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We want to propose a conception of wisdom with a view to exploring what insights it can give us into some basic dimensions of teaching in contemporary higher education. We hope to show that this conception allows us, on the one hand, to see some crucial inadequacies of existing approaches to critical thinking, multiculturalism, and global awareness or internationalism. On the other hand, we believe that it also gives us some insight into the existentially or spiritually meaningful dimensions of learning. In this way, it bridges the most contemporary and practical foci of teaching and its most fundamental and timeless concerns. In the later part of the paper, we shall explore some of the characteristics of this conception further through the teachings of some of the longstanding wisdom traditions, including what they say about teaching itself.

Our conception of wisdom involves several very sharp, related paradoxes, which will emerge in the various stages of our discussion. We will show in each case that these paradoxes actually make an easily grasped kind of sense, and we ask the reader's forbearance with each apparently nonsensical initial presentation. The initial paradoxes are, in fact, nonsensical: but, as we hope will become clear, this is not all that they are.

A Conception of Wisdom

We propose to think of wisdom as a matter of coming to understand as a whole a perspective on life or on reality in general, whether it is our own perspective or another's. In a related form, this conception is a central part of the tradition of metaphysics in the west, where the highest or deepest kind of knowledge is commonly understood to be insight into the nature of the whole of being, into its foundations and sense.[1] The same is true of many religious traditions, east and west, which typically ask the "big" questions about the origin of things in general, the meaning of life, and our ultimate destiny. Our conception emphasizes, as many of these traditions also do. that the whole we aim to grasp includes ourselves, our act of looking at the whole, and the structure of the perspective that we inhabit in attempting to look at it.

When we learn new things *within* a general perspective, standpoint, or framework, we are essentially learning new information, which we can organize within our existing categories and ways of making sense of things. We have "boxes," as it were, into which we can place the new items: we already know how things make sense, and we are discovering new things that make sense in those familiar ways. It is different when we consider the whole perspective, standpoint, or framework itself. When we turn our attention to the perspective in its own right, we are learning about the categories and ways of making sense themselves. That is, we are no longer placing information into the existing categories in which they fit and make sense, but are standing outside the categories and trying to make sense of *them*. As a result, we do not yet know how to make sense of what we are learning. We do not yet have the "boxes" in which to fit the information.

We propose that this deeper kind of learning, in which we come to make sense of the categories and so the conditions of sense itself, constitutes at least one crucial dimension of what is traditionally described as wisdom.

One traditional, common sense way of describing wisdom is that it involves getting a perspective on ourselves, and this is what we have described. What is important to recognize in this re-description, however, is that getting a genuine perspective on ourselves means partly stepping outside of our capacity for making sense at all. Better expressed, it involves stepping outside of what objectively constitutes sense in the relevant context. For it is sense itself that requires an account of itself (a making sense), and so it is sense itself that requires us to step outside it.

It is true that in each case we step outside only a particular perspective on sense. But the perspectives we are discussing stepping beyond are perspectives on reality in general, and so on sense in general. Consequently what fails is what we in this perspective mean by *sense in general,* or sense *as it can ever possibly be*. Further, if what really happened was that we simply stepped into another—say a broader—perspective in which we could still make sense, we would not yet have gained a perspective on our own perspective as a whole. We would only have shifted our perspective to another on which we had no perspective, and so we would not yet be accounting for sense in general (or all of sense as it is for our perspective). Getting a genuine perspective on ourselves, then, involves an intrinsic failure of what we mean by sense itself, in general. But, as we will see, this is a very productive failure.

A natural objection is that it is impossible to get a view of ourselves or of our sense-structure as a whole, exactly because this would have to be described in terms like "stepping outside of ourselves or outside of all sense." But this objection itself is a comment on what can be true about our sense-structure as a whole. As such, it claims to be a view of our sense structure as a whole, and so denies its own possibility. That is, it refutes itself. (Actually, given our thesis, we would say it is no different in this respect from all perspectives on our perspective or sense-framework as a whole: it is a failure of sense, but, as we shall try to show, a failure that is profoundly productive for sense itself.)

The idea of a necessary and intrinsic failure of sense is also part of traditional, although not common-sense, understandings of wisdom. Traditional accounts might call this awakening, enlightenment, gnosis, wisdom, arcane knowledge, occult knowledge, or esoteric knowledge. Historical wisdom traditions typically expect acolytes, adepts, or students radically to alter their understanding of how they make sense of the world in the most fundamental and comprehensive ways, and the transition from one sense of things as a whole to another is not itself seen as a domain of rational sense. This re-understanding of sense itself, then, is traditionally an intrinsic part of gaining wisdom.

Philosophers like Karl Jaspers and Ludwig Wittgenstein also identify this dimension of the deepest kind of knowledge. Jaspers notes that

> For the clarification of . . . the Encompassing, we have used words and concepts which had their original meaning for definite things in the world; now however they are used to go beyond the limits and are not to be understood in their original sense . . . [As a result,] through reason I catch sight of something which is only communicable in the form of contradiction and paradox. Here a rational a-logic arises, a true reason which reaches its goal through the shattering of the logic of the understanding.[2]

Wittgenstein famously argues in the *Tractatus* that the sense and value of the world can only lie outside of it, where they cannot be said but only shown, and that we can do even this only in propositions that we must in the end recognize and discard as nonsense: "The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem," and "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. . . . He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright."[3] The same idea is present in a different form in his later work: "The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language. These bumps

make us see the value of the discovery."[4]

Postmodern philosophers and theorists often also defend and pursue the fundamental importance of this kind of failure of sense; we shall give some examples later. In addition, as we will discuss in the final part of the paper, the logical tetrads of Taoism and Buddhism suggest a similar understanding of the relation between sense and failure of sense.

Fundamental religious insights, eastern, western, and tribal, are often expressed in the forms of myth, vision, and dream, which are typically articulated partly on the basis of contradictions, category confusions, non-sequiturs, and equivocations. As we hope to make clear in our discussion below, these are not logical flaws in these contexts, but accurate and appropriate expressions of an objective incoherence in sense that occurs at the deepest level of sense itself, the level at which the nature of sense itself is addressed. In accounting for sense itself, for sense as such and in general, we step partly outside it, and this involves the failure of sense itself.

