

The issue comes to mind firmly while reading Maximos the Confessor's refractions of Gregory the Theologian's orations, although it likely pertains to interpretative acts of culture in general. In theological terms, akin to yet richer than philosophical and literary terms, one might say: the layering on of theological meaning to an event or act or word is appropriate insofar as it deepens and clarifies the traditional reality and truth of the event or act or word, and when it deepens and clarifies its relation to other aspects of the faith; but such layering is inappropriate when it obscures unto abstraction its matter—when the simple tonality, rhythm, and ascetic and noetic sense becomes complicated, over-involved, and incomprehensible. One might assert: regarding the relationship of word and thing, all properly conceived construals of layers of meaning or registers of sense ought to allow something (or someone) to come into its own, to be more fully itself. This feels a simple point, yet one perhaps frustrated to the degree that one grants accommodation to the widespread assumption that language essentially involves naming, which, insofar as it is understood as an act of identification, tends towards inward stasis. Language as naming, perhaps proper to poetry, exceeds itself when it gives in to the urge to 'see more' of oneself in another, to 'recognise' one's own predilections in something different, or to 'identify' the hidden machine behind events, the historical manipulation ascribed to some obscure power.

In our time we may find this as the heritage of the hermeneutics of suspicion, the inwards forms of which linger in contemporary uses of allegory, in the echoes of Dostoevsky's 'something else', and in the kinds of critique now fairly common to the humanities in the university and on the street. All of these things partake of the spirit of nihilism and stand over against thoughtful participation, meaning embodied and enacted, and the 'elemental' relationships of which Lawrence speaks so fervently. One might ask: does our interested interpretation draw us near—without identification—to something as it is in its own right? Does our initial apprehension lead to ongoing comprehension in which the presence of person and thing is mutually confirmed and affirmed? The twentieth century has writers alert to the pitfalls of layering suppositions onto the event: Celine: transpose—don't invent!; Kis: reality is enough—away with fantasy!; Gombrowicz: the only valid inquiry into my erotic life would yield general insight!; Broch: in the reigning ideal of kitsch lies a spiritual cul-de-sac! Here, one wants pacing for the mind and patience with ideas—guided in mood by what is essential and appropriate. In his *Ethics*, Aristotle writes: 'Our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject-matter admits of, for precision is not to be sought alike in all discussions, any more than in all the products of the crafts. [...] it is the mark of an educated person to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits [...] each person judges well the things they know, and of these they are a good judge. And so the person who has been educated in a subject is a good judge of that subject, and the person who has received an all-round education is a good judge in general. Hence a young person is not a proper hearer of lectures on political science; for they are inexperienced in the actions that occur in life, but its discussions start from these and are about these; and, further, since they tend to follow their passions, their study will be vain and unprofitable, because the end aimed at is not knowledge but action. And it makes

no difference whether they are young in years or youthful in character; the deficit does not depend on time, but on their living, and pursuing each successive object, as passion directs. For to such persons, as to the incontinent, knowledge brings no profit; but to those who desire and act in accordance with a rational principle knowledge about such matters will be of great benefit'. Precision and soul—Musil's favoured terms—come to one who has cultivated within themselves the wherewithal to recognise readiness and ripeness—who is capable of discerning inflation, confusion, decadence, refinement in how we understand what is of something's own. To this end one observes simply, quietly, peacefully what is present deeply.