

Ludwig Wittgenstein and Klaus Mollenhauer's *Forgotten Connections*
Norm Friesen & Merilee Hamelock (July 2012; nfriesen@tru.ca)

Introduction

Klaus Mollenhauer's *Forgotten Connections: On Culture and Upbringing* (1983) is internationally regarded as one of the most important German contributions to philosophy of education and curriculum theory in the 20th century. It has been translated into Japanese, Norwegian, Swedish, Spanish and Dutch, but is only now appearing for the first time in English. It is one of only two or three works on the history and philosophy of education from post-war Germany to be made available in English.¹

Mollenhauer (1928-1998) is a post-war German pedagogical theorist whose work focuses on critical pedagogy and the cultural and historical nature of education and child rearing. Terms that are used for some of these themes in the aforementioned translation include *Bildung* and upbringing. *Bildung* is taken directly from the German, referring to the biographical "formation" of the self, and *upbringing* is used to capture some of the broader meanings of the German term *Erziehung* (which is often simply translated as "education"). Mollenhauer's understanding of these terms is similarly broad. "[U]pbringing [*Erziehung*] and *Bildung*," he says, "always have to do with the culture as a whole, and the social structures that are a part of it" (in press, p. 13).² He describes his own book, *Forgotten Connections* as "nothing more than a rough sketch of what a general study in *Bildung* and upbringing could consist of today" (p. 14). In this book, Mollenhauer identifies that the "task of upbringing and *Bildung*...is a debt owed by the adult generation to children" (p. 10), explaining further that

Satisfactory answers [for questions raised by this task are] ...not provided by theories of child development, of teaching and learning, of educational psychology, socialization, interaction, or of schools and curricula. Responses in these areas are necessary but also insufficient. This is because the work of upbringing and *Bildung* always has to do with the aspects of our common heritage that are passed on from generation to generation, and their value in the present and for the future. (p. 13)

Mollenhauer refers to "cultural heritage" as that which "adults bring to children" (p. 12) and he contends that one of the main ways this cultural heritage is provided through children witnessing the lives of adults around them. Culture and heritage in this context do not refer to ethnic traditions –such as songs and recipes dusted off for the holidays or multicultural celebrations. Instead, these terms signify the practices, experiences and values shared by those participating in a society in general –at home, at work, in leisure, as well as at school.

¹ The only exceptions of which I am aware are Adorno's works on education (e.g., "Education after Auschwitz"), and Luhmann and Schorr's *Problems of Reflection in the System of Education* (in a rather difficult translation).

² The chapters of the translation of *Forgotten Connections* cited here are currently available at no charge at: <http://www.culture-and-upbringing.com>. The pagination referenced corresponds to this draft version.

Mollenhauer suggests that the passing on of such culture and heritage is particularly apparent when children learn their first language or mother tongue. Accordingly, the question “*How* is language actually learned and what exactly *does* a person learn when they learn a language?” is central for Mollenhauer. He says that it “has preoccupied philosophers from Plato to Wittgenstein” (FC, p.18). From this range of philosophers, it is Augustine (354 - 430 CE), and particularly, Wittgenstein (1889 - 1951) who appear to be most important in Mollenhauer’s response.

Augustine’s autobiographical *Confessions* contains one of the first accounts of a child learning to speak. Its divergent interpretation both by Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* and subsequently by Mollenhauer in *Forgotten Connections* form the initial focus of this paper. The ways in which Augustine’s account is understood by both thinkers reflects much about their understanding of language, culture and education. The divergence of these two interpretations also throws into sharp relief Mollenhauer’s particular, dialogical understanding of “the call” –a central pedagogical notion articulated by Augustine, and reinterpreted by Mollenhauer through his reading both of the *Confessions* and of Wittgenstein’s *oeuvre*.