This corresponds to another traditional characteristic of wisdom: that answers to the deep questions always seem somehow unsatisfactory as they stand, and are somehow always anti-climactic. Yet we propose that this does not mean that giving these kinds of answers is misguided. This failure of sense is a very specific type. It occurs in trying to get a perspective on our standpoint: it is only by trying to make sense of our standpoint as a whole that we reach the position where we are outside it and where it therefore no longer makes sense. What is more, as we have noted, it is sense itself that requires us to account for sense as a whole and so leads us outside it, to this specific kind of loss of sense. And it is *this specific* standpoint (or sense-making framework) that requires *this particular* outside, and so this particular failure of sense. We are only "outside" sense, then, and are only justified in being there, because of what occurs "inside" sense itself. The failure of sense "outside" only occurs with reference to, and as a product of, the particular sense "inside." The outside of sense is required by its inside, and so is, paradoxically, internal to it. We have, as it were, one foot in the framework and one foot out of it, and that is how the failure of sense occurs.

Now, *outside* our perspective as a whole, its sense simply fails to occur at all: we are outside sense as a whole, or outside all of sense. As a result, any awareness of our perspective can only occur *wholly* inside it, to the exclusion of anything outside it. It follows that perspective on it is both *wholly and exclusively* inside it and—since it is perspective on it as a whole—*wholly* outside at once. (Our "feet" metaphor, then, is more accurately expressed as: *both* feet are inside, and only inside, and both feet are outside, and only outside, simultaneously.) Consequently, the statements we make from this position both essentially make sense (even if they are partly mistaken, the mistakes are intelligible: they occur in a context where the rules of sense-making apply) and are also wholly outside of that sense. The answers we find to deep questions at this level are *simultaneously and in the same respects both* perfectly sensible *and* perfectly nonsensical. That is, it is not that they are simply absurd or misguided, but rather that they are simultaneously obviously true and yet do not exclude the opposites that cancel them: they are both clearly true and completely useless as guides. For example, "love all things" means also "love your own hatred," and "accept what is" means also "accept your own inability to accept things."

Consequently, as we hope will become clear, the real value of these answers is not in what they directly say, but in the consequences of the position they place us in with respect to our perspective as a whole. By placing us outside our whole framework of sense in this way that retains its link to the specific inside (where sense occurs), they function as a passage to a renewed grasp of sense in general, as a redirecting of our capacity to make sense as a whole. They function as what Plato called a *periagoge* or conversion of the soul, a turning of ourselves wholly about to face the same world of things in a new direction that allows us to re-understand it.[5] For example, a statement like, "everything is caused, determined, necessary, and so just as it should be," allows us to register certain dimensions even of what we think of as free acts that we would otherwise be unable to conceive. We can, perhaps, see these acts as fitting with their surrounding circumstances and events, so that the burden of responsibility for them is not wholly on us. This statement gives a little grace, a little charity, to the world's requirements

of us.

To give a somewhat more academic example, Richard Rorty discusses how our perspectives are each fundamentally governed by what he calls a different "final vocabulary." He calls it a "vocabulary" to indicate that each person articulates their sense of things based on a particular set of words that is just one among many other possible sets. He calls it "final" to indicate that to the particular person it is basic or foundational in the sense that "if doubt is cast on the worth of these words, their user has no noncircular argumentative recourse. Those words are as far as he can go with language."[6] By using this kind of formulation, Rorty allows us to compare different perspectives from their own point of view without committing ourselves to the truth of any of them—including the truth of our own perspective. This position partly outside our own commitments produces a prevailing attitude that he describes as "irony."[7] Since, however, this formulation applies to all perspectives, including Rorty's own, it follows on its own grounds (as his ironic attitude towards it explicitly acknowledges) that the vocabulary of "final vocabulary" cannot be the only final vocabulary in terms of which to construe perspectives.[8] This means that it, itself, establishes the possibility that it may on occasion be the wrong vocabulary, and in fact that it can be wrong by wholly missing the appropriate sense of what we may justifiably want to say. In other words, it establishes the possibility that it can be simply nonsense. Rorty's formulation from outside any particular perspectives allows us to approach conflicting perspectives in ways that enable us to enter into their ways of making sense and that are profoundly morally and politically helpful, but it does so (despite Rorty's own understanding of it) partly by being capable, and *because* it is capable, of rendering itself literally without sense. It functions, then, by not simply saying what it says, and in so doing redirecting our capacity to make sense as a whole.

One very important dimension of this "rendering itself without sense," this self-cancellation, of the sense of a general "outside" of perspectives is its contrast with what occurs "inside" a perspective. Not only does any coherent perspective on things as a whole or in general make sense on the inside, but, as we have noted, that inside *wholly excludes* what falls outside it from having any sense. What is outside it is simply nonsense, simply meaningless. Consequently, what is inside has no meaningful alternatives to contrast to it: in other words, it is *absolute* sense. This is the kind of context in which Wittgenstein, for example, notes that we can speak of absolutes. When the idea of an overall "language game" in contrast with another plays no role in what we are saying on a given occasion, then, Wittgenstein writes, "'Put it *here*'—indicating the place with one's finger—that is giving an *absolute* spatial position."[9] Similarly, Donald Davidson, who argues that the idea of an overall "framework" or "conceptual scheme" is incoherent, maintains "a theory of absolute truth," according to which "we . . . re-establish unmediated touch with the familiar objects whose antics make our sentences and opinions true or false."[10]

We began by noting that wisdom is perspective on perspective, from the outside, because that is where the deep questions of ultimate sense and value find their context. Now we are saying that ultimate sense and, therefore, value find their context exclusively inside perspectives. This is not a contradiction; or, rather, it is the kind of contradiction that belongs to the paradox in which we are proposing wisdom consists. We have also noted that the deep questions and answers outside particular perspectives show themselves to be nonsense, and so function to redirect us to a renewed grasp and appreciation of the sense that is made within perspectives. The questions of ultimate sense and value, then, take us out of our general perspective, only to fail there in their sense, and so return us to the general sense of things within our perspective, but now with an appreciation of its foundational character and value. By asking fundamental questions and so leaving our perspective, we find out that sense and value occur only within our perspective: that is, when we are no longer asking the fundamental questions about it.

