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Tropes of Transport

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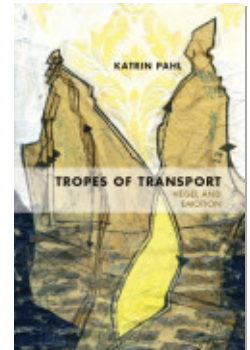
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Epilogue: Against Emotional Violence

Appadurai locates the reasons for the increase in global violence in the spread of specific emotional conditions. In *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*, he argues that the ethnic cleansings of the early 1990s in eastern Europe, Rwanda, and India, as well as the terror that has come to dominate the beginning of the new millennium, are the effects of a “geography of anger.” By this he means that global, regional, national, and local spaces are interwoven to replicate hatreds that are fueled by “social uncertainties” and ideological fears, such as the “anxiety of incompleteness” (Appadurai 2006, 8–10). Understandably, Appadurai doesn’t make it his job to thoroughly theorize the emotional conditions that he features so prominently in the title of his illuminating book, namely fear and anger. But the recent wealth of political analysis, such as his, that takes emotion, affect, or feeling into account while investigating specific political issues, makes a thorough theory of emotional phenomena all the more necessary.

Reemtsma argues as part of his wide-ranging critique of why modernity’s excesses of violence have not destroyed modern faith in modern institutions that the civilized taboo on violence makes us more sensitive and more susceptible to trauma (Reemtsma 2008, 136). In response to Reemtsma’s diagnosis, one might want to propose homeopathic doses of violence to raise the threshold for trauma again. It was perhaps in this spirit of remedying easy bourgeois traumatization that Fisher has made his case for what he calls the “vehement passions.” And it seems to me that much of modernity’s characteristic cultivation of sexual passion has been serving exactly this function of a homeopathic cure against epidemic trauma. But Reemtsma has a more mediated form of homeopathy in mind when he argues that the social and personal fragmentations so typical of modernity are the kind of violence that also provides the mechanisms to cope with trauma. Modern rationality—in the form of social and mental operations that distinguish, separate, and even split off parts of the self—can protect the person from being seized completely and broken irremediably by violence (Reemtsma 2008, 137). I

have shown throughout this book, and in particular in the last chapter (“Broken”), that such anti-totalizing gestures and self-differentiating mechanisms do not exclusively, and not even primarily, belong to rationality but are, rather, the domain of emotionality.

I subsume rationality under emotionality—in counter-distinction to cognitivist accounts of emotion, where emotions are shown to serve rational processes. I do so in the hope that a better awareness of the workings of emotionality will change what we accept as rationality, or, to put it more concisely, that emotionality will affect logic. I thus pursue a strategy slightly different from those accounts of affect that demand a radical separation of affect and cognition (because they want to foreground the values of emotion as irreducible to those of reason). In this conclusion, I will address two representatives of the separatist anti-cognitivist camp in emotion theory: one I disagree with—that is Fisher’s *The Vehement Passions*—and one I have a lot of affinities with, Altieri’s *The Particulars of Rapture*. Their book titles already indicate that they both favor emotional figures of complete seizure (passion for Fisher and rapture for Altieri). But one reinforces the bluntness of such seizure by insisting on vehemence while the other implies internal differentiation by promising the particulars.

My argument for the self-differentiating force of emotionality brings me into almost complete disagreement with Fisher’s case for pre-modern passion. Fisher wants to rehabilitate the passions that have been ostracized, as it were, by a long history of civilization. Beginning with Stoicism and continuing with the Enlightenment and the establishment of modern bourgeois society, Western culture has spent enormous disciplining energy to moderate and privatize passionate experiences. Fisher is interested in the passions over and against modern “emotions” or “moods,” not because the term “passion” vacillates fruitfully between passivity and activity (or because the term is tied to a rhetorical culture of affectation and self-affectation), but—quite to the contrary—because passion, in his view, propels to “immediate action” (Fisher 2002, 14).

