholder of a painting do the same when they buy tickets to museums to stand before paintings. Thus, the beholder of the painting can no longer ignore the role they are playing as a beholder of paintings who goes to museums in general once they interact with Manet's *Olympia*. Interacting with this painting requires the beholder to understand the role they are playing in general whenever they interact with paintings at this time.

Thus, we can say the beholder is self-conscious of the role they play in the interaction with Manet's *Olympia* as an instantiation of the role they play in general when they interact with paintings as beholders of them according to the norms of the social practice of art this time. Moreover, insofar as the beholder is in the middle of playing this role when they are interacting

with Manet's *Olympia*, and the painting is about the fact that they are partaking in the interaction that paintings and beholders of paintings generally do, then it is not just the painting or the beholder alone that are self-conscious but rather that the interaction as a whole between the painting and its beholder is self-conscious.

Section Fifteen

In Sections Thirteen and Fourteen, we changed the subject from conversation to art. The point of doing so was to articulate the idea of self-consciousness where the painting, Manet's *Olympia*, was posed as an example of a painting that is self-conscious. Although initially I suggested that the painting itself is self-conscious in Section Thirteen, which means that the painting is aware of the role it is playing in the interaction with the beholder in light of its art historical context, I showed how interacting with the painting makes the beholder self-conscious of the role they play as beholders of paintings in general, and how therefore the interaction as a whole between Manet's painting and its beholder is self-conscious.

Changing the subject from conversation to art allowed us to now pose the following question given what we learned about self-consciousness in art: how is it that you can change the subject of a conversation in a way that is irrevocable? For example, in the course of this dissertation, I just changed the subject from conversation to art, but it was clearly revocable since we can now go back to talking about conversation even though we did for a time stop talking about it to talk about art instead. Manet's *Olympia* is significant for our conversation on conversation not only because it illuminates how self-consciousness in art works so that we can

begin to think about how it works in conversation but also because it can shed light on how we can change the subject of a conversation in an irrevocable way.

According to Pippin, what makes Manet's work, and in particular his painting, *Olympia*, pivotal to art history is the fact that we can isolate Manet's work as a juncture between what art was doing before Manet's time and what art begins to do after the turn Manet's work took in the conversation we call art history. Thus, Manet's *Olympia* changed how art in this cultural context was practiced forever. But how exactly does Manet accomplish this feat – how is it that we can mark this painting as the pivot point between what was happening in the social practice of art in this context before this time and what happens in the social practice of art in this context after this time? In other words, how did Manet change the conversation in art irrevocably?

Manet accomplishes this feat by directing his painting to a community of beholders who belong to the world in which a painting like Titian's *Venus of Urbino* would be seen, understood, and experienced as beautiful and who would expect to go to a museum to look at paintings on the wall that were presented there to be regarded as beautiful. At the same time, the painting moves this community of beholders forward by creating a painting that plays on the same elements of Titian's painting but in new ways: choosing a new kind of subject (a sex worker instead of a goddess), changing the nature of her gaze (confrontational and directed at the beholder instead of relaxed and directed at the supposed painter), and flattening the pictorial representation of the subject so as to veer away from any attempt at verisimilitude (a direct contrast to Titian's attempt to render the subject with precision and as beautiful). Thus, *Olympia* relies for its meaning on a community of beholders who would understand the meaning of *Olympia* in light of its juxtaposition against Titian's rendering of *Venus*.

In addition, by rendering the painting from the perspective of a sex buyer, Manet's *Olympia* casts the beholder in the role they already play in every interaction they have with paintings in this time. Effectively, this means an otherwise one-sided interaction becomes mutual in the case of interacting with *Olympia*. Manet accomplishes this by creating a painting that anticipates the arrival of a beholder in search of an aesthetic experience. Olympia's gaze, facial expression, and posture express that she is already interacting with someone who is there to buy the experience of seeing her, which shows that Manet rendered the painting so as to expect the kind of interaction the beholder then goes on to have. If the beholder understands this, then the beholder understands what Manet has already shown himself to have understood to the beholder. This effectively renders a mutual understanding between the painting and the beholder of this expectation.

We can understand what this means better when we compare it to an interaction between a painting from Manet's time that is not by Manet and the beholder of this painting. Although every painting in Manet's time also anticipates that the viewer would come to the painting in search of an aesthetic experience, the paintings would conform to this expectation by creating paintings that enabled beholders that came to the painting in search of an aesthetic experience. Thus, both the painters and the beholders in these cases understood separately from each other what the norms and expectations were in the social practice of art this time. Because of this, painters could reliably know that they were supposed to paint something beautiful for the beholder to see in a museum, and the beholder could go to museums in search of these kinds of paintings.

In contrast, Manet's paintings are successful in collapsing this institution because he renders a painting that facilitates a mutual understanding between the painting and the beholder about the fact that these are the norms and expectations of the practice. He does this by rendering a painting that demonstrates to the beholder that the painting already understands what the beholder wants from the painting, but at the same time, it fails to deliver on the expectation. Thus, it is not merely the case that the painting does not do what it is supposed to be doing, but rather that the painting both (1) demonstrates that it understands what it is supposed to be doing and (2) demonstrates the nature of the social practice while failing to conform to it.

The painting accomplishes the first by playing on Titian's painting, as already explained, and it accomplishes the second by demonstrating how the social practice places the painting in the same relation to the beholder as a sex worker is to a sex buyer. The analogy is demonstrated through casting the beholder as someone who is interacting with Olympia as a sex buyer would.

Understanding the analogy requires the beholder to acknowledge the fact that they bought the experience of seeing Olympia just as a sex buyer would, and once the beholder understands that the entire social practice is built on the sort of relationship sex buyers have to sex workers given that the experience is being sold and bought, then it becomes hard to go on continuing in the practice without making the practice about the fact that it takes place under the conditions of a market exchange, or that it is fundamentally a matter of buying and selling goods. Given what Manet exposes about what art is about in his time, art after Manet cannot continue what it was doing before because Manet exposed the essential nature of the social practice at this time and thereby opened the door to begin making art about what he exposed it is really about instead, where what it is really about is capital.

By demonstrating that the social practice of making and looking at art for the sake of creating and having an aesthetic experience more fundamentally fit under the description of buying and selling goods, and that under this description, there is no real difference between selling and buying sex, on the one hand, and selling and buying art. In other words, there is no sense in which painters and museum-goers can describe what they are doing in their social practice that is not a matter of buying and selling goods.

If painters sell paintings to museums for the sake of creating an aesthetic experience for beholders of paintings to see in museums, and beholders of paintings buy museum tickets to go see paintings for the sake of having an aesthetic experience, then even if they take themselves to be making beautiful paintings and seeing beautiful paintings that were made to be seen, then there is no sense in which this social interaction could take place unless the painters sold their paintings to art-dealers or museums and beholders of paintings bought museum tickets to see what painters sold to them. The former could not do what they are doing without the latter, and vice versa, which makes it so that they are doing this together.

Thus, even though they take themselves to be engaging in the social practice of art, they are more fundamentally engaging in the social practice of market exchange. Manet's *Olympia* is effective at changing the subject in the conversation because it exposes what the social practice they are engaging in is essentially predicated on such that there is no sense in which they would be engaging in the former social practice if it were not for the fact that it was a part of the latter social practice. Since the latter is the true description of what they are doing and the former is just a part of this, then their social practice is more aptly understood as a market exchange rather

than what Manet's contemporaries take themselves to be doing, which is creating and seeing beautiful things made to be seen.

The reason then that Manet's paintings were consequential in an irrevocable way for art history is because art thereafter was no longer about making and seeing beautiful things but rather about the material conditions of making and selling things that are seen in museums by people who buy tickets to see them in museums. That is the description under which art after Manet falls under, and that is why artists no longer aspire towards "beauty" in their social practice. Beauty therefore is an irrelevant criteria for the art community following this history.

Section Sixteen

Given what was said in Section Fifteen, we can say that the subject matter of art changed after Manet such that art was no longer about creating and seeing beautiful canvases made to be seen as beautiful. Instead, art becomes about the material conditions of making and seeing things people go to see in museums. Thus, materiality supplanted beauty as the central organizing principle of art.

This shift was not arbitrary given what everyone now knew from Manet's *Olympia*. That is, the social practice people took themselves to be partaking in, namely sharing the experience of beauty found in life by capturing it permanently in the work of art for someone else to behold, was actually more fundamentally a matter of partaking in the social practice of market exchange. If what they took themselves to be doing was the former and, after Manet, they had a common understanding of how the former was essentially a part of the latter, where the latter was the whole of what they were doing in their social practice, then Manet's *Olympia* marks a shift in

how the social practice of art went from being about the former to being about the latter. Insofar as the subject matter of art is a central part of this social practice, then the art following Manet shifted its attention from beauty to materiality.

Art after Manet then is predicated on an acknowledgment, or a mutual understanding, of what Manet's painting is about, which is this mutual understanding itself. We learned in the few previous sections of this dissertation how Manet's *Olympia* anticipates the relationship the beholder will have to it and thereby renders a mutual understanding between itself and the beholder, about their relationship. This open acknowledgment then is how the relationship between the painting and the beholder can then be transformed. The same can be said for what Manet's *Olympia* does for the art world in general.

That is, Manet's *Olympia* anticipates the change in the subject matter in the social practice of art from beauty to materiality. By failing to deliver on the expectation of a beholder who arrives at the painting in search of an aesthetic experience and instead offering an understanding of the material condition of their relationship to the beholder, the painting creates a mutual understanding between itself and any of its beholders about what their relationship is actually about. By further contextualizing this in a painting meant to be a play on Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, Manet's *Olympia* demonstrates an understanding of how the history of painting in general, and what it was about, relates to what this particular painting is about. On the basis of a mutual understanding of how the latter is predicated on the former, this opens the possibility for the people to whom this painting matters to then go on to continue to make art about its materiality in light of learning how it makes sense to do this, as Manet does, in light of art's history.

We can say then that art after Manet is self-conscious in the same sense that Manet's painting is. That is, art after Manet understands the role it is playing in the social practice of art in light of what was mutually understood among those who partake in this practice in light of what was understood through Manet's paintings. Insofar as these artworks are made for beholders who understand that the social practice is no longer about the beauty of art but rather about the material of art, and they understand why and how art moved from being about beauty to being about materiality, then art after Manet, and in fact the social practice of art after Manet, is self-conscious because it is predicated on an understanding of the role the interaction is playing in light of its history.

Given what we have learned about Manet and how the history of art developed in such a way where art became self-conscious after Manet, I want to inquire how self-consciousness works in a conversation. Can a conversation become self-conscious in the way that art became self-conscious after Manet, and under what conditions? Just as Manet's *Olympia* does not merely change the people who looked at the painting nor just the art itself but rather changed the relationship between them so that the relationship between paintings and beholders itself looks different before and after what Manet did, any example of such a conversation should be one where we can see how the conversation itself changes the relationship between people in a way where two people become self-conscious of their relationship through a conversation.