This process satisfies a third traditional characteristic of wisdom. Recognizing the nonsensical character of a perspective *on* our perspective as a whole allows us to make sense not only of the emptiness of stated wisdom and of its always elusive and questionable nature, but also of its status as directing us to what is most solid and basic in life. What is more, it allows us to understand how these two contradictory characteristics make sense as part of the same feature of life.

A little earlier, we discussed the simultaneity of being "inside" and being "outside," having our feet both inside and outside our perspective at the same time. This simultaneity allows us to understand the meaningful relation between wisdom and the unreflective experience of everyday life, or between depth and shallowness. (It allows us to do this in a way that again corresponds to a prominent insight of a variety of wisdom traditions, as we shall illustrate below when we discuss the existential dimensions of teaching.) Expressing this simultaneity differently, deep perspective on ourselves, awareness of ourselves as a whole or from the outside, is *nothing but* awareness *of* our shallow, familiar selves, as they occur in our "insides." Outside of those familiar perspectives, as we have argued, there is in fact no genuine or stable sense at all and, as we have discussed, absolute value and sense are *only* found within perspectives—that is, where deep reflection does *not* take place. The difference, then, between taking our sense-making categories or foundational "boxes" for granted and having a perspective on them—or the difference between shallowness and depth—is not simply that these are separate, distinct standpoints and ways of thinking. Instead, having perspective on our taking our categories for granted does not exclude or eliminate that unaware taking for granted, but is an awareness *of* it, and so includes it as an ongoing part of itself. Similarly, depth is the deeper dimensions *of* our shallowness, and so does not eliminate it, but includes it as an ongoing part of itself. Wisdom is the wisdom *of* un-insightful life.

There is a fourth traditional characteristic of wisdom that is also satisfied by the activity of this kind of thinking. Thinking in this way requires us to be tempered, and itself tempers us, in certain ways. It requires and shapes certain attitudes and ways of being in us. In particular, it requires and inculcates patience in the recognition that reality is bigger than we can always grasp in any given moment, and that sometimes we have to wait attentively for insight and control to emerge from the way things sort themselves out entirely independently of our immediate ideas, expectations, and needs.

We mentioned at the start that we mean by "coming to understand a perspective as whole" coming to understand either our own perspective or another's. The logic is identical in either case: to understand any perspective as a whole, we have to be both wholly inside it and wholly outside it at once. More importantly, for our purposes, in coming to understand another perspective, we need to step outside ours in the same way we have discussed. As a result, sense fails, since the sense of our own perspective fails, and we do not yet have the sense of the other perspective. And, equally, we are put in a position to gain a fundamental understanding of our own framework, from the outside. What is more, each time we come across a new perspective, it will contrast with ours in unique respects, and so we will come to see new dimensions of our own perspective as a whole. Consequently, the process of coming to understand another perspective is essentially the same as the process of gaining a new sense of our own.

In the context of relating our perspective to those of others, then, the encounter with failure of sense is a necessary part of the process by which we engage with deeply different standpoints, and not only of the process in which we engage deeply with our own.

Wisdom and Some of the Contemporary Concerns of Teaching

This conception of wisdom can help us to understand some crucial inadequacies of existing approaches to critical thinking, multiculturalism, and global awareness or internationalism. The inadequacies that we have in mind of current approaches to these areas share a common basis. In all of these cases, the existing approaches are certainly thought out in terms of getting perspectives on our particular standpoints, whether individual, subcultural, ethnic, or national, but none of them recognizes that getting such a perspective involves stepping not simply outside of what is familiar and comfortable to us, but outside of sense altogether. This is true even when theorists recognize that other standpoints can be so radically different from our own that the two are incommensurable (that is, without any common standards or grounds), so that we need to step outside of our standpoints *entirely* even to understand the other one. Even there, while the literature recognizes the conflict between frames of sense, it does not recognize the failure of sense itself: say, the sense that even the theorists' own writing

might make in discussing these situations. For example, if, as these theorists themselves understand what they are doing, we are describing a situation that involves two (or more) incommensurable or, in other words, two wholly mutually exclusive frameworks for sense in general, then, first, we cannot coherently describe the whole situation in terms of either framework on its own. If we did, we would just be assimilating one framework to the incompatible and therefore distorting terms of the other: we would make nonsense of the meanings of one of the frameworks. Second, however, we also cannot coherently describe the situation in terms that include both standpoints. They are mutually exclusive and, as frameworks for sense in general, they each cover the whole of sense: describing one is therefore automatically to deny any possible sense to the other. Consequently, the only way we can describe the whole situation these theorists discuss is to include in our description either contradictions or some other types of failure of sense itself, as such.

(Some postmodernist work does recognize this failure of sense itself, such as the work of Derrida or Irigaray, but this side and level of postmodernist thought does not seem to be taken up in the theorizing of multiculturalism, international awareness, and critical reasoning.)[11]

To give one representative example, Pearce and Littlejohn argue that moral conflicts can be characterized by incommensurable differences of outlook, but in developing a solution, they insist that "Postmodernism requires a commitment to the rejection of absolutes and the celebration of difference."[12] Their description of their approach contradicts itself: their commitment to rejection of absolutes is itself an absolute commitment. One might also wonder how well "the rejection of absolutes" harmonizes with "the celebration of difference." If Pearce and Littlejohn did make room for absolutes that are not their own (of rejecting absolutes), the coherence and sense of their particular "perspective on perspectives" would collapse. And that would be their genuine entry into the process or area of thought that we are describing as "wisdom." Unfortunately, they do not make that room, and so do not go as far as the failure of sense.

Again, in the context of critical reasoning, Richard Paul, for example, argues for a "strong-sense critical reasoning," which involves understanding arguments within the broader context of the overall networks of reasoning and concerns, the "worldview," within which they have their sense. While he and others working with this kind of model explain what kinds of attention and practice we need to enter into the relevant overall context of thought, they do not consider the ways in which such contexts constitute sense itself, as such, and consequently also do not consider the relevance or the problems of failure of sense for this kind of entry into deeply different worldviews.[13]

In other words, then, the current approaches to multiculturalism and critical reasoning never reach the point of *completely* failing to make sense, and so of *completely* leaving what is familiar and foundational for them. As a result, these approaches always continue to subordinate whatever alternative views they are considering to their own categories of sense.