He identifies two strands in the history of the discourse on the passions: one that models all passions on fear (the strand inaugurated by Stoicism) and one that describes their characteristics using the template of anger. Fisher himself praises the advantages of focusing on anger. “The inner material of anger is . . . the will,” he maintains, while “where fear is used as a template, as it was in Stoicism, the passions are taken as disturbances of the self, rather than internal material of the self” (Fisher 2002, 14). “No one,” he contends, “thinking of the passions by means of the template of anger could ever think of the passions as passive or opposed to actions” (ibid.). This is a rash claim, and I have shown in my

chapter on pathos that impassioned action must, from the perspective of even only a slight remove, indeed be deemed at least somewhat compulsive and unfree. The fact that Fisher brushes away any concerns about unfreedom within action leaves me wondering whether he equates anger with activity and fear with passivity simply because the object of fear might attack us while we might attack others in anger. He thus confuses emotion with behavior. By insisting that passion is “internal material” rather than a disturbance from the outside, Fisher assumes a substantive inner core (the will) and doesn’t get into view that the self disturbs itself. Not to mention that fear and anger are much closer connected than Fisher’s forced separation of two strands of passion theory wants to make us believe. The entanglement of anger and fear is evident everywhere in the work of Appadurai, who sees anger and hatred grow out of fear and anxiety as well as spur fear in return. But most importantly, Fisher’s celebration of sheer activism seems rather dangerous in light of Appadurai’s diagnosis of a global geography of anger.

What, then, are the values that drive Fisher’s account? Why does he want this truth about the passions and not another one? Fisher provides a bold answer to such questions when he suggests that “the template of anger . . . sponsors a fundamental claim for a model of human worth and dignity, inseparable from the passions and nearly equal to the worth and dignity of reason” (Fisher 2002, 15). This statement has two parts. He wants equal respect for passion and for reason. In addition, he claims to be invested in “human worth and dignity.” Let’s turn again to his descriptions of anger to see what such apparent humanism might entail: “In anger an outward-streaming energy, active, fully engaging the will and demonstrating the most explosive self-centered claims on the world and on others, makes clear the relation of the passions to spiritedness or to high-spiritedness, to motion, to confidence, and to self-expression in the world” (Fisher 2002, 13). When he speaks of “human worth and dignity,” Fisher, thus, clearly means that of the self—over and against the worth and dignity of the other. Indeed, he endorses “the most explosive self-centered claims . . . on others.” “The passions,” he argues, “assert a world in which there is only a single person over against all others” (Fisher 2002, 64). The vehement passions he wants to rehabilitate are impervious to arguments. They have a “fixed and immobile quality, a stubborn indiscussable intensity” (Fisher 2002, 67). And the passionate person is asocial and tyrannical; he creates in one swoop “a kinglike or godlike world where only the reality of his anger . . . has any importance”—that is to say, “a world in which there is only one center and all others exist as circumference” (Fisher 2002, 69).

But there are indeed also values to the passions. According to

Fisher, passions center the self and show who we truly are. "In a moment of extreme [passion], the self is completely given" (Fisher 2002, 54). Such centering is achieved by the "absorbing concentration on one present-time object." Fisher observes that "instead of diversified investment," passion "solidifies attention in the direction of one monopolizing fact" (Fisher 2002, 62). He underscores that such focus creates a sense of unity and intensity: "In the moment of extreme [passion] . . . full momentary unity of the self is achieved, and it is a unity in which each part is pitched at a peak of activity" (Fisher 2002, 54). Typically modern frustrations, such as the mind-body split or the hierarchy among the personal faculties, are overcome in the state of passion: "All the parts of the self . . . —the body . . . , the mind . . . , the soul or spirit . . . —can . . . be demonstrated in an impassioned state not merely to be connected but to pervade one another so as to be capable of being fully and simultaneously present" (Fisher 2002, 55). From this sense of "living life to the fullest" stems the tremendous attraction of passionate states: "within the passions lies the most potent experience of our own individual reality of which we are capable" (Fisher 2002, 60).

