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Tea Lobo

A PICTURE HELD US CAPTIVE

ON AISTHESIS AND INTERIORITY IN LUDWIG
WITTGENSTEIN, FYODOR M. DOSTOEVSKY AND
W.G. SEBALD



ON WITTGENSTEIN

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On Wittgenstein

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by James Conant, Wolfgang Kienzler,
Stefan Majetschak, Volker Munz, Josef G. F. Rothhaupt,
David Stern and Wilhelm Vossenkuhl

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On Aisthesis and Interiority in Ludwig Wittgenstein,
Fyodor M. Dostoevsky and W.G. Sebald

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Contents

Note on the Russian Transliteration — IX

List of Abbreviations for Frequently Cited Titles — IX

Introduction — 1

- 1 Aisthesis and Interiority in Ludwig Wittgenstein’s Writings — 31**
 - The Picture Theory of Language and the Inexpressibility of Ethics — **42**
 - On the Eastern Front with Dostoevsky: How Literature “Shows” Ethics — **55**
 - Wittgenstein on Post-Cartesian Subjectivity: Presenting Interiority and Reading Bodies — **79**
 - Dostoevsky on “looking into hearts” and Wittgenstein’s Private Language Argument — **94**
 - Wittgenstein and Bakhtin(s) — **106**

- 2 Showing Intentions and Seeing Aspects in Fyodor M. Dostoevsky’s Novels — 119**
 - The Idiot* on Beauty: On Writing and Objectifying — **129**
 - Resisting Commodification in Image and Word — **139**
 - Visions of Utopia in *Demons*: “The Golden Age” and the Age of the Press — **150**
 - Narrating Duels: A Study in Aspect Seeing — **162**
 - The Ethics of Aesthetic Presentation in *The Brothers Karamazov*. ‘Writing’ Icons and Writing Novels — **169**
 - Theatricality and Constructions of the Private and the Public — **177**
 - Court Trials as ‘Real’ Theater — **190**

- 3 The Visibility of Pain in W.G. Sebald’s Novels — 197**
 - Seeing in the Dark: Platonic and Photographic Motifs — **200**
 - The Work of Memory — **214**
 - Ethics and Aesthetics of Representation: Architecture, Text, and Image — **225**
 - Aisthesis and “Outsidedness” — **243**
 - The Meaning of (Pictorial) Signs: Reference versus Use — **257**

VIII — Contents

Conclusion — 273

Bibliography — 276

Index of Names — 288

Index of Subjects — 289

Note on the Russian Transliteration

In the following work, the Library of Congress system of Russian transliteration was used, without diacritics. However, popular spellings, such as “Fyodor Dostoevsky” have been retained.

List of Abbreviations for Frequently Cited Titles

For Wittgenstein’s works:

- TLP* *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*
PU *Philosophische Untersuchungen*
PI *Philosophical Investigations*
VB *Vermischte Bemerkungen*
CV *Culture and Value* (the English translation of *VB*)

For Dostoevsky’s works:

- BK* *The Brothers Karamazov*
BK (1906) *Die Brüder Karamasoff* (the 1906 German edition of *Brat’ia Karamazovy*)

For Sebald’s works:

- Austerlitz (Bell)* Anthea Bell’s English translation of *Austerlitz*
LL *Luftkrieg und Literatur*
NHD *On the Natural History of Destruction* (the English translation of *Luftkrieg und Literatur*)

Introduction

In §115 of the *Philosophical Investigations* (*Philosophische Untersuchungen*) Ludwig Wittgenstein remarks, “A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.”¹ The remark is embedded in a discussion of his self-understanding as a philosopher, as noted in §109: “Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.”² One example of a misleading picture that leads to a philosophical dead-end is already presented in §1 of the *Philosophical Investigations*. There, he describes an absurd scenario in which a fruit vendor, in order to oblige with the buyer’s demand for “five red apples”, first opens a drawer labeled “apples”, then looks up “red” in his catalogue of color samples, then counts out objects identified as “red apples” until he comes to “five”. Wittgenstein draws attention to all the idle questions raised by a theory of language divorced from actual practical uses of language at the end of §1:

“But how does he know where and how he is to look up the word ‘red’ and what he is to do with the word ‘five’?”—Well, I assume that he *acts* as I have described. Explanations come to an end somewhere.—But what is the meaning of the word “five”?—No such thing was in question here, only how the word “five” is used.³

A theory of language that comprehends words as referring to ‘things’ like “red” and “five” runs into these philosophical difficulties. It is already here, in the opening of the *Philosophical Investigations*, that Wittgenstein introduces his alternative conception of language—that the meaning of concepts does not depend on their reference, but on their employment in everyday practices: “how the word ‘five’ is used”.⁴

1 *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (henceforth: *PU*), §115, “Ein Bild hielt uns gefangen. Und heraus konnten wir nicht, denn es lag in unserer Sprache, und sie schien es uns nur unerbittlich zu wiederholen.”

2 *PU*, §109, “Die Philosophie ist ein Kampf gegen die Verhexung unsres Verstandes durch die Mittel unserer Sprache.”

3 *PU*, §1, “Wie weiß er aber, wo und wie er das Wort “rot” nachschlagen soll und was er mit dem Wort “fünf” anzufangen hat?”—Nun, ich nehme an, er *handelt*, wie ich es beschrieben habe. Die Erklärungen haben irgendwo ein Ende.—Was ist aber die Bedeutung des Wortes ‘fünf’?—Von einer solchen war hier gar nicht die Rede; nur davon, wie das Wort ‘fünf’ gebraucht wird.”

4 This notion of language meaning in use is elucidated more explicitly in relation to his rule following considerations, especially in the notion of practice (*Praxis*) in *PU*, §202.

In §5, Wittgenstein criticizes the labeling view as unnecessarily mystifying:

If we look at the example in §1, we may perhaps get an inkling how much this general notion of the meaning of a word surrounds the working of language with a haze which makes clear vision impossible.⁵

Instead, he suggests a view of language as a practical activity, intertwined with the social practices it is used in. In §7 he compares concepts to “language games” (*Sprachspiele*), with rules for moves within social practices, and in §11 to tools like a hammer, a saw or glue. Just like language game rules and tools have different uses, so do conjunctions, disjunctions, abstract nouns etc. have very different functions for achieving different ends and do not only act as labels for physical objects.

Throughout his work, Wittgenstein merrily heaps one visual trope upon the other. In the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (henceforth termed the *Tractatus*), visual metaphors are apparent in his “picture theory” of language (*Abbildungstheorie*) in 4.01, his insistence on “showing” as opposed to “saying” in 4.022, 4.121, 4.1212, and his characterization of philosophy as an activity of “elucidation” (*Klärung*) in 4.112. In §5 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, cited above, he reveals his ideal of “clear vision”, which is also present in his striving for a “perspicuous (or synoptic) presentation” (*übersichtliche Darstellung*), as stated in §122 and other passages throughout the *Philosophical Investigations*. His considerations of “aspect seeing” (*Aspektesehen*) in Part II, section xi of the *Philosophical Investigations* link perception to the imagination and the capacity to see the same material in mutually contradictory manners. Therefore, his claim that some “pictures” in language hold us “captive”, suggested in §115, is not a general call to iconoclasm, but to an activity of elucidation capable of identifying misleading and unnecessarily mystifying imagery in language that lead to idle philosophical problems.

For instance, in §§185–200 Wittgenstein defines what it is to understand the meaning of “add two”, not as referring to *anything*, but as being able to correctly complete this arithmetical operation. This meaning is based on the common *practice* of mathematics, as it is for instance taught in schools. Thus, within the framework that Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations* circumscribe, Ferdinand de Saussure’s insight that linguistic signs are arbitrary need not lead to a

⁵ *PU*, §5, “Wenn man das Beispiel in §1 betrachtet, so ahnt man vielleicht, inwiefern der allgemeine Begriff der Bedeutung der Worte das Funktionieren der Sprache mit einem Dunst umgibt, der das klare Sehen unmöglich macht.”

skepticism about meaning, as it did in post-structuralist thought.⁶ It is perhaps precisely Wittgenstein's insistence on understanding linguistic meaning as exercised in the use of language in particular situations, and not—like Saussure—as an elaborate and abstract system of signs, that allows Wittgenstein's philosophy of language a full and unabashed access to the immediate experiential dimensions of everyday life, including the visual.

The tenacious view that language functions in only one way—to represent things—can be described as a picture that “held us captive”, to use Wittgenstein's expression from §115. Another prominent example of diagnosing a misleading picture is Wittgenstein's dismantlement of the Cartesian view of interiority, according to which the mind, mental states and sensations are located ‘inside’ the body and are known by introspection. On this view, the body (*res extensa*) is understood as a kind of container, and the mind (*res cogitans*) as a supremely private thing-like content.⁷ For instance, in §293 Wittgenstein compares the notion that interior states are comparable to ‘things’ that we can label with names with the notion that each one of us possesses a box with something inside which we agree to call “a beetle”. He claims that the object inside the box is irrelevant for the language games it is embedded in—we can refer to the other's “beetle” without having seen it, just like we can talk about the other's pain without having felt it. As Wittgenstein articulates the point further in §304, “It [i.e. a sensation as an example of mental content] is not a *something*, but not a *nothing* either!” (“Sie [i.e. eine Empfindung] ist kein Etwas, aber auch nicht ein Nichts!”) He continues in the same paragraph, “The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way”⁸—it is the assumption that language always functions according to the designation-thing schema that causes philosophical problems about the ontological status of ‘interior’ states.

6 Most post-structuralist thought is based on Saussure's assumptions about language. Henry Pickford parodies a skeptical Derrida-esque questioning of the Wittgensteinian claim that the meaning of concepts is comparable to rules of a game, for instance chess (expressed in *PI*, §31): “[I]f the skeptic asks, ‘Given that this bit of wood is individuated only in its differential contrast to differently shaped other bits of wood, what justification can you provide for claiming that it represents a bishop?’, one can respond that [...]: the bishop is that bit of wood that *may move like this but not like that.*” In *Thinking with Tolstoy and Wittgenstein*, p. 18.

7 In her essay “On Wittgenstein on Cognitive Science”, Diane Proudfoot demonstrates how Wittgenstein's philosophy as a whole attacks the Cartesian picture of the mind, which still crops up in today's cognitive science; for Wittgenstein's anti-Cartesianism, cf. also Chantal Bax, *Subjectivity after Wittgenstein*, pp. 33–73.

8 *PU*, §304, “Das Paradox verschwindet nur dann, wenn wir radikal mit der Idee brechen, die Sprache funktioniere nur auf *eine* Weise.”