The alternative we are proposing is to recognize that in truly critical, multicultural, or international interactions, we need to reach the point where we no longer presuppose our relevant foundations, and this means that we no longer presuppose even our criteria for relevant sense itself. We have to re-learn what does and does not make sense in this context from the ground up. We have to be beginners, unable to assert any of our certainties, because we no longer know precisely what they mean. We have to be so confused that we are entirely lost. Here, it is not even clear that being open, critical, or pluralistic are good ideas.

This state of being confused, lost, incompetent, and powerless to assert our certainties is what allows us, in its often difficult and always deeply demanding way, to re-establish and evaluate sense without question-begging pre-commitments. This state is, then, a crucial component of gaining clarity, direction, competence, and empowerment either to assert one's own entitlements *or*, equally, to recognize those of others. It follows that the failure of sense that this state expresses is a component of genuinely critical reason. It also follows that openness to un-

dergoing this state and the ability to deal with undergoing it are among the essential critical reasoning skills. The failure of sense and the skills of dealing with it are part of the necessary means of achieving sense. And, since it is sense itself that requires and leads to its failure, this failure of sense and the skills of dealing with it are really part of the substance of sense and sense-making—of genuinely critical reason and logic—themselves.

In teaching critical reasoning, then, and, for the same reasons, in teaching multiculturalism and global awareness, we need to teach the skills of being profoundly skill-less, without resource, and powerless to assert or to endorse. (This recipe is of course the opposite of what is inculcated in a culture of acquiring skills—"by the end of this course, we will be able to ..."—of respecting everyone's opinions, and of becoming empowered.) The tempering into the kind of patience and fortitude that we discussed in the previous section is relevant here. In teaching students to be open to and how to deal with the experience of the failure of sense, we need to help them acknowledge and teach them—or to work with the process that tempers and so teaches them—to come to terms with the highly ego-threatening failure of their basic competences to make and recognize sense, with the more broadly threatening reality that in these situations they cannot rely on any of what they otherwise take to be obviously rational procedures of thought—among other things, that they simply do not know yet how to criticize and endorse—and with the entirely undignified beginner's process of learning basic ways of making sense of which they are currently simply ignorant.

We think that the way in which this degree of uncertainty and unclarity makes sense is actually intuitively clear. One of the problems with postmodern pluralism that is becoming increasingly recognized in this pluralist field itself is that (like liberal open-mindedness) this kind of universal openness is in fact closed to all the many standpoints that do not accept universal openness. Judith Butler, for example, offers a rigorous discussion of the problem in an essay arguing that "particular" groups may have views of "universality" that are intrinsic to them as the particular groups they are; as a result, in fighting for the recognition of particular differences we may therefore need to negotiate not simply between conflicting particular groups but between "competing notions of universality." That is, far from our respect for differences allowing us to replace "universal truths" with "particular truths," it may *require* us to respect notions of universal truths and even to find ways of negotiating between different *versions* of universal truths.[14]

For another representative example, the anthropologist Bruce Kapferer complains that "in the contemporary redemptive mood of anthropology," the "potential differences" between Self and Other have been

> largely flattened out in a homogenising, globalising sweep. This contradicts the significance of the postmodern notion of multiple modernities . . . involving distinct . . . orientations to reality . . . To reverse and generalise the rational equation (humanity is united in a common irrationality), as is currently being done, sustains the hegemony of metropolitan assumptions rather than decentring them.[15]

We note Kapferer's paradoxical formulation, which we endorse: postmodernism is properly concerned partly with multiple *modernities*, and not only with multiple, "open-minded" *post*modernities.

In short, in its unconfused and definite (or clear and distinct) commitment to respecting difference, postmodern pluralism utterly disrespects those different standpoints that do not share its respect for difference. In multicultural terms, if we want to be genuinely multicultural, we need to make a place for the many cultures and sub-cultures that reject multiculturalism.

In this connection, as we have discussed, that an overall perspective that is not committed to any particular perspective is literally nonsense and so without any validity at all (although it is deeply necessary, productive and important invalid nonsense) is only one side of a coin. The other side of the coin is that what is entirely *within*

a perspective on things as a whole has its *absolute* validity. As a result, the alternative we are proposing allows multiculturalism, for example, both to recognize that its sense necessarily arises from its own cultural particularity (to recognize its own non-multicultural status), and also to endorse the truth of cultures that are not its own in a genuine and unqualified sense—and so to be genuinely multicultural after all.

For that matter, it allows it to endorse its *own* validity, as multiculturalism, through respect for its own inside: that is, *because it* is a particular, non-multicultural perspective! This, at least, has the virtue of honesty, and as a result may allow more fruitful dialogue with standpoints with different commitments than does the intolerant assumption that our own multicultural tolerance is the only insightful option.

If it is not already clear from the logic of the position we are presenting, we are not advocating intolerance. We are saying that where different perspectives on things in general are at issue, what is in fact intolerance and what is instead principled insistence are not clear in advance of finding out what makes sense in each of the frameworks. What *we* (*or* "they") mean by "principle" and "intolerance" are not the only possible relevant meanings in such situations, and we need to find out what the relevant meanings *are* before we can decide which, if any, are the right ones. We believe that to do otherwise is actually to be intolerant, and we are trying to find a way of avoiding this deep and therefore most insidious kind of intolerance.

Returning to our description of our alternative, then, and expressing it more generally, it gives us not only more complete and radical questioning of our foundational prejudices and assumptions (to the point where the meanings of our questions themselves are in question), but also more solid answers (in fact, completely solid answers, *because* the meanings of those questions themselves have come into question, so that the answers are at that point entirely dissociated from the context in which further questions about them even have meaning).

Like the more general idea that sense itself leads to the failure of sense, this kind of openness to the negation of the sense of openness is of course a self-contradiction. We have argued that this contradiction is inherent both in honest and consistently thought-through multiculturalism and internationalism, on the one hand, and in critical reasoning that is willing to be critical about itself in turn (in other words, critical reasoning that is, again, honest and consistent). We believe, however, that this contradiction is not a problem, but stems perfectly intelligibly from a source that, we have been arguing, is the deep dimension of how sense and meaning work, a source with which "wisdom" traditionally engages.