The separate values of the passions, in Fisher's account, are authenticity and absorption, unity of self and full presence. These are values that are not commonly associated with the antisocial and anti-democratic ethos that Fisher exhibits. But the brashness of Fisher's argument has the advantage that it clearly and unmistakably reveals the indeed inherent link between the desire for authenticity and the need for violence.¹ Fisher's account privileges passion over less vehement emotional states such as mood, emotion, or feeling because his appreciation of authenticity and fullness of life creates a strong need for vehement states. But such fullness is short-lived and doesn't happen very frequently. The transient experience of passion creates a longing desire for passionate states. Similarly, once we are in a state of heightened passion, Fisher admits, "we are protecting [its vehemence] from interruption by other moods or other claims" (Fisher 2002, 67). Here we get a hint of the actual fragility of vehemence. It requires a lot of energy to boost and protect the supposedly "natural" states of high passion. And sometimes, it simply requires violence.

The feeling of absorption that the passions afford comes at the expense of the reality of others: "With extreme fear, we seem to enter a world where no other person any longer exists" (Fisher 2002, 60). The intensity of high passion is also bought at the expense of other realities of the self. Vehemence lies in "the most uncompromising experience of the present moment of time. That moment of pure present time stands

uninflected and uncompromised by any secondary feeling for claims of other times past or future in which, under other circumstances, we might imagine our identity invested” (ibid.). Intersubjective and intra-subjective differences suffer equally in moments of great passion. Passionate states deny inner difference, that is to say, the fact that we are both more and less than one person and that we are invested in various different versions of ourselves. They also deny outer difference, that is to say, the friction that the various claims of others provide. The monopolizing attention of vehement passion does not care about the destruction of any of the things and values—and in extremis even people—which at that moment do not fall within its focus. Fisher’s example of Achilles—who, in his extreme anger, “withdraws into a solitude from which he can watch the destruction of his own social world”—supports what we have seen in chapter 2, namely that the self-destructive stubbornness of the tragic hero provides evidence for the peculiar indifference of single-minded passion to the complexities of life and the subtleties of transport (Fisher 2002, 64). That the passionate hero doesn’t have the energy and mind to rescue his world makes sense because his passion has already (if subjectively and temporarily) annihilated that world: significant others, as well as all previous and future realities of the self, have become utterly irrelevant.

Transport

I have cast emotionality not as passion, but as transport. While passion singularizes, transport pluralizes—it pluralizes both the subject who “has” the emotion and the subject that the emotion is. My account therefore does not explain all emotionality through one paradigmatic transport (it belongs neither to Fisher’s anger strand nor to the fear strand he identifies as governing the discourse on emotion). Instead, it brings out the internal differences of transports. For example, I have shown how the orgasmic quality of release that indeed seems to bring the *Phenomenology* to a passionately heroic end is offset by its sorrowful quality: the grief about the many figures of consciousness that were former selves and that have been negated along the way. Through this grief, the subject of the *Phenomenology* (spirit) connects with its former selves. It might seem contradictory, but release relates. Transports are modes of self-relation that both project future selves and remember past selves. The ejaculatory valence of release projects the *Phenomenology* into the future, while

the sustained process of relinquishing, that is part of release, involves remembrance.

The transports that are thus divided also divide or pluralize the subject. The characteristic ambivalence of transports unsettles those who try their best to experience them. They constantly need to renegotiate the specific valences and internal distributions of that ambivalence. I thus describe transports as driven by Hegelian dialectic, which is precisely not a regulated process of calm resolution through mediation of in themselves stable terms, but a messy dynamic where each pole is folded into its opposite so that both continually and internally modify one another, and where recognition (*Erkennen*) doesn't follow with necessity but "bursts forth" as if by accident (§ 786).

Transports transform and they create a multiplicity of selves along the way. Altieri has argued that feelings can activate and advance processes of transformation, especially if we adopt the right attitude toward them. In a wonderful reading of "The Dead," the last story in Joyce's *Dubliners*, Altieri shows that expanding one's capacities to both express and read feelings (that is to say, cultivating an aesthetic approach to affective states) enables change (Altieri 2003, 220–30). Using Hegel against Butler here, Altieri appreciates that such change of self be achieved not through a re-signification of the codes that interpellate the subject but through "recontextualization." He attributes more agency to the subject than Butler does. At the same time, his seemingly introspective approach (self-transformation via thorough explorations of feelings) is indeed aesthetic and outward-oriented. It transforms the world. The self must change by creating a new world, a new context for itself. The affinities with the procedure of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* are evident. Here, the protagonist/s are transported with reflective emotion to make existential shifts in perspective: with the transition to a new worldview, a whole new world emerges.