Language Games and Upbringing

We thus begin by quoting (at some length) Augustine’s famous description of language learning—a passage also cited by both Mollenhauer and Wittgenstein:

Passing hence from infancy, I came to boyhood, or rather it came to me, displacing infancy. Nor did that depart, – (for whither went it?) – and yet it was no more. For I was no longer a speechless infant, but a speaking boy. This I remember, and have since observed how I learned to speak. It was not that my elders taught me words (as, soon after, other learning) in any set method; but I, longing by cries and broken accents and various motions of my limbs to express my thoughts, that so I might have my will, and yet unable to express all I willed, or to whom I willed, did myself, by the understanding which Thou, my God, gavest me, practice the sounds in my memory. Then they named anything, and as they spoke turned towards it, I saw and remembered that they called what they would point out by the name they uttered. And that they meant this thing and no other was plain from the motion of their body, the natural language, as it were, of all nations, expressed by the countenance, glances of the eye, gestures of the limbs, and tones of the voice, indicating the affections of the mind, as it pursues, possesses, rejects, or shuns. By repeatedly hearing words in particular positions in various sentences, I gradually learned which things the various words stood for, and having acclimated my mouth to these signs, I thereby gave utterance to my will. (Augustine, Book I, Chapter 1; E.B. Pusey translation; cited in Mollenhauer, p. 17 & in Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 2)³

³ Wittgenstein cites only the second half of this passage in Latin (beginning with “Then they named anything”) in the *Philosophical Investigations*.

In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein writes that “these words” of Augustine “give us a particular picture of the essence of human language.” According to this picture, “the individual words in language name objects,” and sentences are seen simply as being “combinations of such names” (1953, p. 2). This understanding of human language, Wittgenstein emphasizes, is clearly deficient: there does not seem to be any differentiation between kinds of words and sentences; instead, language is reduced primarily to a series of regular and proper nouns (i.e. to words such as “table,” “chair,” “bread,” or names of people or places), and to acts of pointing and labeling. “The remaining kinds of words” and actions, Wittgenstein argues, are simply understood “as something that will take care of itself” (p. 2). In this context, Wittgenstein can be understood as critiquing a “picture” of language that he himself articulated much earlier in his career, in the *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*. Unlike his posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations*, the *Tractatus* offers the reader not so much a range of questions and paradoxes, but a series of logically interconnected statements, hierarchically ordered under seven main propositions. Among these are formulations proposing (for example) that “objects can only be *named*,” with “signs” being “their representatives” (2001, p. 15; italics in original).

These kinds of claims are diametrically opposed to the commentary on Augustine in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Here, Wittgenstein is unsparing in his critique of the “philosophical concept of meaning” that he sees as implicit in Augustine’s account. Wittgenstein regards such a concept of meaning as appropriate only for a system more primitive or simplistic than what we know as “language.” “Augustine... does describe a system of communication,” Wittgenstein admits, but “not everything that we call language is this system” (p.3). Wittgenstein sums up what he sees as the limitations of the Augustinian account of language with a particularly rich metaphor:

Augustine describes the learning of human language as if the child came into a strange country and did not understand the language of the country; that is, as if it already had a language, only not this one. Or again: as if the child could already think only not yet speak (Wittgenstein, pp. 13-14, as cited in Mollenhauer, p. 21)

Augustine’s description of language learning, Wittgenstein is saying, is ultimately circular. It attempts to account for the way in which languages are learned, but it can only do so by assuming that the child already knows *another* language, like someone learning a second language in a foreign country. It presupposes what it claims to explain, and as Wittgenstein has famously remarked, all “explanations come to an end somewhere.”

Wittgenstein instead proposes an “expansion of language” in order to understand original language learning –one that goes well beyond the familiar account of pointing and naming. He develops his famous notion of the “language game” to do this. Wittgenstein’s suggestion is that pointing and naming –and other, more playful forms involved in childhood language learning– provide only one example of a

language game, one game among many that together constitute a much larger game, “the whole process of using words:”

I... will sometimes speak of a primitive language as a language-game. I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the “language-game.”...the term “language-game” is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life. (1953, p. 5)

For Wittgenstein, to think of any particular type of language use –whether reporting, describing or pointing– is to think also of an activity, or more simply: “to imagine a language means to imagine a form of life (*Lebensform*)” (p. 8). Wittgenstein is able to conceive of a wide range of language games and corresponding forms of life:

It is easy to imagine a language consisting only of orders and reports in battle. – Or a language consisting only of questions and expressions for answering yes and no. And innumerable others. (1953, p. 8)

Among these innumerable others, Wittgenstein imagines languages that might be used for “reporting an event,” for “speculating about an event” and –significantly for this paper– for “a child us[ing] such primitive forms of language when it learns to talk.” In this last example, Wittgenstein emphasizes that “here the teaching of language is not explanation, but training” (or *Abrichten*, which could also be translated as “drilling,” p.4). The child needn’t be subjected to a complex series of explanations to learn language. Instead, the meanings of a child’s first words, Wittgenstein implies, can be acquired arbitrarily, through drill and training.

Wittgenstein is arguing, in other words, childhood language learning – whether it is conceived as drilling and training or pointing and naming – is only one language game among many. And to reduce all language to a single primitive game, as he sees Augustine as doing, is to greatly oversimplify its complexity and multiplicity. But what does this conclusion mean for upbringing more generally?

“Pointing Out,” Training or the Fundamental Pedagogical Act

It is with Wittgenstein’s discussion of the child’s language “training” that it is perhaps easiest to show the divergence of Mollenhauer’s and Wittgenstein’s accounts. Interpreting Augustine’s description for his own purposes, Mollenhauer offers not so much a refutation of Wittgenstein’s understanding as he articulates a careful, nuanced differentiation. The intention in this paper is to differentiate with similar care. Unlike Wittgenstein, Mollenhauer is not so much interested in the individualized “forms of life” implied in the activity of reporting an event, speculating about the future, giving and obeying orders, or drill and training. Mollenhauer is interested instead in examining life and language from the starting point provided by *upbringing*. His understanding proceeds from the conviction of its universality as a part of the human condition –the reality that human life would cease without the birth, acculturation and cultural participation (and also ultimately, death) of successive generations. Mollenhauer further believes that we pass on to

children some aspect of ourselves, or of our lives, not through drill and training, but in myriad forms, and whether we explicitly intend to or not: “It is simply unimaginable,” Mollenhauer explains, that an adult could “undertake any act of pedagogical significance –deliberately or not– without conveying some aspect of him or herself or the way he or she lives” (p. 14). Or as Michael Winkler puts it, “we cannot *not* engage in upbringing” (2002, p. 12). Whether it is on the street, in the classroom or inside the home, children not only see us pointing and naming, drilling and training, but also giving and receiving orders, describing objects and events, speculating about the future and much, *much* more.

Mollenhauer’s expresses the notion of adults displaying their lives to children by using the term “presentation” – borrowing and expanding on Wittgenstein’s term *Lebensform* to capture what is presented to children through adults’ words and actions. Language and different “forms of life” present the child not with a “random and chaotic series of things and words,” but with a “distinct structure” (p. 20). Mollenhauer makes this case by pointing specifically to a part of Augustine’s *Confessions* cited above:

Then they named anything, and as they spoke turned towards it, I saw and remembered that they called what they would point out by the name they uttered. And that they meant this thing and no other was plain from the motion of their body, the natural language, as it were, of all nations, expressed by the countenance, glances of the eye, gestures of the limbs, and tones of the voice. (p. 21)

Mollenhauer suggests that through the use of the words “countenance,” “glances of the eye,” “gestures of the limbs,” and “tones of the voice,” Augustine is describing key elements in a structure that is part of upbringing and that can be seen as being much more complex and subtle than a set of primitives and commands –or even combined sets of the same. Before the child can come to understand words and their classification, he or she must first learn a “complex system of meanings” (p. 22) that has no distinct point of origin, whether in naming, pointing or training. Instead these meanings arise through the inherently structured nature of the general context or “lifeworld” itself, as its meanings are unavoidably enacted and articulated in various ways of life. And it is only as a result of this structure that the child can then bring into meaningful interrelationship the “adult’s act of pointing, word and thing” (p. 22). For Mollenhauer, in other words, pointing out is an act that uses an already meaningful order to draw explicit attention to patterns and structures. Pointing out is thus not an isolated language game, as it is for Wittgenstein, and it does not present the intractable problem or infinite regress of having to first explain rules for the meaning of pointing and naming (and to then explain the meaning of “rule” itself; see Wittgenstein, 1953, p. 15). And children, as active selves, are already immersed in these patterns and ways of life. Mollenhauer suggests that when it is understood in this way, “pointing out is a fundamental act in educational presentation –in the unavoidable nature of upbringing– whether it is done verbally or through gestures” (p. 63).