The goal then is to find the conversation analogue for what Manet did in the art world. In this section, I will produce such an example, and in the following section, I will defend why this example is an analogue for Manet's success in art history. To this end, let's consider the conversation we looked at in Section 6 as a possible example of this kind of conversation, but

let's suppose that there is more to the conversation. See the addition of some lines to the conversation as follows:

1 A: Do you know of anything fun we can do for Halloween?

2 B: Do I look like someone who would know of any parties?

3 A: Yes, actually you do.

4 B: Well, I am flattered, but in any case, I don't.

5 A: So what are you planning on doing that night anyways?

6 B: I might go visit my grandmother. Do you want to come with me?

7 A: Yeah, that sounds nice.

8 B: Well, it's not exactly going to be fun. She's getting kind of old and doesn't say much.

9 A: That's fine – we don't have to do something fun and, in any case, it would be nice to meet her.

10 B: Yeah, I'm thinking I might make her some food to take with me.

11 A: What are you going to make?

12 B: I'm thinking I'll make her some daal before I go. Maybe you can help me?

13 A: Yeah, that could be fun.

14 B: And maybe we can check out my friend's party after. He lives next door to my grandma.

15 A: I knew it!

16 B: Knew what? *said in a cheeky tone*

17 A: That you have something in mind. *said in a teasing way*

18 B: What could I possibly have in mind? *said in a cheeky tone*

19 A: This! *said in an exclamatory tone*

20 B: What's this? *also said in a cheeky tone*

21 A: *rolls eyes* You're impossible. So what time are you going to pick me up?

22 B: *gives a cheeky grin* Pick you up for what?

I want to suggest that the lines at the very end, lines 16-22, play the same role for this conversation as Manet's *Olympia* did for the art world at the time. To understand this, let's begin by recalling how I suggested that line 15 was responsible for transforming a series of successive conversations into a single conversation. This is because line 15 only makes sense in light of everything that happened between lines 1 to 14, and so what A says in line 15 would only make sense to someone who was following along up until this point. On this basis, they could then make sense of what it would mean to say line 15 in light of how each separate conversation fits together as a part of the same whole.

In particular, Line 15 refers to how the conversation began in lines 1 to 4, or when A asked B what parties he knew of because she thought he would know of one, and B replied by saying he did not know of any. A and B then went on to make a series of plans for that night, but it is not until line 14 that A learns what she suspected all along: that B does in fact know of a

party for them to attend together. Line 15 then makes sense only in light of someone who understands how everything that has happened so far fits together in light of this whole history. We as observers of the conversation then can also understand line 15 because we too have also been through the process of understanding the conversation each step of the way and can thereby see how, once we get to line 15, this response retrospectively illuminates each part of the conversation as belonging to the same whole.

If A and B are, in fact, on the same page about what has happened between them so far by the end of line 15, then they need some way to acknowledge that they are carrying on the conversation they were having in the aftermath of having understood what it was all about. In other words, they need some way to show each other that they are on the same page about everything that has happened between them so far just as they show each other that they understand each other in each immediate response they give to each other throughout the conversation. For example, when A asks whether B knows of anything fun to do for Halloween, and B then says that he does not know of any parties to go to on Halloween in response to A's question, then that response shows that B understood what A meant when A asked him this question. By the same token, A and B need a way to show each other that they understood the whole conversation they have had with each other up until the point A says "I knew it".

We ordinarily only need to refer to what has immediately happened prior to a reply being spoken in that conversation in order to understand what that reply means in its context. I may not understand the significance of an ordinary reply in light of the whole conversation, but I can at least follow along as long as I heard what has just been said to which what someone then goes on to say after would make sense as a response. In contrast, saying "I knew it", as already

mentioned earlier in this dissertation, can only make sense to someone who was following the conversation from at least line 1. We are now in a position to say why this is the case with more specificity.

That is, we cannot make sense of line 15 in light of line 14 alone because line 15 is not merely a response to line 14 but is more specifically what we call a “callback.” A callback, unlike an ordinary response in a conversation, responds to the meaning of what has immediately been said in a conversation in light of something that happened earlier in the conversation. Line 15, for example, is a callback because it is only in light of the fact that B proves to know what he denied knowing and A suspected he would know earlier in the conversation that it makes sense for A to feel vindicated in her suspicion to thereby say “I knew it” in response.

Moreover, Line 15 is a deeper callback than most insofar as it does not merely respond to Line 14 in light of what happened in line 1 to 4, but rather it points out the significance of line 14 in light of the whole history of the conversation that began with the part of the conversation that took place in lines 1 to 4. For example, this reply would not make sense to someone who was only following along for only the beginning (lines 1 to 4) and the end of the conversation (lines 13 to 15). Rather, it would only make sense to someone who could make sense of the conversation as a whole, which is to say the beginning in light of the middle and the end, and the end in light of the beginning and the middle of the conversation, and so on.

Line 15 then is a special kind of callback insofar as it functions as a kind of bow that ties a conversation together. It is in light of a callback such as this one that we are in a position to say that we had a conversation in virtue of which we are on the same page about what we have understood between us in the course of what we said to each other. If understanding a callback of

this kind means that I did not merely understand how what immediately happened ties to what happened earlier in our conversation, but, more specifically, that I understood the conversation as a whole, which is everything we understood between us from the time of what I called back to up until now, then A and B need a way to show each other that they understood the conversation which is one and the same as showing each other that they understood a callback of this kind. How then can they show each other that they understood line 15, which is one and the same as showing each other that they understood the conversation they had in lines 1 to 15?

I want to suggest that the conversation A and B are having in lines 16 to 22 is how A and B show each other that they are on the same page about what the conversation they had in lines 1 to 15 meant for their relationship to each other. They mark their mutual understanding of the meaning of what has happened between them by changing the tone. Whereas the conversation between A and B in lines 1 to 15 is marked by a relatively serious or neutral and perhaps even distanced tone, the conversation after line 15 shifts to a playful and teasing tone. Let's look at this part of the conversation again below:

16 B: Knew what? *said in a cheeky tone*

17 A: That you have something in mind. *said in a teasing tone*

18 B: What could I possibly have in mind? *said in a cheeky tone*

19 A: This! *said in an exclamatory tone*

20 B: What's this? *said in a cheeky tone*

21 A: *rolls eyes* You're impossible. So what time are you going to pick me up? *said in

a playful tone*

22 B: *gives a cheeky grin* Pick you up for what? *said in a playful tone*

Why does the tone of the conversation shift from serious, neutral, and distanced to playful, cheeky, and teasing? Why did A and B go from interacting with each other in one way to interacting with each other in an entirely different way before and after line 15?

We will go on to see that in lines 1 to 15, A and B are in the process of learning about each other by talking to each other. The tone of this conversation is neutral because they do not yet know what the conversation means for their relationship to each other. In other words, they cannot yet say anything about who they are to each other on the basis of what they are saying to each other. The conversation then can only end when they figure this out, and when they do, there is a shift in the tone of their conversation.

The conversation then comes to an end in line 15 because they have learned what they were in the process of learning throughout the conversation, which is to say they now know what the conversation means for their relationship to each other. When they know this, A and B can then use their mutual understanding of their conversation, or the fact that they both know that they both know that they have mutually understood everything that has happened between them in lines 1 to 15, to continue to talk to each other. I will demonstrate what this means and how this works in what I say next.

First, however, we should ask, given that every response in the conversation is an example of using what they have mutually understood between them in order to continue to talk

to each other, how is the way they do this after line 15 different from how they do this ordinarily throughout the conversation leading up to line 15? For example, is not say line 5 an example of using what they have mutually understood between them by line 4 in order to continue to talk to each other? If so, then how is the way they do this after line 15 different from how they were doing this in line 5 or at any point in the conversation before line 15?

I think the difference is that the conversation after line 15 is a deepening of the conversation A and B were having between lines 1 to 15 whereas the conversation after line 4 is merely a change in the subject matter of the conversation and not a deepening of the conversation they were having in lines 1 to 4. We can generalize this to say that we deepen a conversation only when we both know that we are on the same page about the conversation we have had so far. Only then can we use our mutual understanding of this fact to deepen the conversation or to say to each other what we can only say on the basis of a shared understanding of our history together, or a common sense of the meaning of what has happened between us.

Since line 15 would only make sense to someone who understood everything that has happened so far, then anything said in response to line 15 will demonstrate that they have understood the conversation they have had so far. Line 15 thus marks the fact that A and B can say that (1) they understand lines 1 to 15 to be a coherent whole, which is to say a conversation, and (2) they understand what this conversation means for their relationship, which is to say they can use what they have learned to continue to talk to each other, and (3) they both understand that they both understand (1) and (2).

Thus, after line 15, the conversation undergoes a shift in tone in response to their shared understanding of the meaning expressed in A's declaration, "I knew it!", in line 15. If it is true

that A had a suspicion that B would have some fun Halloween plans for them from the very beginning but B, for whatever reason, denied this throughout the conversation, and it is not until the very end that B reveals in line 14 that he does in fact have plans for them, then line 15 expresses what A takes line 14 to mean in light of everything that has happened so far between them in the conversation. That is, in line 14, A learns that B does in fact know what B has denied all along throughout the conversation, which is that B does know of a party they can attend together on Halloween. Thus, Line 15 expresses what line 14 means in light of the conversation as a whole, which is the fact that A is happily vindicated in her assumption about what this conversation was about all along, and in so doing, it also points to the ambiguity in whether B was teasing or playing with A all along.

If Line 15 expresses the fact that A and B are on the same page about what has happened between them in lines 1 to 14, then continuing this conversation means exploring the meaning of what has happened between them on a deeper level. In particular, if Line 15 establishes that A was right about what A had assumed about B all along, then their mutual understanding of this opens the question of whether B has been implicitly teasing or playing with A all along. In other words, whereas the former is a settled matter, and so we know what happened, the latter is still an open question, and so there is still some ambiguity in the meaning of what is going on between them that remains to be explored if they so choose. Line 15 makes that ambiguity between the two of them explicit.

What happens towards the end of the conversation in lines 1 to 15 suggests that B was implicitly teasing A, and A was playing along throughout the conversation, but nothing in the conversation between A and B gives them certainty yet that this is true and so this remains an

open question. Thus, line 15 resolves the question A had from the beginning of the conversation, which is whether the two of them can do something fun together on Halloween, but at the same time, it opens the question about the meaning of what happened between them along the way to making those plans. That is, did B have fun plans for them for Halloween all along? Was he teasing A by pretending not to? And if so, did A know this and was playing along with B?

Thus, the conversation after line 15 addresses the ambiguities left open from what they have understood between them, which is the conversation they had between lines 1 to 15. Being in a position to talk about these ambiguities means that they both understand that they are on the same page about what happened between them up until line 15. This is how it becomes possible for them to change the tone of the conversation. Shifting the tone of the conversation demonstrates the fact that the conversation after line 15 is a deepening of the conversation they are already having.

The conversation after line 15 shows that A and B are no longer merely trying to understand the conversation they are having with each other as they were before line 15. If they were doing this, then they would carry on the conversation in a normal tone, and they would move the conversation forward by changing the subject as they did between the micro-conversations they had in lines 1 to 15. But we can see that A and B are doing something more than this after line 15.

That is, A and B are interacting self-consciously after line 15, which means that they are showing each other that they are using what they know they mutually learned in the conversation they already had to continue to talk to each other. Interacting self-consciously means that everything they say to each other after line 15 is said in light of not just what is immediately said

prior to any given reply in that conversation but rather in light of everything that has been said up until line 15, or the point at which they arrived at a mutual understanding of their mutual understanding, which is to say when they developed mutual certainty of the fact that they are on the same page about what happened in the conversation. Practically, in the context of the conversation in lines 1 to 15, A and B have mutually learned that they are possibly playing or teasing each other about the existence of their plans to hang out on Halloween. After line 15, they convey this understanding not only in what they talk about but also in how they talk about it, or by other names, in both subject matter and tone, or the content and form of the conversation.

Expressing meaning via tone requires both an intention for my words to mean what they say and a high level of confidence in my judgment about the fact that what I take my words to mean are in fact what they mean as I speak them. To see this, consider how, in contrast, it is possible that B could have been teasing A throughout the conversation if in fact he deliberately withheld information about his friend's party until the very end of the conversation. If this were true, then even if he meant to tease A by doing this, this is not tantamount to having an intention for his words to be received as teasing at the moment he said them even if B may have known that A would eventually discover that he was fronting about not having Halloween plans for them all along. Thus, in retrospect, his words can be understood as teasing but not at the moment they are being said.