The emotional subject is never an individual. It is divided or multiplied within by the history of its previous figurations that are *aufgehoben* or folded into the story of its future unfoldings. The boundaries of the emotional subject are troubled; it is not a self-centered but an ek-static subject, or better, a subject in transport. Altieri foregrounds this interstitial character of emotional transport when he observes that Gabriel, the main character of Joyce's "The Dead," "does not so much create new meaning as learn to dwell more attentively at the edges of meaning, where he can begin to see why his sense of self-importance cannot suffice" (Altieri 2003, 228). Transports take place at the edges of meaning, at the margins of worlds, or, as Cixous puts it, "at the corner, at the angle" between states (Cixous 1997, 42).

Plasticity

Emotional subjectivity is plastic. In the last chapter, I have used the term “rubber subject” to describe the plasticity of emotionality. My discussion of the rubber subject of despair has shown the positive aspects of ambivalence and dividedness, namely that emotionality conceived as transport never seizes the person as a whole. Altieri also underscores the satisfaction that plasticity affords. He describes plasticity as “the capacity of a psyche or a work of art to establish satisfaction in holding together without collapsing diverse aspects of experience which all have substantial claims upon us” (Altieri 2003, 205). For him, plasticity thus means the flexible negotiation of ambivalence and complexity. Even though he appreciates the capacity to “hold together without collapsing,” Altieri, rather haphazardly, rejects dialectical mediation (*ibid.*).² In contrast, I consider Hegelian dialectic as a great tool not for reconciling what is torn, but for reconciling oneself to tears. Speculative plasticity thus strengthens us precisely for, as Altieri puts it, “dwelling emotionally within what the oppositions help unfold” (Altieri 2003, 206).

But wherein exactly lies the satisfaction that complexity, ambivalence, and plasticity afford? Transports set us free despite, or precisely because of, the intensity of their call. They “eat us alive” (they consume us and make us come alive). Their intensity and vitality stems not from force or weight but from the diversity of their address. With Hegel—who of course famously sponsors “the whole”—we can say that transports foster a version of the whole that is not unified, solid, and consistent but internally differentiated, articulated, and unfolding.³ Even though it might be difficult to respond to contradictory claims, the interstices between the different aspects of the experience of transport always leave us space to breathe. The transported self never goes all out, so to speak. Transports are differentiated forms of emotionality that self-augment and self-attenuate through reflection and that mobilize the self’s resources to reflect and save itself. Put differently, the emotional subject or the subject in transport doesn’t have to die for its passion.

As we have seen when analyzing Fisher’s account of vehement passion, the topic of emotion is often used to buttress an unelastic first-person perspective and a blunt narcissism. Yet, the plasticity of emotional subjectivity includes the capacity to switch from my first-person to other first-person perspectives and to appreciate other singularities without losing my own (see chapter 4, “Juggle”). One of the greatest values of plasticity lies in its encompassing both intra- and intersubjective relations while intertwining them. Altieri distinguishes between plasticity and “involvedness,” another major advantage of affective life. By “involvedness”

he means the appreciation for the affective lives of others. To me, such involvedness is part of plasticity precisely because the plastic subject of emotionality relates to itself as another, and feels the other as itself. It can sympathize with others because it has learned to sympathize with itself. Interpersonal emotional relations are formed by way of a complex interplay of “sympathy and distance . . . fully conjoined” (Altieri 2003, 223). And not only does “using self-awareness [in affective matters] as a means of appreciating what creates significance and shapes dispositions in other lives” show the identificatory aspect of sympathy, but it also reveals that without such appreciation self-transformation would not be possible (Altieri 2003, 195). Every seemingly independent individual that forms emotional relations to others is itself already mediated, that is to say, it is the result of a history of emotional self-transformations that, each time, involve the mediation through or identification with others and that also, each time, deposit a remainder of otherness within the self.