Consider a simple example. In many dominant European languages, Mollenhauer explains,

Up and down, right and left (already more difficult to grasp) forward and back, hot and cold [all present]...an initial structuring of the cosmos that significantly is not the same for all times and social settings. (FC, p. 20)

Realities of everyday life, and the more detailed classifications that are consistent with them, are patterned in language and metaphor that as Lakoff and Johnson (1980; as just one example) have shown, orient us in terms of our priorities, values and ideologies. In other cultures and languages, these basic, orienting oppositions may be structured quite differently, as ethnographers have demonstrated: Coastal dwellers may differentiate direction as only landwards or seawards, and other indigenous languages may categorize hundreds of plants and animals –as of yet without genus or phylum in Western science— according to their healing properties.

As suggested above, Mollenhauer explains that one unavoidably acquires such classifications –however self-evident they may appear in retrospect —by “internaliz[ing] a system whose mental world is marked by a structure” (p. 20). Mollenhauer further suggests that once elements of this cultural world are communicated through word and deed, the child “will henceforth perceive the world in terms of this structure” (p. 20). This structure, or rather, these structures are not markedly different from one situation or activity to the next. They do not depend, for example, on whether a situation consists in giving and receiving orders or training a child in vocabulary. Instead, they are tantamount to a system of thinking, a culture --one that as Mollenhauer has already described as “always hav[ing] to do with the culture as a whole, and the social structures that are a part of it” (p. 13). As a result, the translation of *Forgotten Connections* that serves as the basis for this paper has rendered Mollenhauer’s rather extensive use of the Wittgensteinian term “*Lebensform*” with the phrase “way of life,” with its more expansive and colloquial connotations. Whether western and scientific, or indigenous or animistic, languages provide not only structure and order, but also irreplaceably valuable knowledge –in ways that are transmitted from one generation to another, often without direct awareness of what is being passed on in this way.

Representation, *Bildsamkeit* and the Call

Despite Mollenhauer’s rather different take on matters of language and its acquisition, Wittgenstein’s discussion of language games, particularly their individualized and systematic character, is helpful for understanding a second central point in Mollenhauer’s view of education. The modern world, with its specializations, divisions of labor, and its ever-increasing complexity, is obviously one that very frequently relies on giving and receiving commands, reporting distant events, and (perhaps unfortunately also) drill and training. Mollenhauer sees this reality as presenting an enormous challenge to the pedagogical potential of presentation.

Despite his emphasis on the structures and ways of life associated with presentation, Mollenhauer apparently sees different language-games, in the Wittgensteinian sense, as indispensable in modern education:

The modern world offers such a vast and confusing range of ways of life that their presentation must be structured and framed properly for the child from the very outset. ...since our way of life no longer possesses sufficient educational force, the realm of *Bildung* must be created for the younger generation. (pp. 49, 65)

This realm is created not by presenting one or more ways of life directly, but by *representing* these *indirectly*. It is in this way that Mollenhauer defines “representation,” the educational counterpoint and modern supplement to “presentation:”

in addition to the “presentation” of a particular way of life to children, the social and historical aspects of the culture that are hidden from the child must be made accessible to the child. This in turn means that adults must select from a vast array of material ... the available curricular “storehouse”... and convey it to the young person in an understandable form. Educational institutions, which specialize in this selective representation, are central to this process. But through this process, relationships between adults change, just as those among a family or household and between adults and children are transformed: *Representation* of ways of life now becomes the most important problem for *Bildung*. (italics in original; p. 15)