More recently, in “Aesthetics beyond Aesthetics”, Wolfgang Iser has applied Wittgensteinian methods of elucidation to suggest that the general vocabulary in the humanities has focused too much on an understanding of aesthetics as a study of art. He opens his essay by stating, “It is still considered self-evident that aesthetics has to be artistic: ‘And we cannot get outside it, for it lies in our discipline and this discipline seems to repeat it to us inexorably’ (to adapt Wittgenstein).” He likens this narrowing of view to a “picture that held us captive” that Wittgenstein evokes in *Philosophical Investigations*, §115.⁹ He argues that scholars of aesthetics should reconsider its etymology from the ancient Greek *aisthesis*, not in order to re-establish the ancient notion of the hierarchy of the senses, with vision in the lead, but precisely while also acknowledging the challenges to the visual, such as the devaluing of beauty in the ubiquity of bodily enhancements, or the “derealization of reality” effected by new media technologies.¹⁰ Aesthetics as *aisthesis*, or study of the senses, can be expanded to include these widely divergent phenomena. Indeed, as Iser notes, “given that (as Wittgenstein pointed out) ‘the meaning of a word is its use in the language’, it would be wrong and antiquated to dictate a single, ultimate concept of the aesthetic.”¹¹ Enlarging our concept of aesthetics as also a study of perception enables us to study how art intervenes, criticizes, and sometimes simply refers to the world it is situated in. Iser calls for a transdisciplinary approach to *aisthesis* from the angles of “philosophy, sociology, art history, psychology, anthropology, neurosciences, and so on”.¹² One might add literary studies to this list, as they would be especially pertinent for the present text.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the subject of perception and experience has fallen into disrepute within humanities. Since the 1970s, literary studies have become averse to accounts of the world as represented by the senses, and have privileged texts over experience. Whereas Wittgenstein simply states the priority of “showing” over “saying” in the *Tractatus*, and in the notion of perspicuous presentation in the *Philosophical Investigations*, the distinction between “showing” and “telling” has come under scrutiny and suspicion in narratological discussions. For instance, Gérard Genette criticized the distinction and pointed out that even “showing” in texts of course happens in language, and is also in some sense “telling”: “The truth is that mimesis in words can only be mimesis of words. Other than that, all we have and can have is degrees

⁹ Wolfgang Iser, “Aesthetics beyond Aesthetics: Towards a New Form of the Discipline”, p. 7, cf. also fn. 1.

¹⁰ Iser, “Aesthetics beyond Aesthetics”, pp. 10–2.

¹¹ Iser, “Aesthetics beyond Aesthetics”, p. 14.

¹² Iser, “Aesthetics beyond Aesthetics”, p. 22.

of diegesis.”¹³ Wittgenstein also mentions that showing of course also takes place within language, for instance in his gesturing towards that “what cannot be portrayed by language but can only be shown in language”.¹⁴ However, Genette operates within the structuralist assumption of language as an enclosed system of arbitrary signs, which leads him to conclude that even when showing, language never shows anything beyond language: “mimesis in words can only be mimesis of words.” By contrast, for Wittgenstein, arbitrary signs derive their meaning from their possible employment in practical engagement with the world, which is why he does not postulate a chasm between language and possible real-world experience.

Furthermore, literary studies tend to display animosity towards the visual. For instance, Jacques Derrida has argued against a direct and facile presence of meaning in texts. Jean Baudrillard’s extensive treatment of simulacra created by the new communication media suggests the impossibility of immediate experiential access to the world, as Welsch, too has noted in the discussion above. Michel Foucault’s criticism of the panoptic society of all-pervasive surveillance equates the sense of vision with power and hegemony. In feminist theory, Luce Irigaray has criticized the visual sense for the tendency to objectify and subjugate women.¹⁵ The sensitivity to the close links between representation and power emphasized by these scholars has been of great value in providing a new, articulate vocabulary for addressing social and structural injustice. However, they seem to tacitly assume that the visual is *always* hegemonic, exercised by the privileged to the disadvantage of the oppressed, and that it always presupposes a facile view of the world as it supposedly *is*, therefore further cementing prejudice and structures of oppression.

In more recent discussions in literary studies, this equation of visibility and authoritarian impositions of normativity has been challenged. The field of intermediality has been introduced, in recognition of the limitations of traditional, text-centered semiotics and the inevitability of interaction of different media.¹⁶ The field was first inaugurated by Dick Higgins’s article “Intermedia”, and Aage A. Hansen-Löve first introduced the term intermediality as *Intermedialität*

13 Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, p. 164.

14 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 73e; “was durch die Sprache nicht abgebildet, sondern nur in der Sprache gezeigt werden kann”, *Tagebücher*, pp. 167–8. I will explicate his notion of *Abbildung* as truth-functional language in more detail in the first chapter.

15 Mark Edmundson introduces a similar summary of anti-visual positions in the humanities in *Literature against Philosophy, Plato to Derrida*, pp. 67–8.

16 Gabriele Rippl, “Text-Bild-Beziehungen zwischen Semiotik und Medientheorie: Ein Verortungsvorschlag”, pp. 47 and 51.

in German in “Intermedialität und Intertextualität. Probleme der Korrelation von Wort- und Bildkunst—am Beispiel der russischen Moderne”, and has since gained a fairly wide acceptance, also for English speaking scholars.¹⁷ Furthermore, some scholars speak of an “aesthetic turn” in humanities because of increased production of texts on aesthetics (or *aisthesis*) since the 90s like: *Aisthesis—Wahrnehmung heute oder Perspektiven einer anderen Ästhetik* (1990) edited by Karlheinz Barck, Peter Gente, Heidi Paris and Stefan Richter, *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today* edited by Michael Clark (2000), *The Radical Aesthetic* by Isobel Armstrong (2000), *Aesthetics in a Multicultural Age* edited by Emory Elliott, Louis F. Caton, Jeffrey Rhyne (2002), *The New Aestheticism* edited by John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas (2003), *Aesthetics and Ethics: Otherness and Moral Imagination from Aristotle to Levinas and from Uncle Tom’s Cabin to House Made of Dawn* by Thomas Claviez (2008), *The Aesthetic Turn in Political Thought* edited by Nikolas Kompridis (2014), and *Beautiful Deceptions—European Aesthetics, the Early American Novel, and Illusionist Art* by Philipp Schweighauser (2016).

In one of these works, *The New Aestheticism*, John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas have collected essays from both philosophers and literary scholars. The editors observe the success of critical theory in the 1980s and 1990s and its anti-aesthetic tendencies,¹⁸ and they question the assumption that aestheticism necessarily implies a disconnect from current affairs and pressing social issues, as it was assumed about the old-school privileged aesthete. They point to the potential in Alexander Baumgarten’s notion of aesthetics as a science of perception and they refer to the “transformative cognitive potential of the aesthetic and its world-disclosing capacity”,¹⁹ and so take Adorno’s views on art’s critical potential to challenge “truth-only cognition” and disclose new ways of actually transforming the world as a whole, as opposed to merely altering facts in it.²⁰

A version of an aesthetic turn is recognizable in analytic philosophy, as well. Namely, an increased interest in aesthetics and especially literature can be observed since the 1980s and 1990s. Analytic philosophy had originally been founded on a disassociation of philosophy from ‘the arts’ in the early twentieth century, with Gottlob Frege and Rudolf Carnap. One of Wittgenstein’s most important teachers, Frege, was influential in analytic philosophy for striving to in-

17 Gabriele Rippl (ed.), *Handbook of Intermediality: Literature—Image—Sound—Music*, p. 10.

18 Hal Foster summarizes this tendency since the 1970s in his introduction to *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (1983). Cf. pp. ix–xvi. John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas challenge Foster’s influential anthology in *The New Aestheticism*, pp. 5–7.

19 Joughin and Malpas, *The New Aestheticism*, p. 12.

20 Joughin and Malpas, *The New Aestheticism*, p. 13.

roduce a “*Begriffsschrift*”, a formal notation for “pure thought” (*reines Denken*), that is, truth-functional thought capable of being represented in logical relations such as implication and syllogisms. In order to achieve this, Frege distances his project explicitly from literature. Frege introduces his concerns and his aims as pitted against ‘mere’ feeling and as struggling to somehow purify language from any poetic influences (which he over-simplifyingly correlates with emotive factors).²¹ Read in the context of early analytic philosophy, Wittgenstein’s work appears far from any kind of aesthetic concerns, and indeed most mainstream readings of Wittgenstein ignore his scattered mentions of “aesthetics” and the enigmatically poetic quality of his texts.

In the 1980s, there was a movement against Frege and Carnap’s views on the relevance of poetry and literature for philosophy, as well as a questioning of the analytic/continental divide. This movement in Anglophone philosophy is exemplified by philosophers like Mary Mothersill who renegotiated the place of aesthetics in philosophy with her *Beauty Restored* (1984) against positivist philosophical accounts after Carnap, and also against utilitarian views. Another major figure is Martha Nussbaum, a Neo-Aristotelian whose continuous work on philosophy and literature starting with her anthology *Love’s Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (1990), to more recent essays, as for instance “Perceptive Equilibrium: Literary Theory and Ethical Theory” (2010) have emphasized the importance of literature for conceptualizations of the good life. Furthermore, a controversial re-reading of Wittgenstein acknowledged the importance he ascribes to the (aesthetic) form of his writings, by contrast to his acknowledged master Frege. The main proponents of this “New Wittgenstein” are Cora Diamond, James Conant and Alice Crary and the main manifesto is the anthology *The New Wittgenstein* (2000), including texts by Stanley Cavell, John McDowell and many others. Nora Hämmäläinen summarizes the influence of these re-readings of Wittgenstein today in *Literature and Moral Theory* (2016): “post-Wittgensteinian particularism [...] views literature as an independent vehicle of thought, putting forward a point of view [...] out of reach [...] of the more traditional realm of claims, arguments and theories”.²² Seen in this light, “post-Wittgensteinian” thought (termed in this manner because Wittgenstein precisely did not offer a unified theory, but a set of tools and ways of looking at phenomena) pursues a goal comparable to the new aestheticists’ aim described above: a diverse set of approaches that takes aesthetics seriously, both in the

²¹ Gottlob Frege, “Der Gedanke—eine logische Untersuchung”, p. 42. Cf. also Kristin Boyce’s “Analytic Philosophy of Literature” for a detailed account of the history of the relation between literature and analytic philosophy.

²² Nora Hämmäläinen, *Literature and Moral Theory*, p. 73.

sense of art and in the sense of rendering perceptible certain features of the empirical world.

For those more acquainted with Wittgenstein's popular image than with his texts, Wittgenstein may *prima facie* seem to be an odd author to focus on in a discussion of aesthetics. However, aesthetics does play a prominent, though somewhat hidden role in his work as a whole. In 1949, two years before his death, Wittgenstein noted a remark about his philosophical interests: "I may find scientific questions interesting, but they never really grip me. Only *conceptual* and *aesthetic* questions do that. At bottom I am indifferent to the solution of scientific problems; but not the other sort."²³ Having grown up in Vienna at the turn of the last century, at a time when visual art, architecture, music, literature and psychology were flourishing, and in one of Vienna's culturally most well connected and wealthiest families, Wittgenstein was highly knowledgeable about these fields.²⁴ While his name is almost synonymous with the linguistic turn in philosophy and the conceptual analysis of philosophical problems, the second field of interest that he names as capable of gripping his attention— aesthetics—has only recently started receiving scholarly attention.²⁵ Apart from students' notes from Wittgenstein's private lectures on aesthetics delivered in Cambridge in the summer of 1938, he never published a significant scholarly text on aesthetic matters. This may be due to historical reasons, for he was working at Cambridge under Bertrand Russell's tutelage (and more indirectly in contact with Gottlob Frege), at a time when aesthetics would not have been considered a relevant scholarly subject. Indeed, Wittgenstein only refers to this subject

23 *Culture and Value* (henceforth: CV), p. 79e; in the original German: "Wissenschaftliche Fragen können mich interessieren, aber nie wirklich fesseln. Das tun für mich nur *begriffliche* und *ästhetische* Fragen." *Vermischte Bemerkungen* (henceforth: VB), p. 79.