Alternately, one can view the different selves that develop along the way of emotional self-transformation not so much as different articulations of one and the same subject, but indeed as different subjects with independent existences that then can relate to one another as if through sympathy across distance. Emotional plasticity is able to hold both perspectives together.

The discourse on emotion often serves the self-congratulatory celebration of humanity, but the most stunning and rewarding achievement of plasticity lies in its impersonal sympathy. To offer an example, I would like to turn briefly to Altieri’s reading of the concluding stanza of Wallace Stevens’s “Sunday Morning.” Altieri shows a fine sense for the other-than-human quality of emotionality when he observes that “the poem’s final reflections try to expand the affective field into an elastic space” (Altieri 2003, 206):

And in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink
Downward to darkness, on extended wings. (quoted in Altieri 2003,
206)

Even though Altieri locates the agency of this plasticity at first in an actant that can be readily identified as the expression of human agency, namely the poem (“the poem’s final reflections try to expand”), he quickly shifts to the non-human agency of pigeons: “The pigeons stretch out this isolated sky . . . and their ‘ambiguous undulations’ also slow down the time framed by that sky” (Altieri 2003, 207). The plastic

capacities of pigeons stretch human worries about mortality into the elastic space of a sky. As if contagioned with the undulating ambiguity of the pigeons' motions, the vital materiality of the literary language follows suit: "Sound and syntax also work to slow down the sentence by suspending clauses and by playing long vowels and lush n and d sounds against the temporal flow of the sentence" (ibid.). And here the specific reward of this plasticity comes to the fore: "At first, the poem could not reconcile in one space the idea of religious value and the fact of mortality. But now we can see that . . . resolution may be possible if we can simply approach consciousness as if it could treat its own embodiment as closely allied to the force of these extended wings" (ibid.). A subtle and calm—perhaps "casual"—satisfaction lies in the practice of consciousness—be it that of the poet, the speaker, or the reader—to treat itself as "closely allied" with the elastic movements of other bodies and to get a plastic afterfeeling (*nachempfunden*) for the ambiguity of the pigeons' casual fall (see chapter 4).

Syntax

Such plasticity that extends into the impersonal calls into question—and here I differ from Altieri's account—the "experience" character of emotional transports. Rather than somehow merely providing the raw stuff for human experience and representation, emotionality articulates itself. It has a syntax of its own.

Using the example of trembling, I have elaborated that consciousness can never fully experience a transport (i.e., it is not capable of the experience of absolute fear) but gets eclipsed in the transition from one version of self to another and can therefore relate to the actual transport only indirectly. Nancy submits that "the subject is—or makes up—the experience of its being affected" (Nancy 2002, 42). "To make up" means "to form" but also "to fabricate."⁴ As experience, transport always has a fabricated quality to it. The human subject "has" the experience of absolute fear (for example) only in the future perfect, that is to say, it has to make up the experience retrospectively and in anticipation.

Nevertheless, subject and emotionality are synonymous in Nancy's statement ("the subject is—or makes up—the experience of its being affected"). Transports are self-relations. But by this I mean that emotionality relates to itself. Highlighting the impersonality of transport must overlap with the inverse strategy, namely, to personify emotionality itself. Emotionality is fundamentally performative. That is to say,

emotionality constitutes herself as a subject in transport in response to her dividedness, a dividedness which always also has the character of an interpellation—before other (witnessing) subjects who are thereby equally transported (compare the contagion of “Moi” with the emotionality of Rameau’s nephew that I have discussed in the introduction). No human subject is necessary for this emotional self-relation or performative interpellation to take place. Human subjects can be involved, but the whole dynamic is never quite a personal “experience.” If transports can be called “experiences” at all, this term would refer to emotionality’s experience of itself; but in any case it would be a mediated, articulated, and indirect experience—the experience of a plural, syntactic, and ambiguous subjectivity.