In a society with diverse classes, cultures and roles, direct presentation of adult actions no longer suffices for children to be acculturated to one or more ways of life. This task of upbringing, Mollenhauer emphasizes, now takes place “through a kind of pedagogical rehearsal or practice, as it would be for someone from a foreign land” (p. 46). This “foreign land” of educational practice and rehearsal offers a readily recognizable echo of the strange country and culture that Wittgenstein has described. At school and in other pedagogical contexts, the child is learning another language and way of life that indeed appears as if he or she “already had a language, only not this one.” In this case, the language that the child already possesses is the informal speech that had been *presented* through ways of life immediately surrounding him or her: The language that the child must now learn *in addition* is one that can only be acquired through pedagogical rehearsal and practice, the formal language of reading and writing that is generally not acquired spontaneously at home or directly embedded in the child’s lifeworld.

Echoing Wittgenstein further, Mollenhauer recognizes the poverty and disaffection inherent to such a situation. This leads Mollenhauer to introduce the next important term or topic in his account –and ultimately, to also introduce “the call” as a theme in *Forgotten Connections*. He begins by emphasizing the deficiency of what is offered in the “foreign land” of curricular “representation” and schooling. Through representation, he says, we show children

not the world but rather what we take the world to be and what *appears* to us to be tolerable or worth pointing out to children. The underlying principle for educational representation *nowadays* would be for us to say to children...[that] “This is *not* the world.” It is only an image or a mirror’s reflection of the world. As a result, there arises... [the] questions: *What* should be depicted, *how* can it be depicted in such a way that the child’s mind is able to grasp it, and *how* can this be accomplished in such a way as to ground motivation? (p. 76; italics in original)

Mollenhauer answers his own questions by introducing the theme of *Bildsamkeit*, a term derived from the German noun “*Bildung*” (formation) that designates a quality of the child essential to upbringing that is realized through interaction with adults. Although *Bildsamkeit* can be rendered literally as “form-ability,” it does not simply refer to the plasticity of the child in the hands of the adult. Instead, it captures the transitive, intransitive and reflexive meanings of the verb *bilden*, “to form.” The child is formed by what is other, is formed in itself, and also forms itself. As a subject or self, the child is thus engaged in an intricate interchange with the world and also with itself. Two phrases in particular from the quotation of Augustine’s *Confessions* provide a starting point for Mollenhauer’s explanation of *Bildsamkeit*. The first is, “by cries and broken accents and various motions of my limbs... I longed... to express my thoughts,” and the second, “having acclimated my mouth to these signs, I thereby gave utterance to my will.”⁴ What is most important for Mollenhauer in all cases is the activity of the self, its will and their combined expression. Mollenhauer emphasizes that “children do not make [the] structure[s] of the culture around them] their own only passively or receptively, but instead through the engagement of an active self” (p. 66). Speaking specifically of the representational activities of schooling, Mollenhauer also underscores that the “process of internalizing [these] representations ...appears as an *active* internalization process” (p. 24; italics added).

To further describe this active, formative quality of the child, Mollenhauer quotes yet another passage from Augustine’s *Confessions*, this time from Book X, Chapter 10, where Augustine describes learning later in his childhood. This activity is cast not as the acquisition of knowledge possessed by elders, but perhaps counterintuitively, as a drawing or calling forth of that which is already known and present in the child. These things already present, as Mollenhauer quotes Augustine, are so “far back and hidden... that unless they had been *called upon* in the teaching of another person, I should perhaps never have been able to think of them at all” (as quoted by Mollenhauer, p. 94; italics added).⁵ It is from this description of calling

⁴ A third line that Mollenhauer could also have quoted from this passage is: “that so I might have my will, and yet unable to express all I willed, or to whom I willed, did myself, by the understanding which Thou, my God, gavest me, practice the sounds in my memory.”