24 Cf. Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin's *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, p. 9.

25 Cf. Gottfried Gabriel, *Zwischen Logik und Literatur: Erkenntnisformen von Dichtung, Philosophie und Wissenschaft* (1991), who prominently discusses Wittgenstein; Jacques Bouveresse, *Poesie und Prosa: Wittgenstein über Wissenschaft, Ethik und Ästhetik* (1994); Marjorie Perloff, *Wittgenstein's Ladder: Poetic Language and the Strangeness of the Ordinary* (1996); John Gibson and Wolfgang Huemer (eds.), *The Literary Wittgenstein* (2004); Wilhelm Lütterfelds and Stefan Majetschak (eds.), *"Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins": Beiträge zu Wittgensteins Ästhetik und Kunstphilosophie* (2007); Christian Erbacher *Formen des Klärens: Literarisch-philosophische Darstellungsmittel in Wittgensteins Schriften* (2015); Henry W. Pickford, *Thinking with Tolstoy and Wittgenstein: Expression, Emotion, and Art* (2016); Toril Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary: Literary Studies after Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell* (2017). Toril Moi's book, which I have only come across after finishing a semi-final draft of the present text, contains some similar arguments as I have made. She, too, criticizes the pervasiveness of the post-Saussurean legacy in literary studies, the deeply entrenched dogma of the signifier/signified binary, and points to Wittgenstein's philosophy as an alternative understanding of linguistic meaning based on use.

matter negatively, and always in conjunction with ethics. In the *Tractatus*, he notes in 6.421, “It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed. Ethics are transcendental. (Ethics and æsthetics are one.)”²⁶ In the “Lecture on Ethics” held in Cambridge on 17 November 1929, Wittgenstein explicates that he uses the term “ethics” in “a slightly wider sense” than G. E. Moore did in his analytic definition of ethics as “the general enquiry into what is good” from the latter’s *Principia Ethica*, namely so as to include “aesthetics”.²⁷ In *Philosophical Investigations*, §77, he denies that it is possible to exhaustively define both ethics and aesthetics.

If aesthetics is never the explicit subject matter in Wittgenstein’s philosophical texts, and is only briefly mentioned as “inexpressible” and “indefinable”, it is nonetheless present as a criterion in the form of these very same texts. For instance, in order to explain the idiosyncratic character of his first publication, the *Tractatus*, to the publisher Ludwig von Ficker, Wittgenstein wrote to him in a letter dated 7 October 1919, “The work is strictly philosophical and, at the same time, literary”.²⁸ Almost fifteen years later, Wittgenstein noted privately, “I think I summed up my attitude to philosophy when I said: philosophy ought really to be written only as a *poetic composition*.”²⁹ However, for the larger part of Wittgenstein scholarship, his concern with the aesthetic form of language, especially in his own work, has been dismissed as his personal idiosyncrasy. In his recent study on literary forms of presentation in Wittgenstein’s work, Christian Erbacher points out that the first waves of *Tractatus* scholarship were mainly focused on reading his writings in the context of Russell’s and Moore’s projects, more recently in reference to Frege’s work. These first-wave scholars and their followers regarded the mentions of aesthetics and the decidedly literary quality of Wittgenstein’s philosophical work as merely ornamental, or even as obstructing ‘the real’ logical arguments. On this standard view, it is up to the exegete to painstakingly recreate the premise and conclusion structures in his writings.³⁰ Systematic attention to the form of expression in the *Tractatus* was granted only with Cora Diamond’s and James Conant’s “resolute reading” of the *Tractatus*, which takes seriously Wittgenstein’s repeated claims that

26 *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* (henceforth: *TLP*), “Es ist klar, daß sich die Ethik nicht aussprechen läßt. Die Ethik ist transzendental. (Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins.)”

27 Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 43.

28 Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Letters to Ludwig von Ficker”, p. 94; “Die Arbeit ist streng philosophisch und zugleich literarisch.” *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker*, p. 33. And, indeed, the *Tractatus* has been read as a poem by Marjorie Perloff in *Wittgenstein’s Ladder*.

29 *CV*, p. 24e; “Ich glaube meine Stellung zur Philosophie dadurch zusammengefasst zu haben, indem ich sagte: Philosophie dürfte man eigentlich nur *dichten*.” *VB*, p. 24.

30 Erbacher, *Formen des Klärens*, pp. 13–6.

even though principles of logic pervade language, they cannot be themselves expressed in language, and are thus “shown” in the form of language.³¹

Furthermore, Wittgenstein himself suggests proximity between aesthetics and *aisthesis*, by treating aesthetics like a certain kind of a perceiving. For instance, he writes in his private notebook on 7 October 1916:

The work of art is the object seen *sub specie aeternitatis*; and the good life is the world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*. This is the connexion between art and ethics.

The usual way of looking at things sees objects as it were from the midst of them, the view *sub specie aeternitatis* from outside.

In such a way they have the whole world as background.³²

In a later note, he defines architecture—a sub-discipline of aesthetics—as “work” on “one’s way of seeing things”.³³ Wittgenstein’s later aesthetics, as expressed in his lectures on aesthetics, is distinctly modern, refusing the primacy of beauty as a fundamental principle of aesthetic appreciation, following through the implications of Hegel’s thesis on the “end of art” diagnosis that art can no longer express the Absolute in visible or in any sense perceptually available manner.³⁴ Wittgenstein explicitly denies Tolstoy’s notion that art is about imparting ‘a feeling’ in “What is art?”—that is, he criticizes the facile notion of immediately present meaning.³⁵

One way of reading Wittgenstein’s thoughts on aesthetics is from the context of modernist movements—he did, after all, live and work during the modernist heyday in the early twentieth century.³⁶ And modernist art of Wittgenstein’s time, like Wittgenstein himself, seems very much concerned with “showing”, be it by means of a fragmentation of the visual field as in Cubism (for instance Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*), or by means of abstraction (for instance in Paul Klee’s

31 In the afore-mentioned work, Erbacher builds upon the resolute reading and explicitly argues that the means in which the *Tractatus* demonstrates its philosophical points is through their presentation, that is, its *literary* form. *Formen des Klärens*, p. 9.

32 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 83e; “Das Kunstwerk ist der Gegenstand *sub specie aeternitatis* gesehen; und das gute Leben ist die Welt *sub specie aeternitatis* gesehen. Dies ist der Zusammenhang zwischen Kunst und Ethik. Die gewöhnliche Betrachtungsweise sieht die Gegenstände gleichsam aus ihrer Mitte, die Betrachtung *sub specie aeternitatis* von außerhalb.” *Tagebücher*, p. 178.

33 *CV*, p. 16e; “Daran wie man die Dinge sieht”, *VB*, p. 16.

34 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, p. 3. Cf. also Stefan Majetschak, *Ästhetik*, pp. 134–5.

35 *CV*, p. 58e; *VB*, p. 58.

36 Cf. Anat Matar’s introduction to *Understanding Wittgenstein, Understanding Modernism*, esp. pp. 1–3.

phenomenology of color—Klee had famously declared “Art does not represent the visible, rather it makes visible”³⁷), or by focusing on particular details of everyday life as opposed to grand religious or national-historical themes. Just like Martin Heidegger discusses Vincent van Gogh’s *A Pair of Shoes* in “The Origin of the Work of Art”, in his *Notebooks* Wittgenstein observes his own contemplation of an ordinary oven as an example of an aesthetic perspective on the everyday.³⁸ Furthermore, modernist writers like T.S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce were just as obsessively concerned with the workings of language as Wittgenstein was—with drawing attention to forms of expression as opposed to straightforwardly stating content.

Despite the fact that the fragmentary form of his works resembles modernist literature and art, Wittgenstein’s own reading taste was to a large degree quite traditional. His favorite authors included Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Milton, Shakespeare, Grillparzer, Nestroy, Keller, and the occasional Trakl poem.³⁹ He anonymously donated large sums of money to Rilke and Trakl to support their work in poetry.⁴⁰ His life-long fascination with Dostoevsky is the reason why this particular novelist is so extensively treated in the present text. Wittgenstein was, according to his friends and acquaintances, “certifiably obsessed”⁴¹ with the latter’s *The Brothers Karamazov*, and intensely appreciated several other Dostoevsky novels. This is not surprising considering the popularity of *The Brothers Karamazov* among Viennese intellectuals of Wittgenstein’s time.⁴² This novel was intensely beloved by Karl Kraus—one of the most influential journalists and publicists in Vienna, whom Wittgenstein, too, cites as one of his greatest influences.⁴³ Furthermore, while Wittgenstein fought in World War One, and having been ordered to the foremost front, his close friend at the time recalls that one of the few possessions Wittgenstein took with him was a copy of *The Brothers Karamazov*.⁴⁴

After the war and the publication of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein leaves philosophy, gives up his inheritance, and becomes a schoolteacher in the Austrian

37 Paul Klee, *Creative Credo*, p. 182. Quoted in John Skorupski, “Language, Expressibility and the Mystical”, pp. 31–2.

38 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 83e; *Tagebücher*, pp. 178–9.

39 Sasha Bru, Wolfgang Huemer, and Daniel Steuer (eds.), *Wittgenstein Reading*, p. 3. Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, pp. 86–7.

40 Cf. his publisher Ludwig von Ficker’s account of this: “Frühlicht über den Gräbern. II. Rilke und der unbekannte Freund. In memoriam Ludwig Wittgenstein.”

41 James C. Klagge, *Wittgenstein in Exile*, p. 136.

42 Cf. Mathias Mayer, *Der erste Weltkrieg und die literarische Ethik*, p. 116.

43 Mayer, *Der erste Weltkrieg und die literarische Ethik*, p. 117; Wittgenstein, *CV* p. 19e; *VB* p. 19.

44 Max Bieler, “Ludwig Wittgenstein in 1915–1916”, pp. 307–8.

country side—as if carrying out Tolstoy’s call to a simple life.⁴⁵ In the 1930s, however, he returns to Cambridge as a philosophy professor, but soon thereafter he is making plans to emigrate to Russia, including the intense study of the Russian language. In September of 1935, he succeeds in this intent, and embarks a ship from London to Leningrad.⁴⁶ However, two weeks later, he returns to Great Britain, without many words of explanation.⁴⁷ Fania Pascal, with whom Wittgenstein had private Russian lessons at Cambridge together with Francis Skinner, interpreted Wittgenstein’s wish to study Russian and emigrate to Russia as stemming from his intense passion for Russian literature. She writes, “To my mind, his feelings for Russia would have had at all times more to do with Tolstoy’s moral teachings, with Dostoevsky’s spiritual insights, than with any political or social matters.”⁴⁸ She furthermore explains that Wittgenstein’s views on the Russian Revolution were, in her opinion, very naïve and that he had believed—like many Western Europeans at the time—that he would still find ‘Holy Russia’ from Rilke’s poems there.⁴⁹

Pascal recalls their Russian lessons with pleasure and remarks that he learned the grammar “in a remarkably short time [...] and proceeded to read good Russian prose”.⁵⁰ She notes that they often quarreled on the topic of Dostoevsky, since she pointed out the influence of Dickens in Dostoevsky’s writings, which apparently outraged Wittgenstein: “‘Dickens’, he pointed two feet above the floor—‘Dostoevsky’, his arm went up high.”⁵¹ She furthermore notes,

Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* soon became his favorite reading in Russian. More than twenty years later Mrs. Truscott, Skinner’s sister, [...] gave me Wittgenstein’s copy of the book that she had found among her brother’s things. In it every single accent had been penciled in.⁵²

Because he could only have filled in all the accents with the help of a native speaker, Pascal assumes that Wittgenstein must have read Dostoevsky with Ni-

45 Ray Monk describes this move as follows, “Wittgenstein entered the teaching profession with [an] idealistic set of intentions, and a rather romantic, Tolstoyan conception of what it would be like to live and work among the rural poor.” *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, p. 192. Cf. also Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin’s *Wittgenstein’s Vienna*, pp. 204–6.