In contrast, B is self-conscious about teasing A after line 15 in virtue of the fact that he intends for his words to be received for what they mean, which means that he wants A to know that he is teasing her as he is doing it, and he expresses this via tone. He does not merely say

something that could be deniably understood as teasing, but he uses tone to make it undeniable that what he is saying is meant to be teasing A. Tone can be understood either by convention or familiarity with a person's particular manner of speaking. Expressing a tone is often reinforced by the general overall manner or style in which someone conveys what they say, which includes, the quality of the gaze in their eyes, their facial expression, body language, and posture. The tone then conveys the attitude someone has towards what they are saying or what they intend for their words to mean in the conversation with someone.

Given the above, we can say that after line 15, B begins playing with A explicitly. The fact that he is playing with her is made explicit by the contradiction presented between what he says and the tone in which he says those words. That is, in his words, he feigns ignorance about having the plans they have just made with each other, and we know that he is feigning ignorance about these plans because his tone, which is cheeky and teasing, conveys that he does know the plans they have just made with each other. He can rely on the tone to convey the meaning of his words, even if the actual words he says seemingly contradicts that meaning, in virtue of what happened in the conversation until line 15.

What happened in the conversation until line 15 is that A and B discovered mutual certainty of the fact that they have plans for Halloween, where making those plans was the point of the conversation they were having as it was understood from the beginning of the conversation. At the same time, there was ambiguity about what was going on between them when they were doing this as when A assumed B had some fun plans for them in mind, and B responded by saying he did not but then later on said he did. Thus, on the one hand, A and B are successful in doing what they were trying to do in their conversation up until line 15 insofar as

they do, at the end of it, have fun plans for Halloween just as they had set out to do. On the other hand, that same conversation opened up an ambiguity about what happened along the way while they were making these plans.

That is, was B teasing A all along? The conversation after line 15 is a play on this ambiguity, or is a way of addressing the fact that this is an open question, and in this way, it is a conversation about the conversation they are having with each other. In other words, the subject matter of the conversation they are having after line 15 is about the conversation they have been having since line 1.

Section Seventeen

The point of the above analysis was to produce an analogue to Manet's *Olympia* in the form of a conversation. While I have suggested that I take the conversation under discussion since Section 16 to be a possible analogue, and I have analyzed how a more developed version of the original conversation works, I have yet to defend how this example can be understood as an analogue to Manet's *Olympia*'s role in the art world. In this section, I will endeavor to do this.

If we take the conversation in the art world in question to be among a community of people who made and looked at paintings that hung in museums in Europe in the 19th century, then Manet's *Olympia* played the same role in the conversation among them as line 15 does in our example. That is, both the art world and the conversation in our example are self-conscious in virtue of what both Manet's *Olympia* and Line 15 do in their respective conversations.

Both *Olympia* and Line 15 function as junctures in conversations between people who are already caught up in a way of interacting with each other and who, after the juncture, go on to continue that same interaction self-consciously. Both do this by making the people who partake in each conversation aware of the role they are playing in it. Just as Manet addresses the beholder of *Olympia* and thereby makes them aware of the role they are playing in the social practice of art, so too does A finally address B in Line 15 about the role he has been playing in producing the character of the conversation they have been having so far.

In particular, both *Olympia* and line 15 say or point out the nature of the interaction between the painting and the beholder, on the one hand, and A and B, on the other hand, by way of a callback. *Olympia* is a callback to Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, and Line 15 in the conversation is a callback to Lines 1 to 4. By juxtaposing the present interaction against the past, these callbacks enforce an awareness among the people partaking in the interaction of the difference between how they are interacting now in comparison to how they used to interact before.

Olympia shows how the interaction they are having now no longer ignores the role material conditions play in the social practice of art, and Line 15 brings the teasing and playful character of A and B's relationship out into the open and thereby makes it a public matter between the two and anyone else observing. These changes are visible in the art we see after Manet and in the conversation between A and B after line 15. Insofar as these changes took place in response to an understanding of how those interactions are predicated on what they learned from the change they went through in the interaction itself, then the interactions they are having in the aftermath of the juncture at which they arrived at that mutual understanding are self-conscious.

Section Eighteen

I claimed in Section 17 that both Manet's *Olympia* and Line 15 are turning points in their respective conversations, namely the conversation in the art world in the former case and the conversation that we are using as an example in this dissertation in the latter case. Both mark the juncture between an ordinary interaction and that same interaction continuing onwards self-consciously. The conversation and the art world become self-conscious in virtue of the fact that line 15 and Manet's *Olympia* express the meaning of what has happened so far in the interaction. Doing so brings anyone partaking in that interaction into a common understanding of the history of that interaction and thereby makes it possible to partake in the interaction at a deeper level than they were before the self-conscious turn.

Having defended the analogy between an example of an ordinary conversation that takes a self-conscious turn and Manet's *Olympia* in the previous section, I want to explore the disanalogy between the two in this section. To begin, let us first consider how conversations are essentially a part of relationships between people. That is, there is no sense in which two people can be talking to each other unless they are already in a relationship with each other. Consider, for example, how conversations are a part of how two strangers who just met each other begin building a relationship with each other. Insofar as talking to each other is how we build relationships, then there is no sense in which we can be talking to each other and not be in the process of building a relationship with each other.

Let us also consider how conversations can be turning points in relationships for the same reason that a response can be a turning point in a conversation: that reason is that people can become self-conscious of the nature of a relationship through the process of having many

conversations within that relationship in the same way that people can become self-conscious of the subject matter, or the meaning, or what they are talking about, through the process of continuing to respond to each other in the form of a conversation.

In light of these two considerations about how conversations are a part of relationships, we can infer that Line 15 is essentially conversational in a way that Manet's *Olympia*. This is because the former is a conversation that is a part of a relationship between people and the latter is not. Thus, although *Olympia* can act like it is a part of a conversation we call art history, that conversation cannot be real in the way that the one between A and B is.

This makes *Olympia* an example of mimicry, or the act of copying a role, or a pattern of behavior, essential to some other form in order to yield the fruits of that behavior. In this case, art borrows the form of conversation in order to yield the fruits of conversation that can only be begotten through that behavior. For example, if Manet wanted a turning point in art history, then the way to accomplish this feat would be to make a painting that acts like a response to a conversation because conversations by nature have turning points. Acting as a response to Titian's *Venus of Urbino*, for example, gives *Olympia* a conversational character. Ultimately though, Manet's *Olympia* cannot become conversational through mimicry alone because conversations essentially take place in the context of relationships between people.

Any given relationship is made up of a series of conversations that build over time towards a turning point in the relationship at which point that relationship deepens. In this way, conversations and relationships have the same form insofar as conversations work the same. A conversation is built from a series of responses that over time build towards a turning point at which point the conversation deepens, and a relationship works the same way except

relationships involve a series of conversations rather than a series of responses. This makes conversations a microcosm of relationships.

Since relationships are built from conversations, and any given conversation can only exist as a part of the relationship between the people having that conversation, then relationships have the same form as conversations because conversations are a part of relationships. Thus, conversations can be turning points in those relationships in the same way that a response that is a part of a conversation can be a turning point in that conversation. They work the same way because conversations are a part of relationships.

Three questions follow from this. First, what is the form of conversation shared by relationships and borrowed by Manet to make *Olympia*? Second, why are conversations essentially a part of relationships? Third, when is a conversation a turning point in a relationship?

We can learn the form of conversation by again turning to Line 15 and Manet's *Olympia* to see what Manet borrowed from conversation to make his painting. Conversations essentially have turning points, and these turning points are junctures that mark when we travel into more depth in the conversation. We reach a turning point when we have understood everything we were trying to understand about what we were talking about, and by the same token, can begin to speak to each other on that basis. When we do this, we speak to each other at a deeper level about what we have now understood. Thus, depth in our conversation begins at the point at which we understand the conversation we are having with each other.

Line 15 is an example of a turning point in a conversation, and Manet's *Olympia* acts like one. Both deepen their respective conversations by capturing the meaning of everything that has been understood between everyone participating in the conversation thus far. They function as a

kind of *de facto* litmus test that demonstrates how far we have come in the conversation by making sure everyone is on the same page and thereby showing what is now possible for our relationship to each other given what we are on the same page about.

Everyone can tell everyone is on the same page in virtue of the fact that a response like line 15 or a painting like *Olympia* would only make sense to someone who was following along from the very beginning of the conversation, and anyone who is capable of speaking or acting in light of a response like line 15 or a painting like *Olympia* thereby shows that they are on the same page as everyone else to whom that response or that painting made sense. Conversations are necessarily deeper after these “litmus tests,” so to speak, insofar as they only make sense to those who share an understanding between themselves about the fact that they are all on the same page. This is because they can then speak to each other on the basis of the fact that they are on the same page about whatever their litmus test meant in the conversation they are having.

By the same token, every conversation can be understood as the process of getting on the same page about whatever it is that we are talking about. This means that until we get there, we cannot know that we are on the same page about whatever we are talking about and so our responses are only localized to whatever we are saying at that moment.

For example, suppose you are telling me at this moment about what you’re planning to make your grandma for dinner. Although what you are saying follows consequentially from the conversation we already had about our plans for Halloween, we still may not know how what we were saying to each other earlier fits together with what we are saying to each other now.

We get on the same page only when someone makes a callback that demonstrates how everything we have said so far to each other fits together, and it is only once we get here that we

can say things to each other in light of *everything* that we have said to each other so far, or at least as far as can be illuminated by our callbacks, and not just what we are immediately saying to each other at this particular moment in the conversation.

Conversation after a callback, or by another name, after a litmus test that shows everyone to be on the same page, is deeper because everyone is speaking to each other in virtue of their shared understanding of the conversation they have already had with each other. They are no longer on the same plane as they were before the callback and they thereby no longer speak to each other in the register they spoke to each other before the callback. The new register expresses the meaning of what they now know themselves to be on the same page about. Speaking to each other in this new register is how they naturally show each other that they are in a new and deeper plane of the same world they have been in all along.

Callbacks are essential but ordinary features of conversations that travel depth. They at once both mark the end of a conversation and the beginning of a new one that is also a part of the old conversation insofar as the new conversation is grounded in the old one. To understand this, we can compare line 15 to say line 4 in our conversation example.

Line 4 is also the end of a conversation insofar as lines 1 to 4 is a whole, independent conversation with a beginning, middle, and end in the same way that Lines 1 to 15 is a whole, independent conversation with a beginning, middle, and end. The difference between line 4 and line 15, however, is that line 15 is at once both an end of the old conversation and is also the beginning of a new one whereas line 4 is only the end of the conversation that takes place between lines 1 to 4.

If A and B want to keep on talking to each other after line 4, they have to start a whole new conversation insofar as they have exhausted the limits of what could be said about what they were talking about in the first conversation they were having. A wanted to know whether B knew of any fun things they could do together for Halloween, and B wanted to know why A was asking him in particular. Once both of their questions are answered, they do not have anything left to talk about with respect to this subject matter and so they would have to begin a new conversation or to start talking about something new altogether in order to continue talking to each other at all.

Although A and B can and surely do end up making sense of how the conversation they begin on line 5 relates to what they were talking about in lines 1 to 4, line 5 is the beginning of a new conversation, which makes line 4 the end of the old conversation. Thus, these two conversations are only tied together as a unit, or as one conversation, retrospectively, as the conversation moves forward. In contrast, line 15 is both an end to the conversation between lines 1 to 15 and the beginning of a new one that carries forward thereafter. Thus, the new conversation does not begin at line 16 but rather at line 15 at the same moment that the conversation that took place between lines 1 to 15 ends.