As made-up experiences, transports do not take place in time, but they shape—and even constitute—time. I thus agree with Fisher when he argues, building on Hume’s account of relative measure, that “by means of the passions, time undergoes granulation and is given units other than the mechanical and identical units of seconds, minutes, hours, days, and years” (Fisher 2002, 76). His focus on the vehement passions frames Fisher’s consideration of temporality and makes him describe the passionate subject as exclusively concerned with the pressing quality of nearby time (the immediate past and the imminent future). Such urgency does not at all belong to the temporal features of transports. In chapter 5, I have explored how the transport of mutual acknowledging (which crosses mutual embrace with mutual penetration) makes time flow or blow in reverse. The winds and rivers of Hölderlin’s poem “Andenken” there gave evidence to the ambivalent pulls of such cross-vectored time. The mutual reflections among and between the moments of transport add a spatial character to time—rendering it extremely slow and thick.⁵ Hegel shows not only that knowledge (*Erkennen*) is inherent in emotionality but also that this part of the transport of acknowledging is unending—mutual acknowledging is the trope of the repeated incipience of knowledge (*Anerkennen*). We have encountered another example of the decelerating, cross-vectored time of emotionality in the “ambiguous undulations” of Stevens’s pigeons. An image of mutual embrace and penetration, the casual flocks of pigeons both embrace and stretch the sky with their extended wings while being held by the sky and pierced with its darkness so that they sink down. Chapter 7 has shown that transports break and multiply the subject, and in chapter 6 I discussed how the breaks within/between the subject/s reorient time. Time trembles back and forth across these cracks and, as a result, those subjects who would be distant from one another on a linear time continuum come to overlap here, in the broken temporality of transport.

Throughout this book, I have pursued different genre considerations, describing Hegel's *Phenomenology* as a narrative, as a theatrical piece, and as a poem, as well as making an argument about emotionality as constitutively theatrical (it needs a scene in order to transport one; see chapter 3, "Release") and about the experience of transport as essentially narrative (it becomes available only via anticipation or retrospection; see chapter 6, "Tremble"). At this point, I want to underscore again that the mediated structure and specific temporality of emotionality resonates most thoroughly with poetry. This is so not so much because of the characteristic subjectivity of lyric poetry but because of its rhythm. Poetic rhythm generates a different kind of syntax than that of logical sequence and rule-bound subordination.

Lyric poetry, says Hegel, "allows particular ideas to subsist alongside one another . . . whereas thinking demands and produces dependence of things on one another, reciprocal relations, logical judgments, syllogisms, etc."⁶ Things and ideas (and voices and sounds and fonts, among other things) subsist alongside one another in the poem, without a clear hierarchy. Different versions of the same poem (one that foregrounds a sound structure, one that highlights a certain meaning, one that focuses on the visual line breaks, for example) are layered one upon the other. These versions are certainly not unrelated. Their distinction and connection, their affinities and frictions, their reflections across their incongruences build an emotional syntax.

Lightheartedness

The more the emotional subject wants to experience sincere and substantive emotion, the more it becomes palpable (first of all to the emotional subject itself) that such emotional substance must be produced (that experience must be made) by a rather tenuous operation of intensification through reflection and cross-identification—the concentration of emotional energy through a play of mirrors. The (non-)experience of the sublime, Pfau has shown convincingly, means the death of natural feeling (see the end of chapter 1). From hence on feeling has something fictional about it.

On the other hand, even a cynic would not be able to deny her impotence to fabricate transports completely at will. That we need to make up the experience of transport does not give us a fully constructionist version of emotion. Malabou's "*voir venir*"—which she devised to "represent that interplay, within Hegelian philosophy, of teleological necessity

and surprise”—also brilliantly captures the (un)anticipatory structure of transport: we are sure of what is coming and yet we don’t know what is coming (Malabou 2005, 13). Feelings surface when we least suspect them and fail to come about when we think we should feel something. In their fleetingness they escape our control even though we participate in their production. Even if it is very slight, a transport always bursts. Transports form a language that evades us in a way that is similar to ironic language. Indeed, the awareness of the intrinsically ironic character of language in general (the fact that we cannot with final certainty prevent our utterances from turning against us, or others from twisting our words) facilitates the acceptance of the ambiguity of transports, of the fact that we are both subjects of emotion and subject to emotion. Instead of suffering from this condition, one might playfully embrace it.