46 Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, pp. 340 and 342–4.

47 Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, pp. 350–2.

48 Fania Pascal, “Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir”, pp. 531–2.

49 Pascal, “Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir”, pp. 531–2.

50 Pascal, “Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir”, p. 513.

51 Pascal, “Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir”, p. 515.

52 Pascal, “Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir”, p. 514.

kolai Bakhtin (Mikhail Bakhtin's brother), who was one of Wittgenstein's closest friends in Cambridge.⁵³

Wittgenstein's love for Tolstoy's novels is somewhat more well-known and discussed—Wittgenstein claimed that Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief* was central to him in the first period of his military service during World War One.⁵⁴ While working as an engineer in an artillery workshop in Cracow, in a 1915 letter to Ludwig von Ficker, the publisher of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein wrote, "Are you acquainted with Tolstoy's *The Gospel in Brief*? At its time, this book virtually kept me alive."⁵⁵ Wittgenstein's relation to Tolstoy has recently been treated at length in Henry W. Pickford's *Thinking with Tolstoy and Wittgenstein* (2016). There is a handful of shorter texts dealing with Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky, such as Tatiana Fediaeva's "Wittgenstein und Russland", which exaggeratedly constructs Wittgenstein's readings of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky as a central philosophical influence; Brian McGuiness's "Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky" and Ilsa Somavilla's "The Significance of Dostoevsky (and Ludwig Anzengruber) for Wittgenstein". However, these articles do not discuss Wittgenstein's reading of Dostoevsky with the connection between aisthesis and adequate representations of interiority in mind, which is what I seek to do in the present text.

The ubiquity of visual and physiognomic motifs in Fyodor M. Dostoevsky's novels is admittedly not unique, but rather a common feature of nineteenth-century realist novels. Contemporary developments in optics and psychology sparked interest in novelists, as for example in one of Dostoevsky's role models, Victor Hugo, and were reflected in their art.⁵⁶ Furthermore, as Konstantine Barsht has noted, the centrality of the visual in Dostoevsky's writings has often been overlooked because of the immense influence of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogical or polyphonic reading, more focused on the novels' treatment of the characters' voices than on their 'spectacularity'.⁵⁷ Barsht remarks on the unusually high

53 Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, pp. 343, 347, 457.

54 Brian McGuiness, "Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky", p. 230; Ilsa Somavilla, "The Significance of Dostoevsky (and Ludwig Anzengruber) for Wittgenstein", p. 265; Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, pp. 115–6.

55 Letter from 24 July 1915, Wittgenstein, "Letters to Ludwig von Ficker", p. 91.

56 Sharon Lubkemann Allen, "Reflection/Refraction of the Dying Light: Narrative Vision in Nineteenth-Century Russian and French Fiction", p. 3. Lubkemann Allen investigates the influence Hugo's "refractive" optics has had on Dostoevsky's visual motifs in *The Double*, "The Meek One" and *Notes from the Underground* (pp. 4–4 and 6–13), for instance in the cruelly objectifying effect the onlookers' eyes have on a convicted man in *Le dernier jour d'un condamné* and Dostoevsky's novels.

57 Konstantine Barsht, "Defining the Face: Observations on Dostoevskii's creative process", p. 23.

quality of Dostoevsky's paper and writing instruments, befitting of an artist or calligrapher. Dostoevsky's manuscripts were filled with drawings of faces, architectural elements (such as Gothic arches) and calligraphy samples, and Barsht notices the interaction between the visual elements and the text on the page.⁵⁸

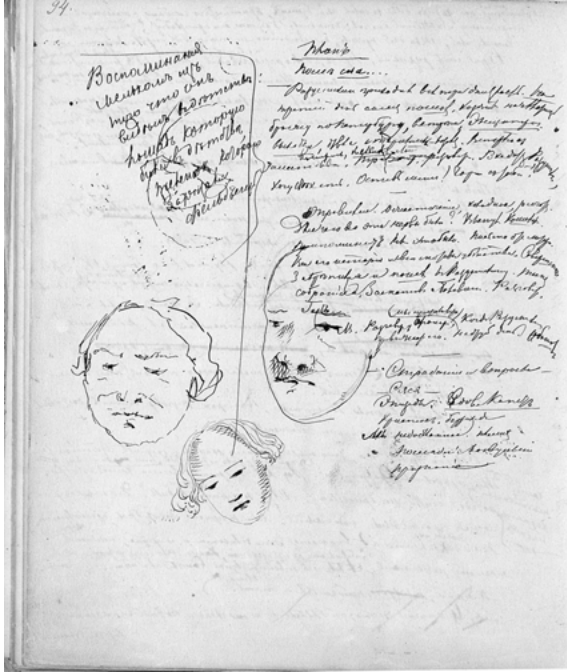


Fig. 1: A page from Dostoevsky's manuscript of "The Crocodile". Reproduction with permission from the Russian State Archive of Literature and Arts.

Barsht furthermore points out the centrality of the motif of the face (*lik*) in Dostoevsky's notebooks—such as for instance Sofia Marmeladova's face, which resembles that of Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*, but also a motif in orthodox iconography.⁵⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin mentions the notion of unity of beauty and goodness in Dostoevsky's notion of *blago-obrazie*, which is itself a Russian translation of the Greek *euschemon*.⁶⁰ In *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art*, Robert Louis Jackson draws attention to the classical Greek ideal of beau-

⁵⁸ Barsht, "Defining the Face", p. 35ff.

⁵⁹ Barsht, "Defining the Face", pp. 23–4, 27, 35–6.

⁶⁰ Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 186; cf. also *ibid.*, fn. 204.

ty throughout his novels—an ideal of “harmony, measure and repose”,⁶¹ and his merging of the Platonic and the Christian ideals of beauty as a sort of purity, for him epitomized in the image of the Madonna.⁶² Dostoevsky shared the enamored with ancient Greek depictions of the ideal with the idol of his youth, Friedrich Schiller.⁶³ Barsht locates Dostoevsky in a complex proto-modernist “confluence of aesthetics—Romanticism, realism and Orthodox iconography”.⁶⁴

Dostoevsky himself did not take for granted the aesthetic authority of the religious tradition, and the ancient notion that the Absolute could be expressed in art as beauty. By incorporating the possibility of the total, transcendent perspective—like that of Bishop Tikhon in *Demons* or Staretz Zosima in *The Brothers Karamazov* inspired by actual religious figures⁶⁵—into his polyphonic rendition of a modernizing Russia, Dostoevsky does relativize the formerly prevalent authority of the religious view (expressed e.g. in medieval religious art), but he does not eradicate it from the scope of possible intellectual interests. Dostoevsky’s proto-modernist aesthetic strategy introduces a polyphony of mutually contesting views of the intradiegetic events. To modify Wittgenstein’s term, Dostoevsky’s novels are characterized by a *multi-aspectivity*. Wittgenstein’s notion of aspect seeing or “seeing as” can here be applied to a reading of the kaleidoscopic complexity (which is a visual trope for Bakhtin’s auditory metaphor, namely polyphony) in Dostoevsky’s works. They present a plethora of contiguous contradictions, and so manifest Dostoevsky’s understanding and artistic presentation of the conflicts of his own time. Unlike Hegel’s dialectical sublation (*Aufhebung*), the contradictions that Dostoevsky presents in his novels are not unified and

61 Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form: A Study of His Philosophy of Art*, p. 46.

62 Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form*, p. 48.

63 Jackson, *Dostoevsky’s Quest for Form*, p. 194.

64 Barsht, “Defining the Face”, p. 54.

65 Dostoevsky was inspired by St. Tikhon of Zadonsk and St. Ambrose of Optina when creating these two characters. St. Tikhon was an eighteenth-century saint who was involved in debates against atheist “Voltairianism”, and who possessed the kind of *prozorlivost’* that Zosima manifested. Cf. P. Pletnev, “Serdtssem mudrye. (O ‘startsah’ u Dostoevskogo)”, pp. 76–83. St. Ambrose of Optina is the Staretz Dostoevsky visited after the death of his son, *ibid.* pp. 83–9. Cf. also Sergius Chetverikov, *Elder Ambrose of Optina*, pp. 11, 213. The notion of active love is a teaching of St. Isaac the Syrian, a seventh-century orthodox saint whom Dostoevsky admired. Cf. Pletnev, “Serdtssem mudrye”, p. 79. Valentina Vetlovskaya also discusses the parallels between Staretz Zosima’s teaching and those of St. Isaac the Syrian. Dostoevsky explicitly mentions the latter in his notes on the former. Cf. “Alyosha Karamazov and the Hagiographic Hero”, p. 687, and Nina Perlina, *Varieties of Poetic Utterances*, p. 100. Dostoevsky owned an 1858 edition of St. Isaac’s *Ascetic Homilies* and he often quoted from it in his notes to underline what he considered central to “the Orthodox conception”. Cf. Rico Monge’s “The Centrality of St. Isaac the Syrian’s Ascetical Theology in Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*”.

merged into a single, higher-level, point of view. Rather, the different voices and respective perspectives remain distinct,⁶⁶ though Dostoevsky explicitly states his clearly imperialist opinions in his feuilleton writings.⁶⁷

The multi-aspectivity of Dostoevsky's novels as a whole—i.e. that the same events and characters can be read in a variety of mutually contradicting ways—has already been noticed by Ksana Blank in “The Rabbit and the Duck: Antinomic Unity in Dostoevskij, the Russian Religious Tradition, and Mikhail Bakhtin”. Blank explicitly refers to Wittgenstein's use of the duck-rabbit drawing and calls the ability to ‘read’ the image as a duck or as a rabbit in Wittgenstein's terms: “noticing an aspect”.⁶⁸ She focuses on the main contradiction in the novel, the contrast between Ivan Karamazov's philosophy and Father Zosima's faith, and the question about which view Dostoevsky himself held. She argues that Dostoevsky is precisely interested in presenting *both* viewpoints at the same time and in their contiguity. She compares multi-aspectivity to Bakhtin's notion of dialogicity and to the often antinomic structure of Greek patristic theology that Russian orthodox theology is based on.