Wisdom and Some of the Existential Concerns of Teaching

On the side of the existential or timeless concerns of teaching, this same passage into loss of sense and meaning gives a helpful understanding of certain crucial phases of learning. When students encounter a wholly different standpoint, they, like all of us in genuinely "multicultural" situations, do not have the "boxes" to make sense of the new information. More precisely, they do not have access to the new "boxes" in which the information (possibly even familiar information) is contained. As a result, they necessarily misunderstand what is being said even in connection with familiar information, and will continue to do as long as they apply their old "boxes" or categories of sense. But those old categories are the only ways of making sense they have, so they will continue to try to apply them; and they *should*, since they are not yet in a position to know that they do not work. As a result of repeated and, eventually, convincingly terminal failure, they come to realize that they are not equipped to understand the material at all. That point, the point of despair, is when they become equipped to start learning the new boxes or categories themselves: they have given up on applying the old ones, knowing now that these old ones are inapplicable, and this puts them in a position, for the first time, to start learning new categories of sense.

Confusion, being intellectually lost, and impotence to understand, then, do not only allow us to get beyond our presuppositions and biases, but are also what allow us, positively, to learn a perspective as a whole or, equally,

to get a perspective on our own viewpoint as a whole. As part of the process of getting a perspective on our own sense of things as a whole, these "negative" experiences, because they are grounded in the objective characteristics of the situation, are part of the experience of encountering our own deep truth, whether or not in concert with the deep truth of others. In engaging with the categories by which we make sense in general and at all, we engage with the source, the fundamental character, of the general sense and meaning reality has for us. In other words, we engage with the fundamental sense and structure of our own being and the meaning being has for us in general.

This process of engagement is not only cognitive—it is not only a transformation of our capacities for understanding. As an acquiring of new boxes, new categories for sense itself, the process transforms our sense of things as a whole, including the sense of ourselves as a whole. That is, it transforms what *we ourselves mean* as a whole, and so what we *are* as a whole: it is a transformation of our being.

These experiences of becoming lost and without understanding, then, are a very real equivalent of a spiritual journey. In this case, it is something like a journey into the desert, in which we lose all sense of orientation in respect to certain fundamental issues, and as a result can come to get a sense of what orientation itself is, and renew our orientations in some sense or in some respects from the ground up. The dry, dispiriting labor of battling to understand and working through confusion has existential or spiritual meaning: it is the labor by which our sense of ourselves and of our reality as a whole is placed at stake and renewed. It is a small but real equivalent of a dark night of the soul, or an initiation process, or an alchemical work: of a liminal passage.

That this aspect of learning functions in the same ways as traditional spiritual journeys demonstrates again, but in a different way, how the deeply transformative and the ordinary commingle and function together. In other words, a great spiritual journey or dark night of the soul is not simply a special activity or extraordinary goal; rather it is a deep description of learning in general when examined with reference to the nature of sense as a whole. This is part of the mechanism that many students and teachers might recognize when they think or wonder how or why they did not understand something earlier that they have come to understand as so obvious now. We forget our old perspectives, misunderstandings, or positive sensibilities because *the whole of things* is different, and so our new way of making sense now makes *absolute* sense to us. The new way of making sense is *so* thoroughly reasonable that we often feel befuddled at why the transformation was such a struggle. This impulse is natural but largely unfair: unfair to ourselves and to the process of learning.

This sequence of confusion, transformation, and forgetfulness is also another reason that wisdom seems a bit anti-climactic. The part of the process in which we are utterly lacking sense is relatively easy to ignore as in any way significant because of its senselessness, and hard to remember later for the same reason.

Failure to appreciate these dimensions of the process of learning often has the result that students and even teachers actually end up ignoring their own educational experience. When students encounter calculus, organic chemistry, or macroeconomics, just as much as cultural criticism, philosophy, or esoteric religious traditions, they can become very confused and disturbed. Here, too, their old categories simply do not make sense and are of no help. Those students who persevere, study, stumble, and fumble along, eventually discover how to make sense in new ways. These successful students, however, seldom reflect on this process. It is even more likely that they do not see this process at all: instead they are likely to believe that they succeeded by using their old, familiar tools of assimilating new information to the categories of sense they have always relied on. In addition, they are likely to believe that they succeeded while some others failed because they are, for example, smarter, luckier, or more talented. Likewise, they are likely to believe that their struggles in the first place were not due to having to make a new and different kind of sense, but to the quantitatively greater (rather than the altogether different quality of) difficulty of the subject. The result is that both students and teachers often do not appreciate either their own achievements in these contexts or the broader insights their experience has to offer about the nature and resources of human learning.

An additional unfortunate result is that, because they do not recognize that they have learned by changing their "boxes," they will continue to think of and explain the new area of knowledge to themselves and others partly in the old terms. That is, they will really have only a confused insight into the new area, consisting in an arbitrary mix of categories that apply to it and categories that do not. In particular, when it comes to approaching wisdom traditions themselves, this information-seeking, no-disruption-of-real-sense approach inevitably tends to distort what it is studying, to make a caricature of wisdom that sees its unfamiliar expressions as exotic, quirky, flaky, enigmatic, or even authoritative in their fascinating mysteriousness, because they are dissociated from any of the particular contexts or applications in which they have their grounded sense.

To return to the positive side of our theme: let us emphasize that all of this means that the deepest and most meaningful part of our experience, the source of the deepest insight and growth, is in part our failure of insight and of meaning and sense. We have already argued that depth and wisdom are not simply opposed to and distinct from shallowness. They are also not simply opposed to and distinct from sheer lack of insight and going astray. Instead, they are a certain way of working with and through them. As we have noted, the deep truth of things is the truth *of those everyday things*, and wisdom is what we learn *from our shallowness*. But among those everyday things that have a deep truth and are the materials in which we learn wisdom, are foolishness and getting lost. Wisdom needs to be—and we believe genuine wisdom is—respectful not only of superficiality but also of foolishness, not simply because it should be compassionate (which presumably it should), but because it *is* in its substance, in part, superficiality and foolishness.