In the first two chapters, I have discussed Hegel’s critique of naturalizing accounts of emotion. The second part of the book (on emotional syntax) has therefore explored Hegelian emotionality as largely synonymous with negativity. It has emphasized the tears (in both pronunciations), the blanks, the synopes, and the brokenness of subjectivity, as well as the unending quality of the labor of the negative. As a result, my discussion has featured quite a few primarily negative emotions (grief, shame, fear, despair). But Hegel also offers the element of levity, improvisation, and playfulness that lifts the weight and earnestness from the Hegelian “labor of the negative.” Loosely quoting Goethe’s translation of Diderot’s *Rameau’s Nephew*, Hegel notes with regard to the performative quality of transports that “a strain of the ridiculous will be blended in . . . , which denatures [feelings] [*ihnen ihre Natur benimmt*]” (§ 521). Rameau’s nephew exemplifies the emotional subjectivity operative throughout the *Phenomenology*, and this emotional subjectivity is not characterized by consistency and integrity but instead slides through a whole scale of tones and feelings. The range and speed of the nephew’s performances turns up the ludicrous and silly aspect of emotionality. It undoes the idea that feelings are natural and therefore can and must be frankly expressed and respected.

Brushing aside the usual scholarly insistence on Hegel’s supposed scorn for irony, Trilling contends that “Hegel in his *Phenomenology* goes far towards explaining the intellectual value that irony may be supposed to have” (Trilling 1972, 12). Clearly, there is also an emotional value to irony that we can read off the *Phenomenology*. Rather than suffering from its inability to achieve a fundamental unity of self and to safeguard the sincerity of natural feeling, spirit takes its tears lightly. It mocks itself. The very articulation of disruption that Rameau’s nephew accomplishes “is” in turn “the derisive laughter about the disorientation of the whole and

about itself" (§ 524). The phrase "disorientation of the whole" must remind us of Hegel's description of truth in the preface: "The truth is the whole. However, the whole is only the essence completing itself through its own unfolding [*Entwicklung*]" (§ 20, trans. modified). Through the figure of the nephew, spirit explicitly acknowledges that its journey of formation—this whole, which is the truth—is indeed confusing and confused. Trilling concludes that "if 'the whole' is seen as 'confused' rather than as orderly and rational . . . the human relation to it need not be fixed and categorical; it can be mercurial and improvisational" (Trilling 1972, 121). Spirit's laughter about itself liberates its readers and its various conscious manifestations (or figures of consciousness) from the weight of the "labor of the negative."

I share Trilling's appreciation for contingency, improvisation, and levity in Hegel. But I am not exclusively concerned with "the human relation" to spirit. I consider irony to be not just a rhetorical device, but also a constitutive factor of emotionality itself. Trilling's wonderfully simple description of irony as an instrument to establish a disconnection, detachment, or reflective distance "between the speaker and his interlocutor, or between the speaker and that which is being spoken about, or even between the speaker and himself," nevertheless does not get into view the non-instrumental and non-anthropogenic forms of irony (Trilling 1972, 120). While Ngai has argued that a particular group of emotions—she calls them "ugly feelings"—have a special relationship to irony, it seems to me that it is rather a certain understanding of emotion that brings the ironic quality of emotionality to the fore.⁷ The account that I have offered here—of emotionality as a relation to alterity that is internally mediated—clearly relies on the slight and volatile distance that irony provides. Irony is part of emotionality. The tremendous energy that naturalizing accounts of emotion have to spend in the attempt to keep irony out of the emotional picture (by locking feeling into the heart or by dramatizing the weight of passion) only proves this point.