While A and B are not necessarily sure how what they are talking about in line 5 relates to what they were talking about in lines 1 to 4 as they carry forward the conversation, they are mutually aware of the fact that line 15 is a turning point in the conversation they are already having. This means that they are mutually aware that they are continuing the same conversation they were already having in lines 1 to 15 but are now doing so on the basis of what they have mutually learned from that conversation. This is why they speak to each other self-consciously

after line 15 because they are doing what they were doing all along but now are doing so on the basis of their mutual knowledge of what they were doing.

In line 5, A and B start doing something new altogether, which in retrospect is shown to be a continuation of what they were doing all along, whereas after line 15, A and B are self-consciously doing the same thing they have been doing all along since line 1 but in a new way. After line 15, they change the form of their interaction on the basis of what they have learned about their interaction from having gone through it. Thus, the newness in their conversation after line 15 is not a matter of change in subject matter. Rather, the newness is in the way they talk about that subject matter as an expression of the newfound depth in which they talk about it.

Line 15 then bears the features that any turning point in any conversation would, and so while Line 15 is a good example of the phenomenon, anything that could be said about this turning point in this conversation could just as well be said about any turning point in any conversation insofar as it is an example of a general kind. In contrast, Manet's *Olympia* is unique because turning points are not an ordinary feature of art history.

Having addressed the first matter, namely the form of conversation, we can now turn to the second matter, which is why conversations are essentially a part of relationships. In response to this question, I will say that conversations take place in the context of relationships because it is only possible to talk to each other if we already know each other in some way or another. Even two strangers who are speaking to each other for the first time begin their conversation by finding some common ground.

Two strangers standing near each other at the park can still talk about the weather. Two strangers standing in an elevator can compliment each other's clothes. Two strangers waiting for the bus can talk about when the bus is arriving. In each of these cases, people who do not know each other can begin a conversation by talking about what they can see or hear or feel in their common setting and thereby arrive at a common understanding by talking about what they share in common through their senses.

Even if we can find a way to start talking, we can only continue talking to each other if we can find more to talk about beyond what we can see or hear in our immediate surroundings. What is needed then is for us to find out who we are to each other. Do we live in the same neighborhood? Do we work in the same building? Do we take the same bus? In other words, it is only possible for us to keep talking to each other if we can find out what we have in common beyond what we can see or hear in this immediate moment so that we can then keep on talking to each other. Often that might involve finding out who or what we already know in common or where we already commonly spend our time so that we can find each other to keep on talking some more.

For example, suppose we are both waiting for a bus that has failed to arrive on schedule, you might make a joke that would only make sense to someone who tried to take the bus when it stopped running during the fires in Los Angeles. Even if we have just met each other, a response such as this one early in our conversation might make it possible for us to have a deep conversation insofar as this response calls back to a shared history we can talk about even if we do not know each other at the time when it happened. That is, once we are on the same page about what we mutually understand to be the significance of what was said, namely that the

transit situation during the fire was abysmal, it becomes possible to say more to each other on the basis of our shared understanding of the significance of what was just said in the course of our conversation.

Conversations then can move towards depth relatively quickly even if we just met each other depending on how quickly we can find ourselves on the same page about our shared history even if we did not live through it together. By the same token, a conversation can stay superficial so long as we refuse to partake in the process of letting the conversation go deeper. This would happen if either or both of us are not willing to or cannot find anything we have to be mutually meaningful in light of the history we discover ourselves to share through the course of our conversation.

For example, we might talk to each other and discover that we actually have a lot in common as far as the facts of our life go. We might have grown up in the same town and now are neighbors and even like to do the same things with our time. However, if we cannot find anything to be mutually meaningful about what we have in common, then it will be hard for us to keep on talking to each other if we cannot find anything to say to each other about the facts we have in common with each other. This would be equally true if we were strangers waiting in line for the bathroom after having seen a movie who started up a conversation about that movie.

In both of these examples, our conversation would stay superficial if we noted the facts of either our lives (same hometown, same neighborhood, same hobbies) or the movie (the facts of what happened in the movie), but the conversation could just as well move towards depth rather quickly if we are capable of sharing our judgements (I liked or hated X or Y or Z) or making connections or references to, say, landmarks in the towns in the first case or offering comparison

to other movies in the latter case. This would provide context we can use to figure out what the things we are talking about mean. Whenever we do this, our conversation gets deeper, and we thereby get to know each other better.

For example, if we are talking about the fact that we are from the same hometown, and then we figure out we used to go to the same diner and had the same feeling about the owner of that diner, then we can talk some more about what we are on the same page about. The conversation will move from being superficial to deep if we go on to talk about the specifics of what we have found to share in common. In this case, if we are from the same place, our conversation will get richer if we can say more to each other about the character of the town, who we knew there, what we did there, and what we liked or disliked about it. The more we do this, the less we are strangers and the more we become people who know each other.

Given everything said above, we can say that we can only talk to each other about what we have in common with each other, and we can only do this if we are already on the same page about what we have in common with each other. If being on the same page about what we have in common with each other is what it means to be in a relationship with each other, then there is no sense in which we can talk to each other unless we are already in a relationship with each other. Talking to each other is the process by which we build this relationship, and we can speak to each other in depth relatively quickly if we can talk about the history we share in common from the time before we began to talk to each other.

Moreover, we can also say, given everything said above in this section, that a conversation gets deeper when we can talk about the subject matter we are talking about on the basis of arriving at a common understanding of that subject. We can do this whenever we figure

out the meaning of the conversation we have had so far and can thereby speak to each other on the basis of what we have figured out. Moreover, we can have a deep conversation without having a deep relationship and we can have a superficial conversation even in the context of having a deep relationship since depth in conversation is not equivalent to depth in relationship. Given this, we should ask: how then do we measure the depth of a relationship if not by the depth of a conversation?

If we measure the depth of a conversation by reference to its turning points, and so we know that a conversation after a turning point is deeper than the conversation we were having before it, then I think we can measure the depth of a relationship in the same way. That is, if conversations can be turning points in relationships, then I think a relationship is deeper after a turning point in a conversation than it is before one. Likewise, in the same way that we only reach a turning point in a conversation when we have mutually understood everything we were trying to understand throughout the entire conversation, then I think we can only reach a turning point in a relationship when we have mutually understood everything that has happened between us up until that point and begin anew again by talking to each other on the basis of what we have now learned about our relationship.

Let's consider our conversation example again to see how a turning point in a relationship works. If, as already established, Line 15 is what makes the conversation in our example a conversation with a turning point, then it follows that not every conversation has a turning point and thereby moves towards depth. If, say, the conversation was cut off at line 4, then there would not have been a turning point in the conversation. Analogously, not every relationship moves towards depth, and just as a conversation relies on an intelligent response that then moves

everyone towards depth, so too do relationships require intelligent conversations that then move those who partake in them towards depth in those relationships. Can the conversation in our example also be an example of a turning point in a relationship and under what conditions?

I want to suggest that a conversation can be the turning point in a relationship when the turning point in the conversation points to the change in the relationship between the people partaking in that conversation. A turning point in a conversation calls back to the entire history of the conversation up until that point and so thereby casts light on what everything thus far has meant in totality. When that turning point in a conversation also, at once, calls back to the entire history of the relationship up until that point and so thereby casts light on what everything has meant so far for the totality of who they are to each other, then that turning point in a conversation is also, at once, a turning point in a relationship. Thus, a turning point in a relationship looks back to the fact that the relationship between the two of them has already changed and that, in the span of that conversation, they have already begun interacting differently than they were before. The turning point in the conversation can then be a turning point in the relationship because they mutually understand that they are already doing what they will now go on to do together self-consciously.

The conversation in our example I think is an example of this. That is, Line 15 is an example of a turning point in a conversation that is a part of a conversation that is a turning point in that relationship. The way we can tell is that Line 15 casts light on the fact that the relationship between A and B has already changed, and Line 15 is a reference to the change in their relationship. In other words, the turning point in the conversation points to the turning point in the relationship. A saying “I knew it!” is making explicit how A and B are already interacting

with each other and that is, at once, how they will go on to interact after the turning point. A and B are already teasing each other in lines 1 to 15, and the only difference that line 15 makes is that it casts light on what they are already doing together and thereby makes it possible to now talk about this. Thus, the turning point in the relationship has already happened by the time they talk about it, which is when the conversation takes a turn.

A conversation then can play the same role in a relationship as a response can in a conversation. The history of a conversation or a relationship has the structure it does because of a turning point in terms of which we can make sense of a 'before' and an 'after', whereby the turning point names what we are already doing and thereby makes it possible for us to talk about it thereafter. It is because conversations are a part of relationships that they have this structure in common, and so we can thereby say they have the same form.

Section Nineteen

In Section Eighteen, I showed how a turning point in a conversation is the end of a conversation that is at once also the beginning of a new conversation. We reach a turning point when we are on the same page about everything we have talked about so far and can then start talking about something new together on that basis. I also showed that conversations are a part of relationships, and for this reason, they have the same structure or form. Thus, relationships, like conversations, have turning points. Just as a response in a conversation can be a turning point in that conversation, so too can a conversation in a relationship be a turning point for that relationship.

A conversation is a turning point in a relationship when a response in that conversation is a turning point for that conversation, and when that response points to the fact that the relationship has already changed through the conversation they just had. Thus, any turning point in a relationship will involve a conversation that has a turning point at which point the people partaking in that conversation will learn that their relationship to each other has changed through the conversation they just had. If relationships between people change when they develop self-consciousness about their relationship at a turning point in a conversation, then we can ask: what do they find out, or come to understand, at these turning points? What sort of knowledge do they obtain at a turning point that they did not have up until that point?

For example, what do A and B find out when A proclaims “I knew it!” in line 15? This response does not add any new understanding of the conversation that A and B did not already understand up until that point. By the end of line 14, A and B already mutually understand that B ended up knowing about a party even though he claimed to not know of any parties earlier in the conversation. They should already be on the same page about this by the end of line 14 if they were both following along with everything that happened up until that point. Line 15 then just says explicitly what they should already be on the same page about if they have both been following along with the conversation. So then what do A and B learn in Line 15 that they did not know before beyond the fact that A is vindicated in her assumption about B’s knowledge of Halloween parties? What makes this a turning point in their relationship?

To understand the kind of knowledge A and B acquire at the turning point of their relationship, let us first consider an insufficient characterization of what A and B learn at the turning point in the conversation. For example, it would be insufficient to say that A and B’s

relationship changes at the turning point. By the time we get to line 15, the relationship between A and B has already changed. They are already teasing each other by denying the plans they are in the course of making, and so it would be a false characterization to say they begin teasing each other by denying the plans they are making in line 15 of the conversation. At the same time, the tone and manner in which they interact changes after line 15, and so from this we can infer that something does change at this point, but what is that change?

We therefore need a characterization of the turning point that captures both the fact that the relationship between A and B has already changed by the time they become aware of that change in line 15 and also, at once, that the relationship does in fact change at line 15. In other words, the kind of knowledge they acquire at line 15 makes them, at once, aware of both what has already happened between them and also is what explains the further change in their relationship at line 15. Whatever they learn in line 15 is responsible for both of these changes at once, namely the change in their awareness of the past and also the change they make on the basis of that awareness. The kind of knowledge they acquire then is what makes line 15 a turning point in their relationship. The question is what makes this possible? That is, what do they learn in line 15, and how do they know it?