This, too, is one of the traditionally recognized characteristics of wisdom: it has a perspective on itself, even on its own limitations as specializing in having perspective on itself. Sometimes, it says, one just needs to live; and that perhaps this is even the greater part of wisdom. Yeats, for example, writes,

> A most astonishing thing—
> . . .
> Seventy years have I lived
> No ragged beggar man,
> Seventy years have I lived,
> Seventy years man and boy,
> And never have I danced for joy.[16]

Wisdom and the Teachings of Wisdom Traditions

In this section, we will explore how this conception of wisdom is embodied in some actual wisdom traditions and in their approach to teaching. We will discuss the Zen tradition and Plato.[17]

Zen

Having a perspective on perspective

Our proposal is that wisdom involves having an outside grasp of a perspective on life in general, whether it is our own perspective or another's. Zen koans, or paradoxical statements, are intended to teach this kind of outside grasp on our perspective, by stopping someone from thinking in his or her familiar patterns. Traditional, ambiguous Zen Buddhist statements include, "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" or "Wakuan complained when he saw a picture of the bearded Bodhidharma: 'Why doesn't that man have a beard?'"[18] Zen Buddhist tradition also illustrates the importance of having an outside perspective on ourselves in many of its teaching stories. One story begins,

> Master Nansen saw the monks of the eastern and western halls fighting over a cat. He seized the cat and told the monks: "If any of you say a good word, you can save the cat."[19]

The monks are arguing over a cat. Nansen sees that the monks do not have a perspective on themselves or the cat—for Zen, arguing over such a thing constitutes a lack of understanding of or perspective on everything that is important in life. Buddhists are expected to show equanimity, calm, compassion, non-acquisitiveness. By arguing over the cat, the monks may be behaving as quite ordinary human beings, but they are violating the fundamental truths of their own tradition. They have not yet understood their own tradition's basic teachings. They lack perspective on their own sense of things.

Buddhist teaching suggests that the smallest inkling of self-perspective (wisdom) would cause the monks to immediately cease their squabbling. First, Nansen discursively offers them a "time out" to consider what they are doing. The monks do not have a perspective to articulate: they literally do not notice what they are doing—cannot speak about it—they are caught up in it. It is important to recognize that Nansen is pushing them not just to see that they are being petty and un-Buddhist, but that they have missed something even more fundamental. It is not just the content of Buddhist teaching in particular that they seem to lack, but more importantly, they do not have the more intimate, and so more basic, awareness of what the perspective is that they themselves inhabit. That is, they are not only inadequately aware of Buddhist teaching, but also, more fundamentally, they are inadequately aware of themselves.

Perspective on perspective, requires us to step out of sense

Gaining this perspective on our own perspective requires us partly to step out of our familiar sense of things, which at least at first results in a failure of sense: nonsense. The story illustrates this as follows: "No one answered. So Nansen boldly cut the cat in two pieces." This move violates several very basic Buddhist expectations. It is violent: killing violates fundamental Buddhist values. It appears to be radical over-reaction. As such, it does not seem like a recognizable solution of any kind: it is so gratuitous that it is nonsensical. This is purposeful on Nansen's part. Getting a perspective on oneself is not often gained by simply stopping and thinking about things: the monks had been given that opportunity continually in receiving the explicit teachings of their tradition, and had failed. Nansen responds by pushing this failure even further, violating any possible expectation, and thereby offers the monks a wholly fresh look at the situation. He provides them the chance to break through their state of being caught up without perspective in their attitudes and actions. If Nansen simply wanted them to be more attentive to Buddhist rules against arguing and possessiveness, he might have just verbally scolded them. But he does not do that—he responds to their lack of perspective and their violation of Buddhist rules, by perpetrating an even greater violation. He turns the situation into a complete violation of everything that makes sense to them.

Nansen disrupts sense itself, because this *is the means* to get a perspective on perspective. It is at this point in the story, when all of their expectations and values have been violated, when the story has turned nonsensical, that the monks have a genuine opportunity to step outside what they have so far taken for granted without being aware of it, and gain a perspective on their original dispute, their expectations of themselves, and their expectations of Nansen.

Students are very often puzzled by why Zen masters sometimes drink wine when it is forbidden, cut cats in two, speak gibberish, or give other anomalous responses. At least one important purpose of these actions is to demonstrate that even the Buddhist Dharma itself is useless if one lacks a perspective on that perspective. It is partly the perspective on perspective that the Zen masters are teaching, not simply traditional Buddhist values.

Zen masters do also show great respect for basic Buddhist values; but they consider them to be only genuinely valuable *after* one has the truly deep perspective on what a perspective actually is. This is illustrated in another story by a monk who has obviously already assimilated basic and advanced Buddhist practices.[20] A student asks Master Joshu: "If I haven't anything in my mind, what shall I do?" This suggests that the student is already accomplished in the meditations on emptiness. Joshu answers his question by saying: "Throw it out." The monk

asks: "But if I haven't anything, how can I throw it out?" Joshu responds, "Well, then carry it out." In this case, the monk is succeeding in practicing basic Buddhist meditation: he has emptied his mind. But Joshu's responses demonstrate that although the student has made some obvious progress in the practice, he has still somehow missed the more fundamental point. Practicing non-attachment to thoughts (becoming empty) *and* practicing non-attachment to the emptiness *itself* (non-attachment to the non-attachment) equally and together demonstrate an awareness of the more fundamental insight: our perspective or view of things is very valuable, but it needs to go together with a perspective on it in turn, an awareness that is not wholly absorbed in it.

Our general awareness involves our taking its organizing categories or "boxes" unawarely for granted, much as we cannot see our eyeballs while we are using them as the basis for our seeing. As a result, to be properly aware, we need to become aware of our "boxes" as well. But this second awareness does not eliminate these boxes: it is partly an awareness *of* our taking these things for granted. So proper awareness includes simultaneously and in the same respects (1) awareness, (2) awareness of awareness, (3) a "throwing out" of that awareness, and (4) awareness that we are throwing awareness out—in other words, also lack of awareness and awareness of lack of awareness.

This is in fact a version of the famous Zen Buddhist term "mu," sometimes expressed in the form of the logical tetrad: "it is this, and that, and both, and neither." It is nonsense: but it is the kind of nonsense that occurs when we have a perspective on sense itself or, in other words, when we make sense of sense itself, as sense itself requires, so that we are partly outside sense. As a perspective *on* or awareness *of* sense, it is nonsense that includes sense: it *itself* is "both and neither sense and not sense." As nonsense, it does not even have the unqualified sense of being identifiable simply and exclusively as nonsense!