In “Paradoxical Dostoevsky”, Gary Saul Morson offers an intricate survey of paradoxes⁶⁹ and contradictions throughout Dostoevsky's novels. He, too, compares this aesthetic strategy to the *Gestalt* duck-rabbit image, although he does not refer to Wittgenstein.⁷⁰ However, one of the main thematic complexes that Morson identifies Dostoevsky's paradoxes to be revolving around is the con-

66 While Dostoevsky never explicitly discussed finer points in Hegel's philosophy, he at least once expressed great desire to read his work (he wrote to his brother from prison, “without fail send me Hegel, especially Hegel's *History of Philosophy*. My whole future is bound up with that!”). There is no evidence that he did study it in depth (he also made negative comments, like “only Hegel, the German bedbug, wanted to reconcile everything on philosophy”). However, Hegel's ideas were so omnipresent in Russia of the 1840s, Dostoevsky's formative period, that it is safe to assume he was at least indirectly influenced by them. Cf. Kenneth Lantz, “Hegel”, *The Dostoevsky Encyclopedia*, pp. 177–8.

67 A good example of these views is his defense of the ‘humble’ ascendancy of Russia over other peoples in “The Utopian Conception of History” from 1876, printed in his column *A Writer's Diary*.

68 Ksana Blank, “The Rabbit and the Duck: Antinomic Unity in Dostoevskij, the Russian Religious Tradition, and Mikhail Bakhtin”, p. 22.

69 It is well known that Dostoevsky names several of his characters “paradoxicalists”, namely Ivan Karamazov and the underground man, as well as a voice he sometimes uses in *A Writer's Diary*, who defends controversial issues. Cf. Gary Saul Morson, “Paradoxical Dostoevsky”, p. 471.

70 Morson, “Paradoxical Dostoevsky”, p. 492.

cept of *intention*, which is exactly what Wittgenstein admired in Dostoevsky's novels.⁷¹ Morson explains the paradoxes of intention in Dostoevsky's novels:

Law, poetics, and psychology typically imagine human intention as in principle locatable at a moment. [...] For Dostoevsky, such a view of intention is naïve. It applies only some of the time. Intention *may* be complete at some point, "the last determination of the judgment" [quoting the empiricist John Locke], but it may also be always incomplete and genuinely processual, with no moment containing the decision for actions undertaken.⁷²

Dostoevsky obviously does not treat intention as an isolable, thing-like entity, but in a more dynamic and processual manner. The most obvious example is Dmitrii Karamazov's loud drunken boasting that he intends to kill his father, in which he went so far as his father's very doorstep. However, once there, Dmitrii only looks at his father through the window:

The personal loathing was increasing unbearably. Mitya was beside himself, and suddenly he snatched the brass pestle from his pocket...

.....⁷³

The dotted line interrupts the flow of action and marks the threshold between a supposed intention and its actualization in action. However, the readers find out later that Dmitrii had changed his mind in the last minute and did not complete the supposedly linear path between an intention and an action. As Morson points out, in comparing Dmitrii's case with a real trial case Dostoevsky was reporting on in his column, *A Writer's Diary*, there was not one single moment in which Dmitrii clearly knew what he intended to do. His action was open-ended, his intention unformulated and processual. As Morson formulates it, "An intention without an intended outcome, a series of conscious and unimpeded actions leading to a result not envisaged in advance—surely, this is a paradoxical view of intention and human action."⁷⁴ When measured against Cartesianism and Empiricism, Dostoevsky's artistic treatment of intention appears paradoxical, since it contradicts many of the basic assumptions underlying Western philosophy of interiority.

71 As Brian McGuinness notes, Wittgenstein often used examples from Dostoevsky's and Tolstoy's novels to illustrate how a person's intention may be *shown* as opposed to merely stated. Cf. "Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky", p. 233.

72 Morson, "Paradoxical Dostoevsky", p. 477.

73 *The Brothers Karamazov* (henceforth: *BK*), p. 393.

74 Morson, "Paradoxical Dostoevsky", p. 478.

This description of Dostoevsky's treatment of intention complements Wittgenstein's own anti-Cartesian concerns very well. For Wittgenstein there is no clear separation between a supposedly 'interior' intention and an 'exterior' action and he could, in principle, agree with Morson's Dostoevsky reading that it is sometimes paradoxically the processual character of the action that formulates the intention rather than the other way around. Because, in *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is Dmitrii's *action* of going to his father with a brass pestle in his pocket that made him realize that he could not, in fact, murder him, and *not* a temporally isolable thing-like *intention* that determined his action. Even though Dostoevsky was an avid reader of the newest findings in medicine and psychology,⁷⁵ his works nonetheless suggest a non-deterministic take on the human *psyche*, as never exhaustively calculable by the means of exact sciences. As Mikhail Bakhtin explains, Dostoevsky struggled against any reductive notions of mechanistic materialism and "physiologism", including especially Claude Bernard's methods of experimental psychology.⁷⁶ This skepticism is perhaps most vividly expressed in the closing lines of *Demons*, in which an autopsy was performed on Stavrogin's brain that "completely and emphatically ruled out insanity",⁷⁷ showing that the kind of disturbances this character exhibited most of his life are not representable with natural scientific methods. Similarly to Dostoevsky, Wittgenstein will later consistently reject the idea of scientific determinism in psychology.⁷⁸

The novel's depiction of Dmitrii's trial highlights the moral and legal ramifications of a more complex take on intentionality. The prosecutor and the defense lawyer dispute over Dmitrii's character and each try to linearly deduce his supposedly criminal nature or innocence from his behavior. As Kate Holland has pointed out in reference to the novel's unmasking of the extent of simplification involved in such undertakings, "every piece of evidence referred to [...] can be read in many ways, thus opening up a multiplicity of possible narratives to explain the murder."⁷⁹ Holland furthermore argues that the linear proceeding

75 Cf. James L. Rice "The Covert Design of 'The Brothers Karamazov'", p. 368.

76 Cf. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 40.

77 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 678.

78 Cf. TLP 4.1121; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, p. 42; PI, §571 and PI, II, section xiv. Cf. also Maurice Drury's *The Danger of Words*. Drury was Wittgenstein's student who later became a psychiatrist. In his book, he expresses his appreciation of modern medicine, also of Claude Bernard's methods, but also draws upon his philosophy studies with Wittgenstein to argue against a mechanistically reductive model of human psychology.

79 Kate Holland, "The Legend of the *Ladonka* and the Trial of the Novel", p. 195.

of the lawyers—who seek to deduce character based on material evidence—is self-reflexively contrasted to the more holistic or “novelistic” (*romanicheskii*) proceeding that seeks to present the open-endedness and complexity of Dmitrii’s behavior which cannot be pinned down to clearly isolable facts and features.⁸⁰ The view that (Dostoevsky’s) novels can show the ‘interiority’ of a person in a manner superior to a mere list of facts about them perfectly corresponds to Wittgenstein’s own estimation of Dostoevsky’s ability to present intentionality.⁸¹

As Wittgenstein had suggested in a note from 1930, theater is another example of how art shows ‘interiority’, like intentionality, by presenting characters on a stage and granting beholders the paradoxical perspective on someone as they are when they are not being watched.⁸² Arguably, the seldom explored theater references in Dostoevsky’s novels—for instance the entire chapter titled “The Performance” in *Notes from a Dead House*, Fyodor Karamazov’s theatrical antics in *The Brothers Karamazov*, or the repeated invocations of Denis Diderot in the same novel, the paradigmatic representative of the Western illusionist tradition⁸³—reflect a profound psychological change in Russian society in the course of its modernization. The nineteenth century in Europe at large is considered an especially theatricalized epoch, for instance in the highly ritualized court behavior, or in the aesthetization of war (the battlefield of Austerlitz was, for instance, considered an especially suitable naturally-occurring amphitheater).⁸⁴ According to Hegel’s analysis of Diderot’s aesthetics, theater is an important metaphor in the dialectics of mindedness (*Geist*): a theatrical mind modulates one’s feelings and intentions in order to fit into social conventions and narratives.⁸⁵ As Donna Tussing Orwin has argued, the abrupt modernization and westernization reforms that Tsar Peter the Great (1682–1725) had introduced in Russia, which prohibited traditional Russian clothing and culture to the elites and imposed

80 Holland, “The Legend of the *Ladonka* and the Trial of the Novel”, pp. 192 and 194; *BK*, pp. 731 and 701.

81 Cf. Hans Biesenbach, *Zitate und Anspielungen in Wittgensteins Werken*, p. 87.

82 *CV*, p. 4e; *VB*, p. 4.

83 Werner Wolf, “Illusion (Aesthetic)”, pp. 281–2. According to my count, Diderot is mentioned by name eleven times in *The Brothers Karamazov*. By contrast, Schiller, the hero of Dostoevsky’s youth (cf. Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt*, pp. 109–10), is mentioned only six times.

84 Yuri Lotman, “The Theater and Theatricality as Components of Early Nineteenth-Century Culture”, pp. 147–9.

85 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, §§539–40. Hegel does not mention Diderot’s *Rameau’s Nephew* by name, but, as Michael Speight has argued, it is obvious from the text which work he means. Cf. Speight’s *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency*, pp. 78–84.

Western-style appearance and behavior, introduced an outside perspective on one's self and one's society, and therefore a highly theatricalized culture. This outside perspective in turn became a prominent *topos* in Russian literature. Orwin suggests, "they could not completely internalize behavior that they admired and imitated, so they began to observe themselves from a distance and ironically."⁸⁶ This outside perspective on oneself has a theatrical character. The Western-style clothes that Russian elites put on had the feel of *costumes*.⁸⁷ Dostoevsky depicts this everyday theatricality in the character of Fyodor Karamazov, who "apes" the Western-style bow of his relative hailing from Paris, Miu-sov.⁸⁸ I will argue that within Dostoevsky's novel, the motif of theater and theatricality (on or off actual stages), as for instance in the highly theatricalized court trials of the time, functions as a metaphor for a scrutiny of interiority in the sense of a mindedness as overtly expressed in public codes.

The other author to be discussed in the present text—W.G. Sebald—is one whom Wittgenstein could not possibly have read, since Wittgenstein died when Sebald was only seven years old (in 1951). However, it is Wittgenstein and his philosophy that are regularly referenced in Sebald's novels. In *Austerlitz*, one of the times in which Wittgenstein is explicitly mentioned the narrator remarks,

And now, whenever I see a photograph of Wittgenstein somewhere or other, I feel more and more as if Austerlitz were gazing at me out of it, and when I see Austerlitz it is as if I see in him the disconsolate philosopher, a man locked into the glaring clarity of his logical thinking as inextricably as into his confused emotions: in the stature, in the way they study one as if across an invisible barrier, in the makeshift organization of their lives, in a wish to manage with as few possessions as possible, and in the inability, typical of Austerlitz as it was of Wittgenstein, to linger over any kind of preliminaries.⁸⁹

86 Donna Tussing Orwin, *Consequences of Consciousness: Turgenev, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy*, p. 12.

87 Orwin, *Consequences of Consciousness*, pp. 23–4.

88 *BK*, p. 39.