Irony ruins pathos and breaks hearts. Yet there is no need to get overly invested in the pathos of distance, either. The "generous irony" that Altieri envisions overlays, in my view, self-differing with the inverse operation, namely excessive presencing (Altieri 2003, 228). The heart breaks but one doesn't suffer in earnest because what "bursts forth" is the "Yes" of affirmation (§ 786). The heart bursts into laughter. If all goes well, the ironic account of emotion proposed in this book encourages hearts to stop laboring at dramatizing passion and to embrace lightheartedness instead. Such lightheartedness may well take the form of excessive sentimentality.

If the experience of transport is that "I am an other," then "I" cannot

fully live up to my feelings. The dishonesty lies not only in the linguistic expression. To be certain, I cannot mean what I say when I say "I love you." In the final analysis, I will be unable to prove or even justify this declaration (see Smock 2003). But the hypocrisy of declarative language comes from the fact that transport itself is performative; it cannot provide a substantive referent for linguistic description. My discussion of fear in chapter 6 has shown that one can never fully experience fear because the experience divides the self. In love and in fear, to remain with these examples, we are unable to be serious. A certain kind of lightheartedness always slips into the experience of emotionality. We are incapable of owning up to our self-descriptions when we say that we fear or that we love, because transports keep changing the subject. Emotions are a joke, and we are laughable when emotional.

But in its very impotence lies also the innocence of emotionality. Most accounts of feeling since the eighteenth century construct innocence as naive and natural feeling as uncontaminated by reflection, while knowledge is seen as bringing about the fall from natural grace and thus as guilty. Yet, in a speculative account of emotionality innocence and guilt, reflection and feeling are maintained one within the other. Innocence might then be described as the practice of bearing "the unbearable remoteness of incessant pain," or love, or shame, or fear, or any other unjustifiable feeling that is irretrievable yet inescapable in its remoteness from itself (Smock 1984, 61). Bearing the lightheartedness of emotionality then coincides with protecting emotionality from our urge to mean it. Such practice could reduce the need for violence that stems from our terror of being nothing but a joke.

Of course, sooner or later we will fail this innocence, the trope of transport will add one more spin and innocence will turn into guilt, love into hate, and the remoteness of pain into the immediacy of a blow (see Smock's discussion of Melville's "Billy Budd" in Smock 2003). But, despite such turns for the worse, we have now caught a glimpse of the turn from pretense to innocence. We might want to linger for a while and join this revel of valences in which no member is not drunk. The turn from pretense to innocence can also be described as a return from modern emotionality to an eighteenth-century sentimentality now conceived differently. If emotionality turns back into sentimentality, this return displaces the trope of the heart: sentimentality now can be understood not as an investment in sincerity but as a hyperpresence, a playful relation to lack. To the self-reflexive staging of emotionality this sentimentality responds with an excess of sincerity, the very excessive character of which, Sokolsky argues, mocks any sincere investment in sincerity.⁸

The heart breaks and breaks and breaks and each breaking heals

without leaving scars, mocking the impossible verdict of self-expression with lightheartedness. “Unabashed sentimentality would be understood not as a search for an encompassing substantial unity, but instead as an attempt to render unintelligible both this search and the counterargument that one must fail to be adequate to oneself” (Sokolsky 1987, 83). Instead of naively denying alienation or forcefully prohibiting unity, sentimentality in this sense takes the heterogeneity of the self so excessively and unreasonably seriously that, together with the allegedly natural unity of the “I,” it loses also the “conceptual means to describe this loss as loss” (ibid.). Among her excessive tears such a sentimentalist suffers no sense of loss. If emotionality all too often turns either into the violent negation of the vulnerability that runs through the condition of self-differentiability (as in the turn from impossible love to a very possible hate) or else into the self-punishing prohibition of unity, excessive sentimentality offers over-presence or being “too much oneself” as a playful yet critical alternative. This ludic relation to lack challenges the self-tormenting obsession with lack as both too serious and not serious enough. Compared with unabashed sentimentality, the melodrama of self-denial still subscribes, despite its own declarations to the contrary, to a logic of non-contradiction that is unable to conceive of negativity, alienation, and reflection as embroiled with presence, innocence, and naïveté.⁹ It is the distinction of Hegel’s speculative philosophy that it affirms the overlap between the mediated and the immediate, between irony and sincerity, and between the fervent and the cool.