Returning to sense/new sense of sense

Awareness of our perspective, then, not only makes us more properly and deeply aware of ourselves—aware of our "boxes"—but also actively returns us to the sense of things in general we take for granted *within* our perspective (or within a new perspective). When perspective on perspective is gained, it reveals itself to be nonsense, and, by contrast, the sense that occurs *within* taken-for-granted perspectives emerges, whether this is our own, old, familiar perspective or a new one that may happen to speak to us. What is more, because what is outside that perspective turns out to be nonsense, what makes sense inside turns out to be what we *should* take for granted, and so what we can be at peace in taking for granted. There is nothing beyond it, alternative to it, that makes sense. We are returned to the old sense with a renewed appreciation of it. (While at the same time, "multiculturally," we can also recognize and appreciate the equal validity of alternative and even conflicting senses of things as a whole that are taken for granted *inside other* perspectives.) "Throwing out emptiness" is a way of saying that the monk should return to the familiar, everyday sense of things: that she should recognize that she can let go of the nonsense of deeply questioning her perspective and instead appreciate the sense or meaningfulness of her familiar, everyday life.

In keeping with this idea, the modern Zen master, Shunryu Suzuki makes the following analogy between Zen meditation practice and eating brown rice:

> "How do you like Zazen [sitting meditation]? I think it may be better to ask, how do you like brown rice? Zazen is too big a topic. Brown rice is just right. Actually, there is not much difference. When you eat brown rice, you have to chew it, and unless you chew it, it is difficult to swallow. When you chew it very well, your mouth becomes part of the kitchen, and actually the brown rice becomes more and more tasty."[21]

Repeating the process

Zen stories sometimes demonstrate the same lesson multiple times in the same story. The "Nansen cuts the cat" story concludes:

> That evening Joshu returned and Nansen told him about [the cat incident]. Joshu removed his sandals and placing them on his head, walked out. Nansen said: "If you had been there, you could have saved the cat."

Joshu hears the story (regular sense making). He then engages in a nonsensical response (sandals on head, walking out). Nansen then expresses the new sense of the regular sense discursively and in a very ordinary way (awareness of perspective would have allowed the issue to be resolved without extreme measures like killing the cat). While Nansen expresses this new regular sense on the basis of the nonsensical response, he also does not draw on the content of that response. Joshu's response allows a return to and appreciation of the regular sense by simply falling away as the nonsense of an "outside the regular perspective" that it is. This part acts as a demonstration or summary of the earlier lesson.

Plato

Having a perspective on perspective

To turn to a Western example, the Socratic method shown in Plato's dialogues directly takes up the issue of having a perspective on one's perspective. The *Meno,* for instance, begins with Meno asking Socrates one of his culture's well-worn customary questions about virtue: "Can virtue be taught?"[22] Meno offers additional parts to the question (is it the result of practice? of nature? etc.). If Socrates were to take up any of the alternative opinions, and try to argue in favor or against them, he would remain within Meno's customary framework for making sense of this topic. Instead, however, he begins with the statements, "I do not even have any knowledge of what virtue itself is," and "also . . . as I believe, I have never yet met anyone else who did know" (71A-C). In other words, he is saying that they need to begin by getting a perspective on the whole idea of virtue, obvious though it may customarily be taken for granted to be, before they can really even ask whether or not it can be taught—or why that might or might not be a sensible or answerable question.

Meno effectively ignores Socrates' question, by simply remaining within his familiar way of making sense. He offers several conventional ideas about virtue, continuing to fit it into his familiar "boxes": it is the proper management of one's public affairs, desire for good things and the power to get them, and others (71E). And when Socrates questions each of these in turn, Meno adds familiarly related ideas: for example, the power to get good things, but in addition justly, piously, or with moderation (78D-E). Socrates, however, is actually asking Meno to *subtract* his ideas and their related concepts and turn his attention away from them to his assumptions about how they make sense. He is asking Meno to look at his general perspective, standpoint, or framework itself: in this case, to examine the sense of virtue itself. Without that, Meno is not deepening his understanding of virtue, but instead going in circles, recycling what he already takes for granted about virtue within his existing understanding of it. As Socrates says, "I begged you to tell me about virtue as a whole, [but] you are far from telling me what it is. Rather, you say that every action is virtue if it is performed with a part of virtue as if you had said what virtue is as a whole, so I would already know that, even if you fragment it into parts." (79B-C, our insertion).

Meno, then, continues to make assertions that come from his original assumptions, and they keep failing to give him a new perspective. Socrates responds by repeating his original question in different ways each time that Meno offers an answer, and in that way he metaphorically hammers away at these assumptions until they break.

Perspective on perspective, requires us to step out of sense

After several attempts and failures at getting perspective on virtue as a whole, Meno finally begins to lose his sense of things, and to enter the state of confusion and nonsense. He reaches the point where, instead of continuing to respond to the issues about the topic, he says: "Socrates, before I even met you I used to hear that you are always in a state of perplexity and that you bring others to the same state [and now] ... I am quite perplexed [*aporias*: in a state of being completely at a loss, of having no way out]" (79E-80A, our insertions). He goes on to compare Socrates to an electric eel that stings or shocks people until they are paralyzed, so that "my mind and my tongue are numb, and I have no answer to give you." He even playfully accuses Socrates of sorcery. At this point, all sense has failed for Meno. His investigation has simply ended in sheer (if playful) foolishness, and in particular in abandoning the area of sense that belongs to their topic.

Instead of dismissing what he says, Socrates actually plays along with the nonsense and pushes it even further, as Nansen did analogously with his students in the Zen example: Socrates flatters Meno's beauty, and then suggests that he would only be an eel if eels also make themselves numb as they do others. He says, "I am more perplexed than anyone when I cause perplexity in others" (80C). In other words, now neither of them has any idea what is going on. This profound general and resourceless perplexity leads Meno to despair that one cannot get to know anything: "How will you look for it, Socrates, when you do not know at all what it is? How will you aim to search for something you do not know at all? If you should meet with it, how will you know that this is the thing that you did not know?" (80D). This is the point where Meno has given up on his old sense-making framework, something he has been able to do only by pushing his perspective beyond its capacity to make and so provide sense. This state is what Socrates typically aims for as the beginning of wisdom, the state in which we are able to learn something beyond what our assumptions about how things make sense have pre-arranged for us. This is consequently also the first point in the dialogue where Meno and Socrates actually begin to address the original question in depth and without the clutter of Meno's original assumptions.