⁵ A direct translation of the rendering of Augustine used by Mollenhauer references the act of “calling upon.” The original Latin, “*admonente aliquo eruerentur*” combines the verb for “admonishing” or “urging” (*admonēns*) together with the verb for “digging” “tearing” or “plucking out” (*ēruō*). This is generally rendered in English translations as “drawing out” or “bringing to the fore,” as in the Pusey translation: “had not the suggestion of another drawn them forth.” The salience of the verb “drawing out” or “forth” is also discussed below.

upon something that inheres in the child – even prior to contact with the world – from which Mollenhauer develops his notion of the *pedagogical call*.

Mollenhauer does not understand this call, however, as seeking out a kind of primal or reincarnated memory. What is called upon or “drawn out” (as translations of Augustine generally put it), is first of all one’s will and one’s desire to express oneself. In keeping with the implications of *Bildung* as formation, that which is called upon in pedagogy is a kind of power and potentiality that is responsive to the world, but not simply reducible to or determined by it. Mollenhauer frames this as a basic premise or hypothesis “that cannot be proven empirically,” but that is nonetheless what “first allowed for the realization of education early in the European humanist tradition.” This is the belief that

children should be brought up not as if they were material to be changed and formed. Instead, they should be brought up in support for a kind of power and potentiality that develops itself, in a dialogical relationship, in a kind of mutual interchange or call and response. (p. 93)

The pedagogical call, for Mollenhauer, is not simply a single or exemplary appeal to that which inheres in the child. The call is part of a call and response or an ongoing interchange. Moreover, that which is called upon in the child through this exchange is not simply something obscure, hidden and nearly forgotten. Mollenhauer is saying that it is “a kind of power and potentiality,” related to will and self-expression, that forms and develops itself. The possibility of calling upon the energy and potentiality of *Bildsamkeit* can be seen as a possible response to the enervating paucity of representational or schooling practice. However, the question of exactly how to adapt and direct this power to the purposes and conventions of schooling remains an open question for Mollenhauer.

Elsewhere in his discussion of *Bildsamkeit* and of “the call,” Mollenhauer clarifies that this emergent power is tantamount to a kind of radical subjecthood and even that which is beyond language itself.

The question of *Bildsamkeit* arises precisely at [the] boundary ...between what is sayable and unsayable, between subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The subject, which is a mystery, or as Leibniz put it, a “windowless monad,” is compelled along the path of *Bildsamkeit* into the world of intersubjective agreements. (p. 88)

Pedagogy or the pedagogical call, then, becomes a kind of drawing out of that which is innermost, most deeply individual and subjective, and *least* reducible to language and labels. Paradoxically, it is this linguistically irreducible power that gives rise to expression and that forms the ground for articulation and communication. It is this potentially linguistic character of the child’s *Bildsamkeit* that allows it to be called upon, to engage in a response and an interchange. *Bildsamkeit*, as Mollenhauer defines it at one point, “is... a disposition that is articulated by the child when he or she is engaged with another’s expectations.” (The linguistic connotations of the term “articulated” [*artikuliert*] appear to be intentional.) Education, in still other terms, becomes an interchange through which

children are brought from the realm of the subjectivity and idiosyncrasy to that of language and conventional knowledge:

to educate children... means taking them across the boundary from the unsayable of contingent subjectivity to the realm of language, culture and convention. ...Nevertheless, the unsayable still resides in the unconscious and is a source of our desires, hopes, fantasies, and utopias, and thus – during childhood at any rate – is only manifested in an encrypted form. (p. 92)

The call of pedagogy is directed at this source, with the intent of drawing the child from “pure subjectivity” into the realm of culture. Significantly, this is expressed etymologically in the word “education” and the word often taken as the German equivalent. The German *Erziehung*, substantivizes the verb “to draw” (*ziehen*) in a direction that is up or out (the prefix “er-”). (It is this drawing out and up, quite literally expressed in the more general word “upbringing,” that is one of the reasons for its use in the translation of Mollenhauer). Education, for its part, is etymologically derived from the Latin *educatus*, specifically the past participle *educere*, which also designates the act of “bringing out,” or “leading forth.” Like the German *erziehen*, it can be broken down into the prefix ex-, meaning “out,” and the verb *ducere* meaning “to lead.” Education, then, is itself a drawing out, a calling upon of the child’s self and will through an engagement with outside factors and forces. Mollenhauer goes further, saying that