A and B learn not one but two facts about their relationship in line 15. Line 15 is when A and B become mutually aware of the fact that they are on the same page about the conversation they just had insofar as they can only understand line 15 in light of everything that has happened so far. This was the subject of discussion earlier in the dissertation before we changed the subject to talking about Manet. At the same time, Line 15 is also when A and B become mutually aware of the fact that the relationship between them has already changed through the course of the

conversation so far. This has been the subject of discussion in this section and the previous section of this dissertation.

The turning point, or line 15, is not necessarily the moment at which their relationship to each other changes since their relationship to each other has already changed by the time A says: “I knew it!” They are already people who are teasing each other by denying the plans they are making for Halloween by the time they say it out loud (without actually saying it) in line 15. Rather, the turning point marks the change in their mutual awareness of the fact that the relationship between them has changed, and insofar as they become aware of the change in their relationship when they understand the conversation they just had with each other, then Line 15 is a turning point in their relationship because this is when they learn that they changed their relationship to each other by having the conversation they just had with each other. By the same token, Line 15 is also when they mutually understand they can change their relationship to each other by continuing to do what they are already doing, which is by continuing the conversation they are already having. This is what they go on to do after line 15.

Neither the awareness of the change they have already undergone nor the change they go on to make after line 15 solely explains the fact that line 15 is a turning point in their relationship. Rather, the relationship takes a turn because line 15 is when they learn how to change their relationship to each other on the basis of their awareness of the fact that they have already learned how to change their relationship to each other by doing it. Insofar as their awareness of the change in the relationship is identical with their mutual understanding of the conversation, then they mutually understand that having the conversation is how they changed their relationship to each other. The conversation takes a self-conscious turn after line 15 because

they continue the conversation on the basis of the fact that they already know how to do what they are now doing because they mutually understand that they learned how to do what they are now doing by already doing it together.

After line 15, A and B then go on to do what they were already doing before line 15 but now they do so self-consciously. What makes what they are doing after line 15 self-conscious is that they are not merely doing more of what they were doing before, but they are doing it on the basis of their shared knowledge of the fact that they learned how to do it by doing it together. In particular, they are changing their relationship to each other on the basis of their knowledge of how to change their relationship to each other that they learned how to do by having already done it together.

Up until line 15, A and B end up doing the opposite of what they said they are going to do. In the course of their conversation, they make plans to do something fun together on Halloween even though the conversation seemingly began on the basis of a mutual understanding that this was not going to happen. The fact that this is the meaning of what has happened, where that meaning is the fact that they are not saying what they are doing out loud, is never said out loud. Rather, the meaning of the conversation is understood through their shared understanding of line 15 insofar as line 15 could only make sense to someone who understood the meaning of what has happened between A and B up until that point. A's exclamatory, "I knew it!" would only make sense to someone who understands that A and B have ended up doing what they said they were not doing, which is that they have made some fun plans for Halloween, and this would only make sense to someone who has understood the conversation as a whole so far.

When A and B begin to tease each other in line 15 by denying the existence of the plans they just made, they are expressing what they learned they were doing in the conversation up until line 15. Thus, the way they are interacting and what they talk about after line 15 is not necessarily strictly new in the sense that they were already teasing each other and denying the plans they were making with each other before line 15. However, the difference is that after line 15, they are doing it on the basis of mutually understanding that they learned how to interact in this way by having already done it in their conversation up until line 15. This is what makes their interaction self-conscious after line 15.

Notice that interacting self-consciously does not require A and B to explicitly articulate the fact that their relationship to each other has changed in order for them to act on the basis of their mutual awareness of that change as they do after line 15. This can be explained as follows: Line 15 is a form of indirect communication, which means that this response can only be understood by way of someone's understanding of the whole conversation up until this point. Whereas a form of direct communication would express the fact that their relationship to each other has changed, communicating indirectly means that A and B infer this change through their shared understanding of Line 15. Line 15 then is how they get on the same page about their mutual awareness of the change in their relationship without having to say it out loud.

Consider, for a moment, if A had instead in line 15 said out loud that they had made the plans that they said were not on the table for them at the beginning of the conversation. Specifically, suppose she said something like: "so it looks like we did end up having the plans we thought we didn't have" instead of "I knew it!" in line 15. The direct version of the response does not require an understanding of the whole conversation up until that point in order to be

understood. Quite the opposite, it expresses what has been mutually learned through the conversation, and so someone could know what happened in lines 1 to 15 without having actually followed the ebbs and flows of the conversation throughout to figure out what it has meant as a whole. This is what makes a response such as this updated version direct rather than indirect.

A and B can be indirect rather than direct in their communication in line 15 because they are already mutually aware of the change that has taken place in their relationship by the time A says “I knew it!” She does not need to say something like: “so it looks like we did end up having the plans we thought we didn’t have” because A and B are already on the same page about what the conversation has meant so long as they have been following the conversation as a whole up until the time we get to line 15. A can therefore already interact on the basis of their mutual awareness of the change in their relationship insofar as that mutual awareness comes from their mutual understanding of the conversation they have had so far. Saying “I knew it!” then is not a way to express what they have learned but rather only expresses the fact that they can now act on the basis of what they have learned from what they have done. That is, they can change the way they interact on the basis of learning that they have already changed how they interact in the conversation they have had so far.

We can further understand this by way of a comparison again to line 4 in the original version of the conversation. Line 4 completes the conversation that takes place in lines 1 to 4 insofar as the conversation remains incomplete at the end of line 3 and there still remain words that need to be exchanged in order for them to understand what they set out to understand in the conversation they are having in those lines. In contrast, line 15 is not an attempt at mutual

understanding insofar as there is nothing left to understand in the conversation they were having after line 14.

To see this, suppose for example that instead of saying “I knew it!” A instead said “yes,” and thereby merely agreed to the plans that B proposed in line 14. Although this is technically an appropriate response to what B has immediately just said locally in the conversation insofar as it is a response to his proposal for them to go to his friend’s party, it is not an appropriate response in light of everything that has happened so far. “I knew it!” is appropriate because it calls back to the context of what was said between them before and in light of which B’s response in line 14 makes sense. At the same time, this is not strictly necessary for their mutual understanding of the conversation insofar as anyone who followed along in the conversation from lines 1 to 14 should already be able to see the significance of line 14 in light of everything that came before it. The role then of line 15 is to point out the fact that they are already on the same page about everything that has happened so far in the conversation.

That is, in the same way that Manet’s *Olympia* is self conscious because the painting is already acting on the basis of the change it anticipates in its relationship with the beholder of the painting so too is Line 15 self-conscious because A is already interacting with B on the basis of the change her response anticipates in the relationship between A and B. She can do this because she knows that they are mutually aware of the fact that their relationship has already changed, and her knowledge of their mutual awareness of this makes it possible for her to then go on to act on the basis of that change.

If, in this section, we are trying to figure out what it is that A and B know in line 15, then we have found at least a part of an answer to this question. That is, in line 15, A and B are

mutually aware of the fact that their relationship has already changed, and they know this because of their mutual understanding of the conversation they have had so far. A then can act on the basis of this change in line 15 and thereby change how she interacts with B in anticipation of the fact that their relationship will change on the basis of how their relationship has already changed. What A and B know then in line 15 is how to change their relationship to each other on the basis of having learned that they have already changed their relationship to each other by having already done it together. If this is what A and B know in line 15, then how did they learn it?

I think we can answer this question by turning to the subject of the role of depth in conversation. The conversation up until line 15 has both surface and depth, where on the surface they are talking about what they are doing on Halloween, but under that surface, they are teasing each other by not saying out loud that they are making plans to do something fun together on Halloween even though they started the conversation by saying they are not. The relationship then is changing in the course of the conversation because of the way they are talking about what they are talking about.

Depth is built through indirectness. We can see this in the following example. Imagine a scenario where B did not deny knowing of any parties to go to in the beginning of the conversation and instead asked A to visit his grandmother with him and thereafter asked A to go to his neighbor's party with him. If this were to happen, we would be met with the same outcome as the outcome of the conversation in our example – (1) A would know from the get go that she was right in thinking that B had some fun Halloween plans for them in mind, and (2) A and B would have the same plans for Halloween as they would in the original example of the

conversation. Meeting these two criteria would manifest the same results for the relationship as the original conversation. We can see how this would look as follows:

1 A: Do you know of anything fun we can do for Halloween?

2 B: Yes, I do!

3 A: What are you thinking?

4 B: I might go visit my grandmother. Do you want to come with me?

5 A: Yeah, that sounds nice.

6 B: Well, it's not exactly going to be fun. She's getting kind of old and doesn't say much.

7 A: That's fine – we don't have to do something fun and, in any case, it would be nice to meet her.

8 B: Yeah, I'm thinking I might make her some food to take with me.

9 A: What are you going to make?

10 B: I'm thinking I'll make her some daal before I go. Maybe you can help me?

11 A: Yeah, that could be fun.

12 B: And maybe we can check out my friend's party after. He lives next door to my grandma.

13 A: That sounds fun!

Notice how the version of the conversation above does not carry any subtext and yet it results in the same immediate material outcome. In other words, the conversation does not carry the same meaning as the original conversation did for their relationship to each other. A and B have made plans in this updated version of the conversation but it is not possible for us to discern what this conversation means for this relationship from the conversation above alone. There is no turning point in this conversation because there is nothing that happens in this conversation that could be used as material to figure out what is going on between them.

Whereas the conversation in this new example begins with A and B being on the same page about wanting to make plans for Halloween, the conversation in our original example begins with a seeming denial of any potential for making Halloween plans together. When they then go on to make plans without saying they are making the plans they end up making by the end of the conversation, then the conversation acquires a kind of depth that our new updated version of the conversation lacks.

In other words, the conversation up until line 15 has both surface and depth, where on the surface they are talking about their Halloween plans, but under that surface, the relationship between them is changing in the course of talking about their Halloween plans because of the way they are talking about them. In contrast, there is no depth in the updated version of the conversation because there is no sense in which any observable change has taken place in the relationship between them in the course of this conversation. They do not yet know what the conversation between them means for their relationship to each other, and so, there can be no turning point in their relationship on the basis of a conversation like the updated version.

Through the course of the entire conversation up until line 15 of the original version of the conversation, we learn that B is potentially teasing A, or at the very least, A has reason to think that B is teasing her, and that this conversation builds upon a history between A and B in which A learned that B would have some plans for them on Halloween. However, none of this is expressed directly in terms of what they say to each other, or what is mutually understood, between A and B up until the turning point. Rather, all of this takes place under the surface, or at the level of depth, in the conversation.

On the surface, they are merely talking about what B is doing that day and B is also extending invitations to A to join him in each part of his plans at each turn in the conversation. At the same time, there is also something unfolding between A and B as each piece of the conversation continues to make sense in light of what happened before it. In other words, the conversation has the arc of a story where the meaning of the conversation can only be understood when we consider each response in light of the other, making each response a part of a single whole, until the turning point, which is when everything that has happened up until that point makes sense as a coherent whole.

The story then only makes sense to someone who saw what each response meant in light of what happened immediately before it, and thereby understood what that response meant in the context in which it was spoken. For example, A and B lived, so to speak, through line 4, as did anyone who was following along in the conversation, and therefore saw how this response killed hope that the conversation would yield any Halloween plans. Any hope that did remain for either A or B or anyone following along that this conversation would yield in some Halloween plans would stem from their understanding of the history between A and B prior to this conversation

that could be running through the depths of the conversation. A person who then saw what line 4 meant in its context could then see how line 14 would be mutually understood by A and B and anyone else following along in the conversation as a surprise.