89 *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 55–6.; "Mehr und mehr dünkt es mich darum jetzt, sobald ich irgendwo auf eine Photographie von Wittgenstein stoße, als blicke mir Austerlitz aus ihr entgegen, oder, wenn ich Austerlitz anschau, als sehe ich in ihm den unglücklichen, in der Klarheit seiner logischen Überlegungen ebenso wie in der Verwirrung seiner Gefühle eingesperrten Denker, dermaßen auffällig sind die Ähnlichkeiten zwischen den beiden, in der Statur, in der Art, wie sie einen über eine unsichtbare Grenze hinweg studieren, in ihrem nur provisorisch eingerichteten Leben, in dem Wunsch, mit möglichst wenig auslangen zu können, und in der für Austerlitz nicht anders als für Wittgenstein bezeichnenden Unfähigkeit, mit irgendwelchen Präliminarien sich aufzuhalten." *Austerlitz*, p. 64.

In *The Emigrants (Die Ausgewanderten)*, the painter Max Aurach recalls that in 1944 he stayed in the same house where Wittgenstein had lived in 1908. Aurach comments that it is “as if he were tightening his ties to those who had gone before” and that he is “aware of a sense of brotherhood that reached far back beyond his own lifetime”.⁹⁰ Here the notion of brotherhood evokes Wittgenstein’s conceptions of family resemblances that will be an important structuring principle for his later novel *Austerlitz*. Sebald even drafted a script of Wittgenstein’s life for a film.⁹¹ In addition, Sebald mentioned in an interview that the character Paul Bereyter in *The Emigrants*, who starts working in a remote rural school, was modeled after a similar episode in Wittgenstein’s life.⁹²

Like for Wittgenstein, visibility is central to Sebald’s aesthetics, as the numerous photographs included between the lines of his texts attest. Sebald’s use of photography within his novel calls for intermedial reflection, and Wittgenstein offers reflections on the relation between image and word that has not yet been fully exhausted by literary studies. After all, the latter introduces the picture theory (*Abbildungstheorie*) of language in the *Tractatus*, and calls his *Philosophical Investigations* an “album”, full of landscape sketches (*Landschaftsskizzen*).⁹³ In Sebald scholarship, his photographic material is often discussed in relation to Walter Benjamin’s “photographic discourse” of memory, in which he compares remembering to the function of the photographic camera,⁹⁴ which is why, as Ross Posnock formulates it, Benjamin is often considered the implicit “patron saint” of Sebald’s works.⁹⁵ Posnock continues that it would be interesting to “see what happens when we let Wittgenstein play that role”. While there are some articles on the mentions of Wittgenstein in Sebald’s novels, which I will discuss more closely in the third chapter, there is very little interest in the relation between Wittgenstein’s and Sebald’s aesthetics and their work on non-hypostasized representations of interiority, especially pain.

For Sebald, art has a serious role to play in facing difficult European history. As Austerlitz’s history teacher in the novel remarks, “Our concern with history [...] is a concern with pre-formed images already imprinted on our brains, images

90 W.G. Sebald, *The Emigrants*, pp. 166–7; “als schließe er sich immer enger an diejenigen an, die ihm vorausgegangen seien”, “[er] empfinde auch [...] ein weit hinter seine eigene Zeit und Vorzeit zurückreichendes Gefühl der Brüderlichkeit”, *Die Ausgewanderten*, p. 248.

91 Ross Posnock, “Don’t think, but look!” W.G. Sebald, Wittgenstein, and Cosmopolitan Poverty”, p. 114.

92 Cf. Carole Angier, “Who is W.G. Sebald?”, p. 73.

93 *PU*, pp. 232 and 231, respectively.

94 Peter Drexler, “Erinnerung und Photographie. Zu W.G. Sebalds *Austerlitz*”, p. 281.

95 Cf. Posnock, “Don’t think, but look!”, p. 113.

at which we keep staring while the truth lies elsewhere, away from it all, somewhere as yet undiscovered.”⁹⁶ As Anne Fuchs comments on Sebald’s appreciation for the visual artist Jan Peter Tripp’s work, “From Sebald’s point of view the traditional historical disciplines have failed to deal with the ethical consequences of the history of human mastery [...] [they] operate as a cultural silencer, leaving no room for [...] marks of pain”.⁹⁷ The World Wars of the twentieth century indeed pose a challenge to representation because they lack the perspicuity of choreographed battles from earlier centuries. By contrast, and as Walter Benjamin has noted, the sheer scale of destruction of modern warfare precludes representation along the lines of traditional realist narrative.⁹⁸ Sebald’s texts use newer literary forms to circumscribe and suggest, from various angles, that which cannot be discursively and directly described,⁹⁹ but, in Wittgenstein’s terms, only aesthetically shown.

The transmission of memory was such an important concern for Sebald, because growing up in post-World War II Germany, he was tormented by the silence on the Holocaust, which had taken place just years before. Furthermore, he criticizes the culture of silence on the topic of the destruction experienced in Germany from Allied bombings in *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, and especially the lack of serious literature from that period. He emphasizes the need to understand *how* people experienced these traumatic events, since BBC video footage of the bombings from the perspectives of the pilots do not reveal anything but a blur¹⁰⁰ and most eyewitness reports are surprisingly stereotypical, empty and repetitive, not revealing the, as Sebald suggests, the apparently repressed dimension of personal experience.¹⁰¹ Most German authors he read disappointed him in this regard, he remarks that “I had grown up with the feeling that something was being kept from me: at home, at school and by the German writers whose books I read hoping to glean more information on the monstrous events in the background of my life.”¹⁰² The idea of circumspectly breaking this silence,

96 Austerlitz, (Bell), p. 101; “Unsere Beschäftigung mit der Geschichte [...] sei eine Beschäftigung mit immer schon vorgefertigten, in das Innere unserer Köpfe gravierten Bildern, auf die wir andauernd starrten, während die Wahrheit irgendwoanders, ein einem von keinem Menschen noch entdeckten Abseits liegt.” Austerlitz, p. 109.

97 Anne Fuchs, “W.G. Sebald’s Painters: The Function of Fine Art in His Prose Works”, p. 169.

98 Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller”, p. 83.

99 Cf. Todd Samuel Presner, “What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals’: Extreme History and the Modernism of W.G. Sebald’s Realism”, p. 356.

100 *On the Natural History of Destruction* (henceforth *NHD*), pp. 29–31.

101 *NHD*, p. 93.

102 *NHD*, p. 70; “ich [war] aufgewachsen [...] mit dem Gefühl, es würde mir etwas vorenthalten, zu Hause, in der Schule und auch von den deutschen Schriftstellern, deren Bücher ich in der

and tracing the life-stories of victims and the displaced of the Holocaust, but also the experience of the destruction of German cities became major themes of his later literary texts.¹⁰³

A conviction Sebald and Wittgenstein share is their strict anti-Cartesianism. Wittgenstein's distaste for reificationist Cartesianism is echoed in Sebald's novels,¹⁰⁴ such as in the scene from *The Rings of Saturn* (*Die Ringe des Saturn*), in which the narrator is studying Rembrandt's painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* (1632), and comments,

In his philosophical investigations, which form one of the principal chapters in the history of subjection, Descartes teaches that one should disregard the flesh, which is beyond our comprehension, and attend to the machine within, to what can be fully understood, be made wholly useful for work.¹⁰⁵

Sebald furthermore notes a "Cartesian rigidity" in the gaze of the anatomists in Rembrandt's painting.¹⁰⁶ In "Sebald's Painters", Anne Fuchs notes the clear references to the Frankfurt School in this passage of *Ringe des Saturn*, marked in the term "*Unterwerfung*", or subjugation, and in Adorno and Horkheimer's connection between European rationalism and the exploitation of nature, including the human body, with the emergence of Nazi biopolitics.¹⁰⁷ However, in addition to the Frankfurt School, Wittgenstein can be read as another related philosopher, who, in opposition to hypostasizing the mind, presents a series of comparisons and imageries that prompt towards a change of view of what it is to speak of 'interiority', for instance of pain, as potentially always already legible from the body.

Sebald's natural historical motifs such as the continuity between human and animal perception, as shown in the juxtaposition of human and animal eyes in the opening of *Austerlitz*, can be interpreted as echoing Wittgenstein's

Hoffnung las, mehr über die Ungeheuerlichkeiten im Hintergrund meines eigenen Lebens erfahren zu können." *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (henceforth: *LL*), pp. 82–3.

103 Uwe Schütte, *W.G. Sebald: Einführung in Leben und Werk*, p. 19.

104 Ross Posnock presents the striking parallels between Sebald's and Wittgenstein's anti-Cartesianism in "Don't think but look!", pp. 115–7.

105 W.G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, p. 13; "Bekanntlich lehrte Descartes in einem der Hauptartikel der Geschichte der Unterwerfung, daß man absehen muss von dem unbegreiflichen Fleisch und hin auf die in uns bereits angelegte Maschine, auf das, was man vollkommen verstehen, restlos für die Arbeit nutzbar machen, und bei allfälliger Störung, entweder wieder instand setzen oder wegwerfen kann." *Die Ringe des Saturn*, p. 26.

106 Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, p. 17; p. 27.

107 Fuchs, "Sebald's Painters", p. 173.

self-description of his philosophy in *Philosophical Investigations*, §415: “What we are supplying are really remarks on the natural history of human beings”.¹⁰⁸ The anti-Cartesian thrust that informs both his and Sebald’s work has become more widely accepted in cognitive sciences today, leading to new reflections on the relation between art and nature, aesthetics and biological conditions of cognition. In a recent study, Wolfgang Welsch traces the history of the culture/nature binary back to anthropocentricity of the Enlightenment, as for instance the dictum that “man” is the most central and fundamental concept for understanding everything else,¹⁰⁹ and the basic presupposition of a fundamental separation and distinction of human beings from the rest of the world in the Renaissance. This development is paradigmatic already in Descartes’s definition of the mind as belonging to a spiritualized rational world in opposition to the body, belonging to the purely material world subject to mechanistic laws.¹¹⁰ Welsch considers such dichotomic thinking as in stark contrast with the more holistic world-views of the antiquity and the Middle Ages, but also as obsolete today: scientists as well as artists are increasingly interested in exploring continuities between culture and nature.¹¹¹ In *Thinking with Literature: Towards a Cognitive Criticism*, Terence Cave writes,

Literature, as a product of the mind, can perform remarkable feats, but it does not occupy a space of its own, demarcated with glass walls, where people walk dimly-lit corridors, getting a thrill out of seeing jellyfish and sharks at close quarters, but without incurring any risk to their persons.¹¹²

Rather than defining aesthetics as the appreciation of high art, Cave, like Welsch, remarks that he is interested in “aesthetics as it should be understood: for the Greeks *aisthesis* just is sensory perception”.¹¹³ As I will show in the first chapter, this view is entirely congenial to Wittgenstein’s use of the term “aesthetic” in the sense of “synopsizing” or seeing together various features of reality, thus the proximity of aesthetics in the sense of the study of art and aesthetics in terms of aisthesis, or perception.

108 *PU*, §415, “Was wir liefern, sind eigentlich Bemerkungen zur Naturgeschichte des Menschen.”