If we accept Augustine’s metaphorical characterization of... “call and response” –then the self-reflexive narrative of relationship appears as the appropriate way to represent it. (p. 106)

What kind of relationship and narrative is this? Mollenhauer goes on to provide for his readers a number of narratives of *Bildsamkeit*, each story being about a child, suffering from a mental disability, moving towards self-expression through the patient encouragement of a teacher. In one case, this self-expression is as simple as choosing one flavor of juice over another; in another case, it is a matter of reading a short message from the teacher and then scrawling a teasing response on a piece of paper. In both cases, language is central. Speaking again abstractly of self and language, one could say that the emergent self is called or drawn out of mute silence, from that which is unspoken and perhaps *unsayable*, and into the realm of expression and language.

Conclusion: The Limits of the Subject and its World

It is with the unsayable and silence that we return to Wittgenstein, and that we draw this paper to its conclusion. Silence and the unsayable are central to Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*. Of the seven principle propositions and the many tiered elaborating statements that constitute this work, there is only one, main proposition that stands on its own, without elaboration, and that concludes the book as a whole. This is the famous observation that “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence.” This is Wittgenstein’s final statement in a work comprised of over 500

concise and meticulously ordered statements about the world, many of which themselves attempt to specify exactly what we can and cannot say about it.

For example, at a number of points in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein makes it clear that language delimits what we can know, and what constitutes both our subjectivity and our world. He says, for example, that “*the limits of my language* mean the limits of my world” (p. 68; italics in original). If language provides the way that we order the world and give it structure and meaning, then that which is beyond language, which is unsayable, must remain amorphous, unordered, meaningless and ultimately, unsaid. But this is again where Mollenhauer diverges from Wittgenstein. Mollenhauer parts ways from Wittgenstein in a very curious manner –by engaging in an overt mis-reading, specifically of a proposition from the *Tractatus*, namely the assertion that: “The subject does not belong to the world; rather it is a limit of the world” (Mollenhauer, p. 85; Wittgenstein, p. 69). In the context of his other propositions, Wittgenstein again appears to be saying here that language, what is knowable, and what constitutes ourselves and our world are all co-extensive or overlapping. They cover the same terrain, and what lies beyond these things, Wittgenstein is further saying, is that which “we cannot speak about” and “must pass over in silence.”

Mollenhauer sees this all rather differently. What defies (self-)expression, what we cannot speak of, is not so much what lies *beyond* language, but what comes *before* it. This “something,” is not simply to be passed over in silence, but rather, it is to be acted upon or called upon, and drawn out into language. Paradoxically, it is also the force that motivates language, and that –although in some respects it remains unsayable—gives us something to say. What is to be said does not take the form of a series of interlocking propositions about the world, or even of one or more language games that might be a part of some specific activities within the world.

In a sense Mollenhauer is reversing or inverting Wittgenstein’s observations about the self, the world and silence. As is the case with his discussion of Wittgenstein’s account of language learning, Mollenhauer understands or reinterprets Wittgenstein not from the perspective of analytical assertions, demarcations or even questions. Mollenhauer instead interprets Wittgenstein from the perspective of upbringing. Just as the child, in learning language, is not subjected to drill and training, but is drawn ever further into a culture and a way of life, so it is also with what is (and in part, remains) unsayable. What is “called upon in the teaching of another person” as Augustine puts it, is not located at the outer edges where adult language games and forms of life reach their limit, but at their inner core where they are animated and given life.

References:

Augustine. (1909). *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*. The Harvard Classics. New York: P.F. Collier & Son

Lakoff, G. and Johnson, M. (1980) *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Mollenhauer, K. (in press). *Forgotten Connections: On Culture and Upbringing*. London: Routledge.

Winkler, M. (2002). *Klaus Mollenhauer: Ein pädagogisches Porträt*. Weinheim & Basel: Beltz.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953). *Philosophical Investigations*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Wittgenstein, L. (2001). *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. London: Routledge.