What makes it a surprise is the fact that it could not have been anticipated or predicted on the basis of what happened before what he said in line 14, and yet also, at the same time, line 15 makes perfect sense as something that could be said in the context of this conversation. To understand this, we can see in contrast, for example, how these proposals follow predictably in response to his affirmative response to A's question when B then proposes fun things to do on Halloween in the updated version of our example conversation. As another contrast, we could see how B could have also said something completely irrelevant to what they were talking about, and this would be unpredictable because although erratic, it would be unsurprising.

Line 15 makes this conversation a story insofar as it renders everything that happened up until that point into a coherent whole. This is accomplished by bringing the depth of the conversation up until that point to the surface, and this is only possible because the conversation so far has had a depth that could be brought to the surface. That depth is what gives the conversation the shape of a story where that story reaches a turning point, or a climax, at line 15, and everything after the turning point is when that depth becomes a part of the surface of the conversation.

The difference between the original conversation in our example and the updated example of that conversation shows that a conversation only reaches a turning point when the depth of that conversation comes to the surface. Depth is how a conversation carries forward the history of a relationship, and depth cannot come to the surface until the people in that

conversation figure out what the conversation they are presently having means for their relationship. In other words, we do not yet know what we are presently doing means for our history, or how the conversation we are presently having fits into the conversation we were having before this.

A conversation reaches a turning point when we figure out what this conversation means for our relationship to each other, or when we can finally integrate the conversation we are having presently into our history, and so move forward on the basis of understanding what the conversation meant for who we are to each other. Every conversation, no matter how seemingly superficial, then carries the potential for depth insofar as we can recall what we are saying to each other in the immediate present moment either at some future moment in another conversation we are having with each other or even in a conversation we have with someone else. When we do this our conversation travels towards depth because, by recalling what we learned through earlier conversations in later conversations, we figure out how those two separate conversations make sense as a part of the same conversation.

Each time we thread a conversation to another one, we build an arc towards a story, which is another way to say we build depth by understanding how two separate conversations are a part of the same conversation. That depth can only come to the surface when we figure out what we can do on the basis of what we have done in this conversation, and thereby figure out what this conversation means for our relationship to each other. This is when the conversation reaches a turning point.

For example, in our original example of a conversation, the conversation reaches a turning point when A and B mutually become aware of what they have done in the conversation

they just had. In line 15, they figure out that they have not been saying out loud to each other what they have been doing throughout the conversation, which is that they have been making plans to do something fun together on Halloween, which contradicts what the first conversation they had suggested about how the conversations thereafter were going to go. Once they figure out what they have done in the conversation they just had, the conversation reaches a turning point, and even then they do not say out loud what they have figured out about what they have done in the conversation.

The turning point is when the depth meets the surface, or when they have become mutually aware of what they have already done in the conversation they just had. In this case, this is when they figure out that they have not been saying to each other what they have been doing in the conversation they are having. When they do this, they can begin to do what they can only do on the basis of figuring out what they have done. That is, they can talk about what they have been doing. The turning point then is the point at which what is happening at the level of depth in the conversation becomes a part of the surface, or what is actually being talked about.

In the conversation in our original example, at the turning point in line 15, A and B begin to self-consciously do what they were doing all along. If before they were teasing each other by denying the plans they were making to do something fun together on Halloween, then they go on to do this intentionally after this comes to the fore. Thus, they go on to self-consciously deny the plans they have made for Halloween once they are on the same page about the fact that this is what they were doing before they arrived at the turning point in the conversation.

The depth of the conversation before the turning point is then at the surface after the turning point, which means that they have figured out what the conversation they were having

means for their relationship to each other and so they can interact on the basis of what they have learned from having the conversation they just had with each other. A self-conscious conversation then is one where we can talk about what we learned from what we did in the conversation that the one we are now having is based on.

Although not every conversation we have with each other has a turning point, as we have seen in the updated version of our conversation example as well as conversations mentioned as examples in the earliest part of the dissertation, every conversation can be a part of a relationship that has a turning point. This means that even if the depth the conversation we are having right now carries does not yet meet the surface of our conversation, that depth, no matter how small, can be carried forward in the future conversations we have with each other or with other people as long as we can figure out how what we were talking about before is a part of the conversation we are having now. When we thread our conversations in this way, our conversations travel towards depth.

We build relationships when we carry forward the depth we have already built in the conversations we have had with each other and others in our future conversations. As already discussed at length, our relationship will reach a turning point when we figure out how the conversation we are having with each other has changed the relationship between us, and can thereby talk to each other about what we learned from what we did in that conversation. Insofar as we can also talk to others on the basis of what we learned from what we did in the conversation we just had with each other, then bringing the depth of our relationship to the surface can bear on any relationship where we can talk to each other on the basis of what we learned from the conversations that reached a turning point.

In this section, I showed that A and B do not merely learn *that* their relationship to each other has changed at the turning point in the conversation in our example. Rather, the turning point is when they change how they interact with each other on the basis of their mutual awareness of the fact that their relationship has already changed through the conversation they just had with each other. Thus, what they learn at the turning point in the conversation is not merely theoretical or observational knowledge. If it were, they would merely have learned about the change in their relationship to each other at the turning point in the conversation. But, in fact, they have learned more than this.

That is, A and B acquire practical knowledge, and not theoretical or observational knowledge, at the turning point in their relationship in our example. We obtain practical knowledge when we learn how to do something on the basis of what we have learned through the process of having done what we have already done. In particular, in this case, A and B can change how they relate to each other at the turning point on the basis of learning how their relationship has already changed through the conversation they just had with each other.

More specifically, A and B change how they interact with each other at the turning point on the basis of becoming mutually aware of the fact that they have already changed how they interact with each other in the conversation they are having. Because they can do something about what they have learned on the basis of having learned it by doing it, then the kind of knowledge they gain at the turning point is practical knowledge rather than theoretical or observational knowledge.

We can generalize what we have learned from our example to say that the kind of knowledge people acquire at a turning point in a relationship is an understanding of how we can

interact with each other on the basis of what we have learned about how the conversation we just had already changed how we interact with each other. This is practical knowledge, which as mentioned earlier in this dissertation, is “the cause of what it understands,” which is another way to say that my understanding is identical with what I can do with that understanding.

In this case, for example, A and B have practical knowledge at the turning point in the conversation because their understanding of their interaction so far is one and the same as their understanding of how they can then go on to interact. Since A and B mutually understand how the conversation they just had changed their relationship to each other, then they can use that mutual understanding to further change their relationship to each other as well as any other relationship where they can use what they have learned from the conversations they have already had with others.

Section Twenty

In this section, I want to clarify what has happened so far for anyone who might have gotten lost in the conversation along the way or perhaps needs more details of the picture fully spelled out.

This dissertation begins with the question: what is the distinctive sense in which I can know someone through conversation? Thus, this dissertation begins with the same question Daniela Dover asks in the beginning of her paper, “The Conversational Self.” I have shown in this dissertation that the knowledge we have of each other by talking to each other is not reducible to the knowledge we have about each other, which is our observational knowledge of each other. That sense of knowing each other, I argue, is practical knowledge, where our

knowledge of each other is one and the same our practical knowledge of the conversation we are having with each other. Getting to know each other, I have argued, is one and the same as being changed by each other, where being changed by each other means that we change our relationship to each other through our practical knowledge of the conversation we are having with each other.

Our relationship changes whenever we have a conversation that is a turning point in our relationship, and insofar as that conversation has a turning point, then the turning point in that conversation is a turning point in our relationship with each other. After a turning point in a conversation that is a turning point in a relationship, things change between us. This means that what we can expect from each other changes and so we thereby change how we interact with each other after that turning point. Relationships take a turn when we can talk to each other on the basis of having learned how our relationship has already changed and can thereby act on the basis of what we have learned going forward.

We learn what we are doing in the conversation we are having with each other, and it is not until we have learned what we are doing that we can change our relationship to each other on that basis. Insofar as every conversation we have is based on the practical knowledge we have of the conversation we have already had so far in our relationship, then we already have knowledge of what we are doing whenever we go into a conversation. This means that learning what we are doing in the conversation we are having now is tantamount to learning how to do what we were doing before differently.

Insofar as the conversation we are having with each other is how we have learned to do what we were doing before differently, then learning how to do what we were doing before

differently means that we have learned that the conversation we are having is how we learned how to do what we were doing before differently. Our relationship therefore changes on the basis of learning how to change our relationship to each other through the conversation we just had, and insofar as we can only learn this once we have already changed our relationship to each other, then we cannot act on the basis of that change until we have already done it.

Once we learn how to change our relationship to each other through the conversation we just had, then it becomes possible to do that again, which means we can act on the basis of the practical knowledge we now have. Insofar as the practical knowledge we have of our conversation is the knowledge we have of each other, then we get to know each other by changing our relationship to each other through our practical knowledge of our conversation with each other. Since we only learn what we have done when we have already learned to do what we were doing before differently, we cannot know what we are doing in a conversation until we have already done it. This is when the conversation is over. The conversation is over when it reaches a turning point.

If the turning point is when we arrive at a shared understanding of everything that has happened in the conversation so far, and we do not have a total shared understanding of everything that has happened so far until we arrive at that point, then we are on partly separate paths as we walk the path of our conversation to its end at its turning point. This means that we ordinarily have partly separate understandings of our conversation as we walk on its path. I say partly because we will have some common understanding of what is going on between us in the conversation we are having on the basis of our mutual understanding of our immediate and local responses to each other in the conversation as well as our shared history of the conversations we

have already had with each other. However, we will not be totally on the same page about what is going on between us until we arrive at the turning point, which is when everything that has happened so far in the conversation we are having will make sense to us in the same way.

Put simply then, we essentially live in ambiguity whenever we are having a conversation until this ambiguity is resolved at a turning point which is when the conversation is over. This is because we are on separate paths trying to find our way back to each other whenever we are in the middle of a conversation, and the turning point is when we re-unite and find ourselves back on the same path as we were when we began the conversation. We arrive at a turning point whenever we are back on the same path, which is when we have the same view of our shared understanding of what we have done in the conversation we were having.

Conversation shares the form of a relationship because relationships work the same way. Being in a relationship means we will have partly separate understandings of the relationship as we are in them. This is until we arrive at a turning point in the relationship, which is when we meet each other and arrive at a shared view of what has happened in our relationship with each other so far.

Our partial separateness from each other is not a bug but a feature of what we can do together in both conversations and relationships. Insofar as each of us has our own view of the conversation up until the turning point at which we come together to see what we saw on our own before but now as us together, then we can make use of what we learn from the gap between our separateness in conversation and our togetherness at a turning point to figure out what we can do next in our conversation.

That is, the turning point casts light on the meaning of what we were doing separately from each other now from the perspective of our shared understanding of what we were doing all along. What was before only a private or partial understanding of what was being said and done in the middle of the conversation becomes totally meaningful in light of what we have now learned we were doing together all along at the turning point of our conversation. The turning point then is when we finally can see the perspective of us together and can see our past as separate in light of us now together, which means that, by way of contrast, we see ourselves as separate and on our way to finding each other again whenever we are in the midst of conversation.

We can turn to our original example conversation again to see how this works. Line 15 is a turning point in the conversation for two reasons. On the one hand, Line 15 is a turning point because what is said makes use of everything that has happened so far and the conversation then as a whole is suddenly shot through with a meaning that it has because of the pre-history of the conversation that has now become apparent to us because of what is said in line 15. On the other hand, Line 15 is a turning point because it is when their separate understandings of the separate parts of their histories are pulled together to create a shared understanding of the totality of the history of the conversation.