109 Wolfgang Welsch, *Ästhetische Welterfahrung*, p. 35.

110 Welsch, *Ästhetische Welterfahrung*, pp. 39–40.

111 Welsch, *Ästhetische Welterfahrung*, pp. 40–4.

112 Terence Cave, *Thinking with Literature: Towards a Cognitive Criticism*, pp. 3–4.

113 Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, p. 29. He also mentions for instance “the aesthetics of affordances” (p. 55) and the possibility for literature to embody ethical as well as aesthetic values (p. 139).

Anti-Cartesianism does not only attack the rigid opposition of man and nature, but also that of mind and body, which were treated as two separate realms by Descartes. In recent cognitive studies, the intricate intertwining of the conceptual and the bodily is noted. Guillemette Bolens's *The Style of Gestures: Embodiment and Cognition in Literary Narrative* applies these findings to literature. She opens the book with a painting by Jean Baptiste Siméon Chardin, *L'Enfant au Toton. Auguste Gabriel Godefroy (1737–38)*, which is also on the cover of her book (Chardin is one of Denis Diderot's favorite painters for demonstrating absorption and theatricality). Bolens draws attention to the depicted child's gaze, leading our gaze to the toy in front of him, the spinning top still in motion, and argues that the viewer's access to the painting is via one's own kinesthetic memories and imaginative projections of producing the same motion.¹¹⁴ The discovery of mirror neurons in general proved perception to be a far more holistic and complex process than generally assumed, involving not only visual data, but also the activation of one's own sensorimotor system, as well as a conceptual understanding. Bolens focuses on cognitive research on reading action-verbs: "When a person reads verbs for head, arm, or leg actions (e.g. "lick", "pick", and "kick"), signals increase in the brain areas along the motor strip that is either directly adjacent to or overlaps with areas activated by actual movement of the tongue, fingers or feet."¹¹⁵ The finding cited by Bolens means that neuron mirroring works even when just reading texts, and not only when observing others' actions, which makes these discoveries in cognitive science directly relevant to literary studies. Even though most experiments on perception in cognitive science so far focus on very crude distinctions (such as that between "kick" and "lick"), Bolens demonstrates the relevance of literary studies to the scientific study of cognition by discussing an experiment that shows that the same visual stimuli—being presented with "the combined contraction of [...] the zygomaticus major and minor, the orbicularis oculi and oris, the buccinator muscles, etc." that are empirically known to compose a smile—can lead to vastly different interpretations due to the context described to the test subjects as a background narrative to the smile.¹¹⁶ She links these findings to smiles as described in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, where the surrounding narrative makes for a variety of very distinct smiles.¹¹⁷ Far from replacing the humanities, cognitive sci-

114 Guillemette Bolens, *The Style of Gestures: Embodiment and Cognition in Literary Narrative*, pp. 3–4.

115 Bolens, *The Style of Gestures*, p. 12. Bolens cites numerous empirical studies in this field, including e.g. Friedemann Pulvermüller's "Brain Mechanisms Linking Language and Action".

116 Bolens, *The Style of Gestures*, p. 42.

117 Bolens, *The Style of Gestures*, pp. 1, 44, 46.

ences can only profit from the more subtle and rich approach to the analysis of complex contexts and narratives in which natural signs such as smiles or gestures are meaningful in the first place.

Even though Wittgenstein was highly skeptical of the tendency to view psychology as an exact science, his remarks on facial recognition, as well as his experiments on music perception have anticipated much of current research in cognitive studies on human perception.¹¹⁸ For instance, his remark in *Philosophical Investigations*, §285, that it is possible to mimic the other's facial expression without looking in the mirror already points towards a more holistic understanding of human perception, as also involving the sensorimotor system, and as also based on shared conceptual frameworks such as emotion concepts. Even though Wittgenstein did not think in neurobiological terms, his remark pre-figures what the finding of mirror neurons has confirmed: that our observation of others' 'inner' life is very often non-inferentially legible from their bodies. Indeed, Wittgenstein's insistent battle against rationalist Cartesian dichotomy of mind and body, the 'inner' and 'outer', now seems legitimized by a recent turn in cognitive studies. As Cave notes,

Rationalist approaches [...] belong [...] to what are known as 'first-generation' cognitivist studies, in which the human mind was assumed to be a thinking machine, on the analogy of the computer. Current 'second-generation' approaches insist [...] on the continuity between mind and body.¹¹⁹

As Cave continues, in cognition, one is not "reading abstractly remote 'minds': what you read is bodies"¹²⁰ and "mind-reading and motor resonance are not two separate areas ('mind' and 'body') but twin aspects of the incessant efforts we make to penetrate the intentionality of others and make plain our own."¹²¹

Sebald's opposition to a dichotomy of mind and body, the conceptual and narrative sphere and matter, therefore complements the newest scientific findings on the relation between the visual and the sensorimotor systems, and their interlinkage with conceptual and narrative understanding. His novels feature embodied, limited narrators and their field of vision is framed by their locomotion: they are flâneurs and explorers of urban and rural landscapes. As Daniel Weston has noted, Sebald's novels are not so much about "place per

118 Proudfoot, "On Wittgenstein on Cognitive Science", p. 200; John Hyman, *Investigating Psychology: Sciences of the Mind after Wittgenstein*, pp. 1–24.

119 Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, p. 28.

120 Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, p. 30.

121 Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, p. 112.

se but of an experience of place in a sensuously responsive mode, marking their subjective rendering of place not to claim authority but to deflate any claim to definitive vision”.¹²² As Weston suggests, a “non-representationalist” approach based on Wittgenstein’s philosophy is useful for the analysis of Sebald’s novels, for it focuses on the experiential and enacted aspect of cognition.¹²³ The sensorimotor pace of a walking flaneur arguably structures *Austerlitz*, like Sebald’s other novels (especially *The Rings of Saturn*). As David Darby has noticed, “movement through landscape is essential to the process of memory enacted in Sebald’s writing.”¹²⁴ The pictures inserted in the text (be they photographs or instances of an ekphrasis), have the character of a being produced during a brief pause in walking, a pause long enough to take a picture. As Weston notes, “the text’s views are pauses—moment of stillness—rather than extended stasis.”¹²⁵

The effect of an interrelation between photographs and texts in Sebald’s novels can be read as the creation of a *cognitive artifact*, to use Cave’s term.¹²⁶ For photographs *prima facie* create a reality effect, they appear as documents of real experience. This is because they are light-imprints of real matter. In interpreting Sebald’s works, Peter Drexler refers to Marianne Hirsch’s influential concept of “postmemory” of both photographs and narratives, introduced in her *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative, and Postmemory*.¹²⁷ Postmemory is a form of memory whose “connection to its object or its source is mediated not through recollection but through imaginative investment and creation”.¹²⁸ It can be understood as a cognitive artifact. While Hirsch’s concept focuses mainly on photographs, Sebald’s work can be read as an interplay of text and photographs with the effect of creating a cognitive artifact of postmemory. The effect of an interlinkage of meaning between the visual field and language is an important motif for Wittgenstein’s work, as already noted. Wittgenstein remarks, for instance, on the question of interpreting a strange sign: “I can see it in various as-

122 Daniel Weston, *Contemporary Literary Landscapes: The Poetics of Experience*, p. 19.

123 Weston, *Contemporary Literary Landscapes*, pp. 2 and 33.

124 David Darby, “Landscape and Memory, Sebald’s Redemption of History”, p. 265.

125 Weston, *Contemporary Literary Landscapes*, p. 37.

126 Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, p. 1. Cave also explicitly refers to Wittgenstein in proposing a practical approach to viewing literature, for instance in viewing literary genres as ‘games’ with certain rules, but also with the flexibility of change over time. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

127 Drexler, “Erinnerung und Photographie”, p. 281. Todd Samuel Presner also notes the relevance of Hirsch’s concept of postmemory to Sebald’s work in “‘What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals’”, p. 349.

128 Marianne Hirsch, *Family Frames*, p. 22. In her later work *The Generation of Postmemory* (2012), Hirsch explicitly discusses Sebald’s *Austerlitz* as an example of postmemory. Cf. e.g. p. 41.

pects according to the fiction I surround it with.”¹²⁹ So it is also Sebald who surrounds (found) photographs as capsules of preserved light-impressions from the past with a new imagined and created meaning, by writing his fictions around them.

Sebald’s work addresses Baudrillard’s problem of hyperreality caused by new communication media. In Sebald’s *Austerlitz*, the main character watches the Nazi propaganda film *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*, looking for his mother, who was incarcerated there. In it, Theresienstadt is presented as a holiday destination, whereas it was in fact, of course, a camp-ghetto. In the novel, this theatrical staging is mediated through video, which Sebald emphasizes. Austerlitz plays it in slow motion, searching for his mother’s face, and thus creates an uncanny effect of unreality: the pixelated people linger like ghosts on the screen, their voices are drawn out into wails. In “The Ecstasy of Communication” Baudrillard has argued that the twentieth century breaks with the drama of staging interiority and is characterized by the utter dissolution of subject/object relations in an all-encompassing immersion into the simulacra of new communication technologies.¹³⁰ While the self is staged in the nineteenth-century novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, for instance in Fyodor Karamazov’s buffoonery, in Sebald’s novel the subject is medialized, and diffused into a sea of information, like Austerlitz who sought to diffuse himself into his knowledge of architectural history. However, by contrast to late twentieth-century novels, I would argue that *Austerlitz* ventures beyond the typical post-modern novel that revels in simulacra. Published at the cusp of the twenty-first century (2001), this novel explores the capacity of narrative to regain reality and historicity, not in a nostalgically realistic mode, but while confidently handling its own meta-fictional elements. Austerlitz repeatedly turns to the narrator of *Austerlitz* in order to piece his life back together by telling it, and so escape the ghost-like semi-existence in the perusal of indifferent information.

The following text is divided in three chapters. The first chapter is an account of Wittgenstein’s views on aesthetics in its fluid association with perception and experientiality (i.e. *aisthesis*), as well as the closely related notion of ‘inner’ sensations, not in the sense of Cartesian objects, but as intricately interlinked with practices and conceptual frameworks of the social world. The chapter also explores Wittgenstein’s private notes on Dostoevsky. If the ending of the *Tractatus* was indeed as greatly indebted to his reading of *The Brothers Karama-*

129 *PI*, II, xi, p. 210; “Und je nach Erdichtung, mit der ich [ein bildliches Zeichen] umgebe, kann ich es in verschiedenen Aspekten sehen.” *PU*, II, xi, p. 546.

