

Something happens, and from the moment it begins to happen, nothing can ever be the same again.

Something happens. Or else, something does not happen. A body moves. Or else, it does not move. And if it moves, something begins to happen. And even if it does not move, something begins to happen.

It comes from my voice. But that does not mean these words will ever be what happens. It comes and goes. If I happen to be speaking at this moment, it is only because I hope to find a way of going along, of running parallel to everything else that is going along, and so begin to find a way of filling the silence without breaking it.

I ask whoever is listening to this voice to forget the words it is speaking. It is important that no one listen too carefully. I want these words to vanish, so to speak, into the silence they came from, and for nothing to remain but a memory of their presence, a token of the fact that they were once here and are here no longer and that during their brief life they seemed not so much to be saying any particular thing as to be the thing that was happening at the same time a certain body was moving in a certain space, that they moved along with everything else that moved.

Something begins, and already it is no longer the beginning, but something else, propelling us into the heart of the thing that is happening. If we were suddenly to stop and ask ourselves, “Where are we going?”, or “Where are we now?”, we would be lost, for at each moment we are no longer where we were, but have left ourselves behind, irrevocably, in a past that has no memory, a past endlessly obliterated by a motion that carries us into the present.

It will not do, then, to ask questions. For this is a landscape of random impulse, of knowledge for its own sake — which is to say, a knowledge that exists, that comes into being beyond any possibility of putting it into words. And if just this once we were to abandon ourselves to the supreme indifference of simply being wherever we happen to be, then perhaps we would not be deluding ourselves into thinking that we, too, had at last become a part of it all.

To think of motion not merely as a function of the body but as an extension of the mind. In the same way, to think of speech not as an extension of the mind but as a function of the body. Sounds emerge from the voice to enter the air and surround and bounce off and enter the body that occupies that air, and though they cannot be seen, these sounds are no less a gesture than a hand is when outstretched in the air towards another hand, and in this gesture can be read the entire alphabet of desire, the body’s need to be taken beyond itself, even as it dwells in the sphere of its own motion.

On the surface, this motion seems to be random. But such randomness does not, in itself, preclude a meaning. Or if meaning is not quite the word for it, then say the drift, or a consistent sense of what is happening, even as it changes, moment by moment. To describe it in all its details is probably not impossible. But so many words would be needed, so many streams of syllables, sentences, and subordinate clauses, that the words would always lag behind what was happening, and long after all motion had stopped and each of its witnesses had dispersed, the voice describing that motion would still be speaking, alone, heard by no one, deep into the silence and darkness of these four walls. And yet something is happening, and in spite of myself I want to be present inside the space of this moment, of these moments, and to say something, even though it will be forgotten, that will form a part of this journey for the length of the time it endures.

In the realm of the naked eye nothing happens that does not have its beginning and its end. And yet nowhere can we find the place or the moment at which we can say, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that this is where it begins, or this is where it ends. For some of us, it has begun before the beginning, and for others of us it will go on happening after the end. Where to find it? Don’t look. Either it is here or it is not here. And whoever tries to find refuge in any one place, in any one moment, will never be where he thinks he is. In other words, say your good-byes. It is never too late. It is always too late.

To say the simplest thing possible. To go no farther than whatever it is I happen to find before me. To begin with this landscape, for example. Or even to note the things that are most near, as if in the tiny world before my eyes I might find an image of the life that exists beyond me, as if in a way I do not fully understand each thing in my life were connected to every other thing, which in turn connected me to the world at large, the endless world that looms up in the mind, as lethal and unknowable as desire itself.

To put it another way. It is sometimes necessary not to name the thing we are talking about. The invisible God of the Hebrews, for example, had an unpronounceable name, and each of the ninety-nine names tradition ascribes to this God was in fact nothing more than a way of acknowledging that-which-cannot-be-spoken, that-which-cannot-be-seen, and that-which-cannot-be-understood. But even on a less exalted plane, in the realm of the visible itself, we often hold back from divulging the thing we are talking about. Consider the word “it.” “It” is raining, we say, or how is “it” going? We feel we know what we are saying, and what we mean to say is that it, the word “it,” stands for something that need not be said, or something that cannot be said. But if the thing we say is something that eludes us, something we do not understand, how can we persist in saying that we understand what we are saying? And yet it goes without saying that we do.

The “it,” for example, in the preceding sentence, “it goes without saying,” is in fact nothing less than whatever it is that propels us into the act of speech itself. And if it, the word “it,” is what continually recurs in any effort to define it, then it must be accepted as the given, the precondition of the saying of it. It has been said, for example, that words falsify the thing they attempt to say, but even to say “they falsify” is to admit that “they falsify” is true, thus betraying an implicit faith in the power of words to say what they mean to say. And yet, when we speak, we often do not mean to say anything, as in the present case, in which I find these words falling from my mouth and vanishing into the silence they came from. In other words, it says itself, and our mouths are merely the instruments of the saying of it. How does it happen? But never do we ask what “it” happens to be. We know, even if we cannot put it into words. And the feeling that remains within us, the discretion of a knowledge so fully in tune with the world, has no need of whatever it is that might fall from our mouths. Our hearts know what is in them, even if our mouths remain silent. And the world will know what it is, even when nothing remains in our hearts.

A man sets out on a journey to a place he has never been before. Another man comes back. A man comes to a place that has no name, that has no landmarks to tell him where he is. Another man decides to come back. A man writes letters from nowhere, from the white space that has opened up in his mind. The letters are never received. The letters are never sent. Another man sets out on a journey in search of the first man. This second man becomes more and more like the first man, until he, too, is swallowed up by the whiteness. A third man sets out on a journey with no hope of ever getting anywhere. He wanders. He continues to wander. For as long as he remains in the realm of the naked eye, he continues to wander.