Given this, we can say that there are two ways a turning point in a conversation can occur, where that turning point is a change in the mutual understanding of a conversation between people. One way is for someone to say something that totally captures the meaning of everything that has happened in the conversation so far. Doing this would be to use the history of the conversation comprehensively, thereby building as totalizing of a shared understanding of the

conversation as possible. We do this whenever we move from making use of what is said locally in a conversation to speaking globally by making use of all the shared understanding we have so far, as A and B do in the difference between what they do when they speak locally throughout the conversation but globally in line 15.

The other way to go deeper is by unifying the various parts of the conversation as is done in line 15 insofar as each part of our conversation is separated from the other parts until we find a way to say something that unifies each part of our understanding of the conversation thereby turning it into one. More generally, we can say that we are partly separate from each other when we respond to each other locally in a conversation, whereas maximal togetherness requires us to respond to the conversation more globally.

What is special then about the original conversation example is that the turning point in the conversation does both. That is, the change involved in this conversation is both comprehensive insofar as it makes use of the maximal level of shared understanding in the history of the conversation demonstrating it all to be a part of a singular whole, and that change goes deep insofar as it unifies all of the separate parts of the conversation into a singular whole.

Although not every conversation manages to be deep in the way that this one does, conversation essentially travels towards depth, which means that every conversation, and relationship, for that matter, is potentially deep. That is, whenever we are talking about something at the local level, as we usually are in conversation, it can become more deeply about whatever it is about insofar people can use the whole conversation to change it and thereby break out of their local use of the conversation by making more global use of their history which includes our pre-history from the time before this conversation.

If relationships change when the people within them globalize what they are talking about, where globalizing the conversation means we are using the whole history of the conversation to talk to each other, then that change is irrevocable because it means that we have now understood everything we have already said to each other. The only thing left to do then is to say something new on the basis of what we have learned from the conversation we have had and so anything we say at this point will be a turning point in the conversation. At the same time, we can only begin speaking to each other in this new way on the basis of first using what we learn from our conversation more locally until we can on that basis develop a global understanding of the conversation so far from which we then begin again in a new way to go back to making local developments in our conversation fixed by our understanding of the whole history up until the most recent turning point. People can thereby also feel free to drift from the conversation insofar the people in the conversation can globalize, or make use of their whole history to find their way back to talking to each other on that basis again.

We can see this again in our original conversation example. A and B have a series of mini-conversations each of which plateaus at a certain point. In lines 1 to 4, they locally exchange information about parties which then turns to talking about their individual plans for that night on line 5 which then turns to a series of invitations to some plans. Each time they make a local turn in the conversation, they begin speaking to each other on the basis of what they learned locally from a conversation that plateaued and on the basis of which they changed the subject in order to continue the conversation. Each time they change the subject, they speak to each other locally on the basis of what they learned from the previous conversation but they have not yet found a way to speak to each other more globally about every one of their conversations that

plateaued until we get to line 15 when they can say something that can be understood in terms of every conversation they have had so far and thereby speak to each other on the basis of everything that has happened between them so far.

We can further see how the meaning of what we are saying and doing locally can be transformed at a global turn when we consider how A and B begin to tease each other out loud after line 15. Before line 15, A and B are teasing each other without saying it out loud. The point though is not that A and B discover this as a matter of fact at line 15. That is, they do not discover they have learned how to tease each other without saying it out loud. Rather, what they have been doing consists in their doing it without saying it out loud, and insofar as this is a part of what has been going on, then this is a part of how they have been changing their relationship to each other. It is only once they understand the meaning of the conversation as a whole that they can develop a shared understanding of what they have learned to be teasing each other and thereby go on to do it with each other on the basis of their shared understanding of the global meaning of what has happened between them. Thus, what they were doing but were not saying depended for its meaning on the global turn that then makes it possible for them to talk about the shared meaning they now have of what they were doing after the change at the turn.

What A and B learn then is not the fact that they have been teasing each other without saying it out loud but rather what they have learned about is the conversation they were having with each other, where a part of that conversation was the fact that they were teasing each other without saying it out loud. Since A and B lived through the conversation and so they know what it could potentially mean to them separately at the time they lived through the ambiguity of what they were doing, and they retrospectively understand its meaning in light of the global

understanding of the conversation when the conversation finally takes a turn, then the gap between their partly separate understanding of the conversation as they lived through it and their shared understanding of the conversation at the turn makes it possible then for them to finally talk out loud about what they were doing when their conversation changes at the turning point.

The point then is that they cannot talk about the fact that they are teasing each other before the turning point because it would be inappropriate. There is too much ambiguity about what is going on between them while they are living through it in order to talk about it. They do not know what they are doing, and to act as if they did would be to presume a reciprocity not afforded by their shared understanding yet. Once the conversation takes a turn, however, the global history of the conversation resolves the ambiguity by showing that they have been teasing each other. Their perspective shifts then from the local, or separate, to the global, or together, and they can then begin to talk about what they were doing in light of the latter.

Insofar as A and B were teasing each other without a shared understanding of the fact that they were doing this, then the conversation is how they are learning that they can do this. That is, they learn that they are able to tease each other by making a plan without saying that they are doing this. They learn that they can do this because at the end of the turning point, they are ready to use the global history of their conversation to act on their plans. Insofar as they can do what they will now go on to do on the basis of what they learned how to do in the conversation they just had, then the conversation they just had is the practical knowledge by which they can now do what they will go on to do. The teasing in the conversation they had is only teasing because of what they can do on the basis of having done it. It relies for its existence on their use of the global history in the conversation to change it insofar as their actions would not necessarily have

the meaning of “teasing” if it were not for what they could go on to do on that basis. Thus, A and B can only retrospectively understand what they were doing as “teasing each other” once they are prepared to act on what they have done, namely to act on the plans they made. Insofar as they made these plans by teasing each other, and they did this through the conversation they just had, then the turning point is when they can act on what they have learned how to do in the conversation they just had with each other. This also means that they found out that they can tease each other by having done it in the conversation they just had.

The point of everything said so far is that there is no fact contained in the history that they figure out or understand at the turning point. They do not arrive at an observational understanding of whether they can or cannot tease each other when the conversation comes to an end. Rather, the conversation is over when it arrives at a turning point because it is the moment at which A and B figure out what the conversation is about. The content of the conversation up until this point is only locally meaningful, and at the turning point, that same content acquires a global meaning it did not have up until that point. The turning point then is when they figure out what the conversation is about. They do not know what their conversation is about until it is over because they do not yet have the content that can give everything that has happened so far any unity. Thus, more needs to happen in the conversation in order for them to have unity or understanding about what everything that has happened so far was about.

Once they figure out what the conversation is about as they do in line 15, then the meaning of their actions retrospectively can be understood in terms of “teasing” on the basis of how everything turned out to unfold. If they did not arrive at a point where they were prepared to spend Halloween evening together, as they show they are by line 15, then the global meaning of

the conversation would have been different and so their action of “teasing” would not obtain the public meaning it does in light of how the conversation actually unfolded in our example.

We can say then that A and B learn that they can tease each other at the turning point on the basis of learning what the conversation they have been having so far is about, or what we have been calling the global or total meaning of the conversation as a whole. This then ascribes meaning to particular things that were said and done in the conversation that were otherwise ambiguous or even meaningless in terms of their local meaning in the conversation but acquire an unambiguous meaning in light of how the conversation has unfolded when they figure out what the conversation is about, or its total meaning. Thus, if the conversation turned out to be about something else, it is entirely possible that the question of whether or not they were teasing each other would have remained ambiguous or not even a question at all insofar as the conversation would have a different premise and thus a different understanding of what they were doing all along in that conversation.

Section Twenty-One

As we have understood from this dissertation, conversations, and for that matter, dissertations, come to an end when we have understood everything we have been talking about so far. Line 4 ends the conversation in lines 1 to 4 and Line 15 ends the conversation in lines 1 to 15 because both of these lines put a stop to the inquiry they are engaging in by completing the conversation. In other words, whatever they had left to figure out in the course of the conversation has been figured out in that response and that is when the conversation naturally

comes to an end. Thus, we stop talking about whatever we are talking about as soon as we understand it and can thereby name the subject matter of our conversation.

At the same time, we do not actually know when we are done with a conversation because we can always resurrect a conversation we were having earlier through a callback. For example, A and B may have thought that they were done talking about the possibility of going to a party together on Halloween by the end of line 4. However, this possibility is eventually resurrected in line 14. Line 15 is a response to what B says in line 14 by calling back to the earlier conversation in lines 1 to 4, thereby making everything that happens between lines 1 and 14 a part of the same conversation. As another example, when B mentions the fact that going to his grandma's house "isn't exactly going to be fun", he recalls the fact that A mentioned wanting to do something fun in the very first conversation they had, which also then brings everything that happens until line 8 into the fold of the first conversation they had in lines 1 to 4.

Insofar as every conversation has some subject matter, and recalling what was said in an earlier conversation makes the conversation we are now having a part of the conversation we were having earlier, then we cannot ever know the subject matter of the conversation we are having while we are having it. This is because, at any point, the conversation we are now having can become a part of a conversation we were having earlier that was not originally a part of that conversation, which will thereby make the conversation we are now having a part of the subject matter we were talking about in the earlier conversation. By the same token, the subject matter of previous conversations we took to have already understood and thereby completed, are also subject to change in light of what we learn in future ones that later become a part of these earlier conversations through acts of recall. In other words, the earlier conversation becomes a part of

the subject matter we go on to talk about later whenever an earlier conversation is recalled in that later conversation.

When we recall old conversations in our new ones, we see our earlier conversations anew in light of what we learn from the later ones insofar as we keep making sense of our later conversations as a part of our earlier ones. For example, in our original conversation example, it looks as if B simply does not know anything fun to do on Halloween by the end of line 4. A's question in line 1 was an attempt to find out whether B knows of anything fun they can do together on Halloween and once B responds with a 'no' in line 4, it seems as if that conversation, where that conversation is about whether B knows of anything fun they can do together on Halloween, is complete. They thereafter change the subject to talking about something else, namely B's plans for that night. Even though they change the subject in line 5, and so move onto a new conversation, they return to the conversation they were having earlier whenever they recall what they learned from the conversation they had in lines 1 to 4.

In particular, in lines 8 and 13, they refer back to the fact that they learned that A was looking to do something "fun" on Halloween in line 1. When they do this, they make these later conversations a part of the conversation they were having earlier insofar as these acts of recall are attempts to learn more about what they learned in the earlier conversation. At first, there seems to be a clear bifurcation between two separate conversations, where the first conversation in lines 1 to 4 is about whether B knows of any parties they can go to on Halloween, and a second conversation that begins on line 5 that is about B's plans for that night. Eventually, these two separate conversations become a singular conversation about making plans to hang out on

Halloween in virtue of these acts of recall that join the conversation they are having after line 5 to the conversation they were having beforehand.

Learning more about what we already learned means that our understanding of what we take ourselves to know from talking to each other changes as we keep on talking to each other. We can see this in our understanding of lines 1 to 4. This interaction seems unambiguous in meaning on the face of it, or as it is mutually understood between A and B in the moment they say those words to each other, but that interaction retrospectively obtains an ambiguity in light of everything that happens after up until line 15.

Specifically, it seems on the face of it that A inquired into whether B knows of anything to do that night and B denied knowing of anything in line 4. However, as we learn more after line 4 and up until line 15, it becomes possible to retrospectively read what happened as an instance of B teasing A by pretending not to know of any parties. Alternatively, it also becomes possible to speculate that he wanted to see if she would say yes to visiting his grandma before he invited her to the party or that he changed his mind through the course of the conversation spontaneously and ended up inviting her to a party even though that is not what he intended at the beginning of the conversation. These possibilities about what the first conversation potentially meant were previously not available to us while A and B were in the midst of the interaction. However, these meanings become possible as we learn more about their relationship in future conversations.