Returning to sense/new sense of sense

At this turning point, Socrates begin to persuade Meno that he need not be stuck in the paralysis, by reassuring him that exactly because he has arrived at the point of nonsense he can begin freshly again, and in fact is in an even better position to do so than when he first started. He is no longer blinded by his taken for granted presuppositions about the possible sense of the topic, and so can start *entirely* over: in other words, he can in fact start genuinely from the beginning for the first time. He can explore the relevant questions within the same world of familiar sense, but now being less prejudiced as to what that sense can involve.

Socrates offers a theory—based on a myth—that our souls have already learned all knowledge before descending into our bodies, so that all we need to do in order to come to know "new" things is to recollect what we already know (81A-D). He concludes, "I do not insist that my argument is right in all other respects, but . . . we will be better men, braver and less idle, if we believe that one must search for the things one does not know." (86B). The value of the myth for Socrates is not its content, and therefore not the sense that it might make in its own right, but the attitude it inspires in us. It returns us to exploring the familiar, everyday world, and its own sense or lack of sense becomes irrelevant in itself. And so Socrates brings us full circle: we are back to exploring within the world that we already know—but now in the context of an awareness that there is such a thing as our knowledge as a whole (in other words, with a sense of it, as it were, from the "outside"), and consequently with a perspective on the familiar sense of our topic and also on this whole process of exploration itself—a perspective whose own relation to sense is, naturally and appropriately, uncertain.

Conclusion

We would like to end by adding a reflection from the Daoist tradition:

The Wise ones muddle their minds for the sake of everyone under heaven.
Everyone sets their eyes and ears upon the wise ones. They make everyone laugh like children.[23]

Endnotes

1 Plato, for example, has Socrates in the *Phaedrus* describe the proper nourishment of the human soul as the sight of true being, the source of the being of all that is. True being dwells in the "place beyond the heavens," and we come to see it by passing beyond the boundaries of the encompassing heavens and standing "on the back of the world." Plato, Phaedrus, trans. R. Hackforth, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 247. Again, Aristotle describes "first philosophy" as the "science which . . . treats universally of being as being," and which seeks "the first principles and the highest causes." Aristotle, Metaphysics, trans. W. D. Ross, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: Random House, 1941), iv.1.1003a21-27. This idea of the nature of the highest wisdom is repeated in various ways throughout the history of western metaphysics.

2 Karl Jaspers, *Reason and Existenz: Five Lectures*, trans. William Earle (Milwaukee, Wi.: Marquette University Press, 1997), 111, 112, our insertion.

3 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 73, prop. 6.521, 74, prop. 6.54.

4 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2nd ed., trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), 48e, no. 119.

5 Plato, *Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds., Plato: The Collected Dialogues (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 518D.

6 Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 73.

7 Contingency, 73.

8 Jeffrey Stout notes "Rorty's apparent suggestion that . . . the creation of, and choice between, vocabularies . . . is something we exhibit outside one of those vocabularies," and argues that, instead, "choice between or among vocabularies itself always takes place within some vocabulary or other, although not always the same one." *Ethics after Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 263-264.

9 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1967), 123e, no. 713.

10 Donald Davidson, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 221, 198.

11 Derrida explains, for example, that since "I try to write the question: (what is) meaning to say?" his writing needs to avoid presupposing what meaning includes, and that consequently "it is necessary . . . that writing literally mean nothing." Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 14. And Irigaray writes, "It is surely not a matter of . . . remaining within the same type of utterance as the one that guarantees discursive coherence. . . . In other words, the issue is not one of elaborating a new theory . . . but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself . . . This 'style,' or 'writing,' of women tends to put the torch to . . . proper terms, well-constructed forms. . . [It involves] a proper(ty) that is never fixed in the possible identity-to-self of some form or other"; the reality of women does and must "remain elsewhere" to and "threaten the underpinnings of logical operations." Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 78-79, 76-77.

12 W. Barnett Pearce and Stephen W. Littlejohn, *Moral Conflict: When Social Worlds Collide* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 147.

13 See, for instance, Richard W. Paul, "Teaching Critical Reasoning in the Strong Sense: Getting Behind Worldviews," in Richard A. Talaska, ed., *Critical Reasoning in Contemporary Culture* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 135-156.

14 Judith Butler, "Competing Universalities," in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Zizek, eds., *Contin-*

gency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left (London: Verso, 2000), 166-167.

15 Bruce Kapferer, ed., *Beyond Rationalism: Rethinking Magic, Witchcraft and Sorcery* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 18-19.

16 William Butler Yeats, "Imitated From the Japanese," in *Collected Poems* (London: MacMillan, 1950), 340.

17 Many religious and philosophical traditions do not seem to echo the argument or pattern we are exploring here in their self-conscious teaching methods (although we would argue that some of them exhibit this conception without realizing it). The relevant religious traditions might be more properly called mystical or esoteric traditions. As it happens, even though they do not echo our argument in the way that Zen, Socrates, or Jesus might, studying them would (and does) result in the same process we are describing (moving from one sense making framework to another, with all of its confusion, senselessness, and new discovery). In other words, understanding these traditions requires the same process because they do not fit with the modern Western students' common sense-making frameworks. These mystical traditions themselves, however, do not echo our argument, because their emphasis is on teaching a particular sense-making framework without an outside perspective on it.

18 See "A Beardless Foreigner," in The Gateless Gate, in *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings*, compiled by Paul Reps and Nyogen Senzaki. (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 1985), 121. Bodhidharma is the legendary founder of Chan (Zen). He was reputed to be an Indian monk who traveled to China to teach the meditation tradition. He is generally depicted in art as bearded.

19 *The Gateless Gate*, 128.

20 101 *Zen Stories, in Zen Flesh, Zen Bones: A Collection of Zen and Pre-Zen Writings*, compiled by Paul Reps and Nyogen Senzaki. (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle Publishing, 1985), 57.

21 Shunryu Suzuki, *Not always so: practicing the true spirit of Zen*, ed. Edward Espe Brown. (New York: Quill, 2003), 40, our insertion.

22 Plato, Meno, trans. G. M. A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 70A.

23 *Dao De Jing* 49, translated by Jeffrey C. C. Ruff.

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