Thus, the more A and B keep talking to each other, the more they learn about what they do not know about what is going on in the interaction between them. They become aware of what they do not know about what is going on between them when what otherwise seemed to be an unambiguous conversation becomes ambiguous retrospectively after they learn more about

that conversation from future conversations that become a part of that first conversation retrospectively. This, however, is good for their relationship insofar as this gives them more to find out about what is going on between them and so gives them more reason to talk to each other so they can find out. Moreover, we can say on this basis that conversation does not always lead to clarity since talking to each other more can increase ambiguity in our mutual understanding just as much as it can reduce it.

If the subject matter of a conversation is always subject to change, and the subject matter of a conversation changes whenever we learn more about that subject matter in the conversation, then we change what we are talking about by learning more about what we are talking about. Insofar as we can only learn more about what we are talking about when we can use what we have already talked about to talk some more about that with each other, then we change our relationship to each other on the basis of practical knowledge. That is, we change what we are talking about by using what we have learned to learn more about what we have learned, and it is not until we can use what we have learned that we can change our relationship to each other.

For example, A and B mutually understand that A is looking to do something fun on Halloween with B in the very beginning of their conversation. That is, they already know this theoretically, insofar as they know *that* A wants to do something fun for Halloween with B, but they cannot do anything about it until line 8 when they figure out how they can use what they already learned when they can begin to talk about how they can do something fun on Halloween in that conversation.

Similarly, A can see that, throughout the conversation, B is already in the process of finding ways to use what he learned in the first part of the conversation and might even suspect

that B might have some party plans up his sleeve given how the conversation is going but she cannot do anything about what she might suspect until line 14. The fact that she says “I knew it!” in line 15 reveals that she was possibly already suspicious of what she finds out in line 14. It also becomes possible for us as observers of the conversation to conjecture that she formed this suspicion on the basis of her knowledge of B from before the time of the conversation we see before us. After all, how else did she figure out that she should ask B about fun Halloween plans in line 1?

From this, we can see that it is possible for us to know what we are doing as we are doing it, just as A and B might already know that they are trying to make plans for Halloween together before they actually do it, and they know this on the basis of the context of what they are saying to each other and in light of what they already know about each other from before the conversation they are currently having. They might also already know they are teasing each other before it becomes a part of their mutual understanding with each other. At the same time, the point is that this knowledge can only be theoretical understanding, which means that they might know *that* something is true on the basis of what they can observe about how the conversation is going. In certain cases, they might even share theoretical understanding as they do, say, when they both have a theoretical understanding of the fact that A is looking for something fun to do with B on Halloween. However, this knowledge is not practical knowledge, or knowledge of what they can do together on the basis of knowing they have already done it, until they mutually understand the conversation they are having and so can act on the basis of that mutual understanding. Insofar as they can only do this when they mutually understand the conversation they are having, then they can only change what they are doing in a conversation by their mutual

understanding of how they have already changed what they are doing in their conversation, which is what we call their practical knowledge of the conversation.

The subject of our conversation changes whenever we make callbacks and thereby learn how separate parts of our conversation are a part of the same conversation, but our relationship to each other only changes when we can use what we have learned in our whole conversation to say something new to each other. Doing this means that we are no longer responding locally to what we have immediately just said to each other. Rather, it means that everything we say to each other after a change like this one is said on the basis of what we learned about our relationship in that conversation. This makes a change like this one a turning point in a relationship, and as we learned in the previous sections, a turning point like this one takes place when there is a turning point in a conversation, or when we can say something to each other on the basis of what we have learned in the entire conversation we have had so far.

If we can only change our relationship to each other by learning from the conversations we have already had with each other and talking to each other on the basis of them, then it is only from the standpoint of being in a relationship with someone and talking to them that we can change our relationship to each other. Insofar as we can only be in a relationship if we can talk to each other on the basis of what we have learned in the conversations we have already had with each other, then our capacity to change our relationship to each other depends on our willingness to travel toward the depth of our relationship.

That is, the degree to which we can change our relationship is a function of our willingness to learn more about what we have already learned in the conversation we have had so far, and in particular, from our willingness to talk to each other on the basis of everything we

have learned in the conversation we have had so far. The more we can say to each other on the basis of the totality of everything we have said to each other, the more we can change our relationship to each other since this is how relationships between people change.

When we talk to each other on the basis of our mutual understanding of the totality of everything we have said to each other, the change in our conversation is a change in our relationship because that change is irrevocable. This is because our conversation changes on the basis of our mutual understanding of everything we have said to each other about what we were just talking about and so we are now in a position to say what we could say to each other only on the basis of that mutual understanding. We can change how we interact because we now have a shared sense of meaning and so every time we speak to each other on the basis of our shared history of that conversation, then we are deepening the relationship we developed by carrying that history forward in the conversation we are now having.

From this, it follows that there is a further difference between the kind of change in the conversation that takes place after line 4 in our original conversation example and the kind of change in the conversation that takes place after line 15. We say that A and B change the subject of the conversation in line 5 because this is the beginning of a new conversation that only becomes a part of the conversation they were having in lines 1 to 4 retrospectively when they callback in line 8 to how the conversation they are having now relates to the conversation they were having in lines 1 to 4. In contrast, A and B do not change the subject of the conversation in line 15 even though the conversation does take a turn at this point. That is, line 15 is not the beginning of a new conversation in the way that line 5 is because A and B are still continuing to talk about what they were already talking about. The change in the conversation then at this

moment is not a change in subject but rather a change in the level at which they are talking about what they were already talking about.

For example, if the conversation before line 15 was about figuring out what, if anything, they are going to do on Halloween together, then they can begin to talk to each other on this basis once they figure it out. Insofar as they also learned about their relationship through the way they went about talking about this, then they can also go on and talk about this once they figure this out. If what they learned was that they were teasing each other in the way they went about making these plans, then they figured out that they can tease and play with each other when they talk to each other on the basis of having learned that they can do this by doing it. Insofar as they went about making plans on Halloween on the basis of saying that they were not making those plans, then once they figure out that this is what they have been doing so far in the conversation, then they go on to interact on the basis of mutually understanding that they are saying they are not making plans even though they are making plans for Halloween together.

Thus, although it seems as if line 15 is when A and B change the tone of the conversation to be teasing and playful and when they begin saying they are not making the plans they are making, and the idea that they begin to do these things at this point is but an appearance not grounded in truth. This is because A and B are already doing what it seems they begin to do in line 15. They are already teasing and being playful with each other up until line 15, and they are doing this by not saying out loud that they are planning to do something together on Halloween for the entire conversation. The difference is that they begin doing these things self-consciously in line 15, which means they are doing it on the basis of having figured out that this is what they were doing in the conversation they were having so far.

Line 15 then is not a change in subject but a change from surface to depth. When we change the subject of a conversation, it means we are beginning a new conversation after having finished one and retrospectively integrate that conversation into the one they were already having. In contrast, conversations move from surface to depth when we continue the conversation we are already having on the basis of arriving at a mutual understanding of everything we have talked about so far, which is what it means to continue the conversation self-consciously. We can generalize this to say that everything we say to each other on the basis of everything we have mutually understood in our conversation, which is everything we say to each other at the level of depth on the basis of learning what we have to say about it on its surface, is not a separate topic or subject matter from what we were talking about before but rather is a part of that same subject matter, which is another way to say that it is a part of the same conversation.

For example, although A and B can be said to be talking about something new in line 5, we cannot say the same for line 15. That is, A and B are not talking about something new in line 15 so much as they are talking about what they were already talking about in a new way. Since we can only talk about what we already know in a new way when we have shared everything we can know about it in common with each other, then we are talking to each other at the level of depth whenever we can talk about what we already know in common with each other in a new way.

The conversation that we have at the level of depth is, as we say, “the heart of the matter” or what it’s *really* about in the sense that it shows us where we want this conversation to go by talking to each other. The surface tells us where we are but we can only get to the depth when we

have some idea of where our relationship is headed. This is because we cannot know where we are headed until we know where we can go on the basis of knowing where we are. Thus, we begin our conversations where we can, which is on the basis of what we already share in common with each other. We talk about this until we learn everything we have to say about this so that we can then go on to talk to each other on the basis of what we have learned about what more we share beyond what we already know ourselves to share in common with each other.

Quite straightforwardly, for example, A and B might already know that they can talk about their Halloween plans in the conversation leading up to line 15, but they cannot know what they can do on that basis until they have already done it. By doing what they can already do, which is what they take themselves to be doing on the surface, namely, talking about their plans on Halloween night, they learn that they can tease each other and play with each other by doing what they are doing without saying it out loud. They can do this together once they have learned that this is what they are already doing by having done it in the conversation they are having.

As we have already learned in this dissertation so far, relationships change only when we can speak to each other on the basis of our mutual understanding of everything that has happened between us so far, which is when conversations take a turn. Up until we reach this point, we might have partial or private understandings of the conversation we are having with each other. For example, A might have a suspicion that B is teasing her but insofar as there is no appropriate context to say this in the conversation, then she will not share her understanding of this conversation until it is appropriate to do so. That is, we cannot share our understanding of the conversation we are having with each other until it makes sense to do so in that conversation, and it is only when we can share everything we already understand with each other about the

conversation that we are in a position to understand everything that has happened between us so far and thereby change our relationship with each other on that basis.

If, as we have also already learned, our relationship deepens whenever our relationship changes, and relationships change at turning points in conversations, and turning points are when we can act on the basis of becoming aware of what we have learned from what we have done together, then every turn in a conversation not only changes our view of where our relationship is headed but also our view of where we have been in our relationship, which is the history we share in common with each other. Deepening our relationship, or learning more about what we share in common with each other on the basis of talking about it, changes our view of our history together, which is everything we mutually know ourselves to already share in common with each other. This then in turn is what makes it possible for us to change our future together, or what we can share in common with each other on the basis of a deepening of our understanding of what we already share in common with each other.

Everything said so far shows that our history, which is everything we have learned we share in common by having shared it with each other, comes into view when it becomes possible for us to act on its basis. That is, we do not act when we become aware of the history we share in common but rather that we become aware of our history when we have already figured out how to act on the basis of what we learned by what we did when we lived through it. Our awareness of our history then does not make it possible for us to act but rather it tells that it has now become possible to act on the basis of that awareness. Therefore, our view of our history together should tell us our future.

Bibliography

- Anscombe, G. E. M. *Intention*. Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Arendt, Hannah. *The Human Condition*. University of Chicago Press, 2018.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Roger Crisp. Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Darwin, Charles. *On the Origin of Species: By Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. Penguin, 2009.
- Dover, Daniela. "The Conversational Self." *Mind* 131, no. 521 (2022): 193–230.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzab069>.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich. *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Practical Reason*. Translated by Mary J. F. Gregor. Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Edited by Paul Guyer. Translated by Eric Matthews. Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by Allen W. Wood. Yale University Press, 2018.
- Kant, Immanuel, and Lara Denis. *The Metaphysics of Morals*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason: And Other Writings*. Edited by Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni. Cambridge University Press, 2018.
- Manet, Édouard, Olympia, 1863, oil on canvas, Musée d'Orsay, Paris.

Marx, Karl. *Capital: Critique of Political Economy*. Princeton University Press, 2024.

Pippin, Robert B. *After the Beautiful: Hegel and the Philosophy of Pictorial Modernism*. The University of Chicago Press, 2014.

Plato. *Republic*. 2. ed. Translated by M. A. Grube, C. D. C. Reeve. Hackett, 1992.

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio). 1538. Venus of Urbino. Oil on canvas, 119 x 165 cm. Uffizi Gallery, Florence.