130 Jean Baudrillard, “The Ecstasy of Communication”, pp. 130–2.

zov as his philosophy professor Bertrand Russell feared,¹³¹ and if Wittgenstein's privileging of literature and his enduring passion for Dostoevsky's novels is to be taken seriously, it is surprising that there is not more scholarship that juxtaposes Wittgenstein's philosophical works with Dostoevsky's novels and the striking similarities to (especially early) Bakhtin's thought. The second chapter explores Dostoevsky's novels from the perspective of the applicability of Wittgenstein's ideas on their aesthetics, while at the same time acknowledging the historical and cultural remove from which Dostoevsky wrote. Dostoevsky did not share Cartesian assumptions about the alleged discrepancy of body and mind, the person and the social settings, which were deeply entrenched in Western European thought, and his texts must have provided to Wittgenstein a refreshingly alternative, and at the same time highly sophisticated exploration of human mindedness. I will explore how perception is represented in Dostoevsky's works and point out the motif of paradoxical multi-aspective perception. As I will argue, in order to adequately represent the conflicts and paradoxes of his time, Dostoevsky's characters and situations are often depicted in such a way as to yield several mutually exclusive interpretations. Depending on one's conceptual framework, they can be seen under the aspect of modern science and political views or traditional Russian orthodox epistemes, which, as I will show, are rooted in the holistic manner of thinking from late antiquity in the Christian East. The third chapter turns to contemporary literature and W.G. Sebald's "new urban imaginary". In it I will suggest that the Wittgenstein-motif in Sebald's novels is not merely ornamental but that it lends itself well to questions pertaining the relation between Sebald's and Wittgenstein's aesthetics. Sebald's treatment of human perception as continuous with animal perception, and his use of concretely embodied narrators complements both state of the art cognitive sciences and Wittgenstein's intuitions about perception and interiority. As I will argue, Wittgenstein's practical philosophy of language provides a reading of the interrelation between text and pictures in Sebald's novels that takes seriously the experiential dimension of human life, which is not simply extinguished with new communication technologies, but at the same time it is also not hypostasized into a Cartesian 'inner' object. It also suggests an ethics of representation that does not impose a general order onto phenomena, but is sensitive to specific ways in which language and pictorial symbols interrelate with the world in particular cases. Overall, I will argue that paying attention to the manner in which

131 The latter had noted in a private letter: "But on the whole he likes Tolstoy less than Dostoyevsky (especially *Karamazov*). He has penetrated deep into mystical ways of thought and feeling, but I think (though he wouldn't agree) that what he likes best in mysticism is its power to make him stop thinking." Cf. Henrik von Wright, *Letters to Russell, Keynes, and Moore*, p. 82.

art presents perception—which is inherently socially, culturally, and historically formed, far beyond a mere physiological mechanism—can contribute towards a greater understanding of the complex ways art is both apart from and a part of social practices it is embedded in.

1 Aisthesis and Interiority in Ludwig Wittgenstein's Writings

Calling Wittgenstein's works "aesthetic" (or "aisthetic") is not meant to devalue their philosophical contents. The philosophical questions that interested Wittgenstein are very much related to the program of early analytic philosophy, as Wittgenstein credits Gottlob Frege and Bertrand Russell in the Foreword of the *Tractatus* for the impulses to the ideas in his book.¹ Gottlob Frege was the first to develop a system of formal notation for natural languages, based on mathematics, called *Begriffsschrift*, and Wittgenstein credits Russell in *Tractatus* 4.0031 for showing that "the apparent logical form of the proposition need not be its real form".² As I will show, Wittgenstein used aesthetic methods, such as the visual presentation of logical connections, sketches and poetic language to make his philosophical points. He was furthermore very interested in the perception of art and music, as well as—in his later work—the interactions between the inputs to the senses and the conceptual framework of the perceiver. The resulting view of human 'interiority' is that of both immediate sense perception and the kind of conceptual structure based on shared social practices.

Frege's and Russell's project of making the logical form of propositions visible when they are obscured by the surface grammar of natural languages is very much an integral part of the *Tractatus*. For instance, in 3.323, Wittgenstein uses the example "Green is green" to show that two concepts, a personal name and an adjective may be used seemingly so as to result in a tautology of the form $a=a$. This is an example in which natural language use obscures the difference in logical structure, and it is the *Begriffsschrift*, mentioned in 3.325, that is meant to be a notation that renders logical structure visible. To use Wittgenstein's term, this notation should be such that it "shows" the logical structure that the proposition expresses, as he writes in 4.121, "The propositions show the logical form of reality. They exhibit it."³ For example, as he noted in 4.1272, by contrast to the proposition in natural language "there are two objects, which ...", the use of the existential operator that defines the members of its domain to two variables— $\exists(x,y)$ —expresses the same content in a manner that visually elucidates it. It is in this context of the *Begriffsschrift* project that Wittgenstein's conception of the picture theory of language (*Abbildungstheorie*) is

1 *TLP*, "Vorwort", p. 9.

2 *TLP* 4.0031, "die scheinbare logische Form des Satzes nicht seine wirkliche sein muss".

3 *TLP* 4.121, "Der Satz zeigt die logische Form der Wirklichkeit. Er weist sie auf."

placed, as for instance the claim in 4.01 that “The proposition is a picture of reality.”⁴

There are indeed recurrent visual metaphors in the *Tractatus*. For instance, to express that the logical form that is “shown” in a proposition cannot itself be put into words, Wittgenstein writes in 4.12: “To be able to represent the logical form, we should have to be able to put ourselves with the propositions outside logic, that is outside the world.”⁵ And in 4.121 he notes, “Propositions cannot represent the logical form: this mirrors itself in the propositions.”⁶ Furthermore, he describes the impossibility of representing the subject in 5.633 as “Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted? You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field of sight. But you do not really see the eye.”⁷ This claim is followed by a schematic illustration of the eye and its visual field in 5.6331. Then he remarks in 6.45, “The contemplation of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole.”⁸ And in 6.54, the second to last decimal statement proclaims, “[The reader] must surmount these propositions, then he sees the world rightly.”⁹

Myriads of ocular metaphors are present in Wittgenstein's journals, in which he sketched out ideas for the *Tractatus*. For instance, on 7 October 1916, he treats art and ethics as ways of *looking* at the world “sub specie aeternitatis”.¹⁰ Art and ethics, in the *eudaimonic* understanding of ethics as good life, are described as a certain, empirically impossible perspective from outside, with the “whole world” as a backdrop. The next day, he writes, applying the total perspective described above to a concrete object:

As a thing among things, each thing is equally insignificant, as a world each equally significant.

If I have been contemplating the stove and then am told: but now all you know is the stove, my result does indeed seem trivial. For this represents the matter as if I had been studying

4 TLP 4.01, “Der Satz ist ein Bild der Wirklichkeit.”

5 TLP 4.12, “Um die logische Form darstellen zu können, müssten wir uns mit dem Satze außerhalb der Logik aufstellen können, das heißt außerhalb der Welt.” Because of its aesthetic connotation, “to present” is in my opinion a better translation of Wittgenstein's “darstellen” than the conventionally used “to represent”. I use it accordingly throughout my text.

6 TLP 4.121, “Der Satz kann die logische Form nicht darstellen, sie spiegelt sich in ihm.”

7 TLP 5.633, “Wo in der Welt ist ein metaphysisches Subjekt zu merken? Du sagst, es verhält sich hier ganz, wie mit Auge und Gesichtsfeld. Aber das Auge siehst du wirklich *nicht*.”

8 TLP 6.45, “Die Anschauung der Welt sub specie aeterni ist ihre Anschauung als—begrenzt—Ganzes.”

9 TLP 6.54, “Er [d.h. der Leser] muss diese Sätze [des *Tractatus*] überwinden, dann sieht er die Welt richtig.”

10 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 83e; *Tagebücher*, p. 178.

the stove as one among the many things in the world. But if I was contemplating the stove, it was my world, and everything else colourless by contrast with it.¹¹

And he asks on 20 October 1916, “Is it the essence of the artistic way of looking at things, that it looks at the world with a happy eye?” and then proceeds to quote Schiller, “Life is serious, art is gay.”¹² Art is described as providing the otherwise impossible perspective from “outside” the totality of contingent facts that make up the world, and presents them in a way that allow the world to appear meaningful, to make good life possible.

Wittgenstein continues to refer to aesthetics using ocular tropes in his “middle” working period, namely in the 1930s after his return to Cambridge from rural Austria, where he had worked as a teacher in an attempt to put philosophy behind him. For instance, he had noted in his journal in 1930:

A work of art forces us—as one might say—to see it in the right perspective [...] But it seems to me too that there is a way of capturing the world *sub specie aeterni* other than through the work of the artist. Thought has such a way—so I believe—it is as though it flies above the world and leaves it as it is—observing it from above, in flight.¹³

At the end of the remark, Wittgenstein suggests that there may be another kind of work that achieves a similar alterity of view. Some of his remarks from lectures of 1930–1931 suggest that he considers his own work, that of philosophy, to be akin to art in precisely this manner. For instance, he remarked:

What Aesthetics tries to do, he said, is to give *reasons*, e.g. for having this word rather than that in a particular place in a poem [...] all that Aesthetics does is to ‘draw your attention to a thing’, to ‘place things side by side’. He said that if, by giving ‘reasons’ of this sort, you

11 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 83e; “Als Ding unten Dingen ist jedes Ding gleich unbedeutend, als Welt jedes gleichbedeutend. Habe ich den Ofen kontempliert, und es wird mir nun gesagt: jetzt kennst du aber nur den Ofen, so scheint mein Resultat eigentlich kleinlich. Denn das stellt es so dar, als hätte ich den Ofen unter den vielen, vielen Dingen der Welt studiert. Habe ich aber den Ofen kontempliert, so war *er* meine Welt, und alles andere dagegen *blass*.” *Tagebücher*, p. 178.

12 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks* p. 86e; “Ist das das Wesen der künstlerischen Betrachtungsweise, daß sie die Welt mit glücklichem Auge betrachtet? Ernst ist das Leben, heiter ist die Kunst.” *Tagebücher*, p. 181.

13 *CV*, pp. 4e-5e; “Das Kunstwerk zwingt uns—sozusagen—zu der richtigen Perspektive [...] Nun scheint mir aber, gibt es außer der Funktion des Künstlers noch eine andere, die Welt *sub specie aeterni* einzufangen. Es ist—glaube ich—der Weg des Gedankens der gleichsam über die Welt hinwegfliege und sie so läßt, wie sie ist—sie von oben vom Fluge betrachtend.” *VB*, pp. 4–5.

make another person 'see what you see' [...] And he said that the same sort of 'reasons' were given, not only in Ethics, but also in Philosophy.¹⁴

He explicitly understood philosophy to be akin to aesthetics *because* both involve activities of looking. Therefore, he understood "aesthetics" in the broader sense inherent in its Greek meaning of *aisthesis*, namely perception. The notion of placing things side by side or overseeing them, from above as it were also comes up in the notion of perspicuous presentation (*übersichtliche Darstellung*) in *Philosophical Investigations*, §122.

It is this understanding of his own philosophical method as a work of *aisthesis* that we can read a following private note comparing philosophy and architecture from 1931,

Working in philosophy—like work in architecture in many respects—is really more a working on oneself. On one's own interpretation. On one's way of seeing things. (And what one expects of them.)¹⁵

Wittgenstein had tried his hand at architecture and designed a house for his sister Margarethe at the Kundmannsgasse in Vienna from 1926–1928, without any formal architectural education, and based solely on his engineering training and skills acquired while working on the design of an airplane engine in Manchester in 1908–1909. In his architectural tastes, he was mostly influenced by the modernist architect Adolf Loos, whom he was acquainted with. Like Loos, Wittgenstein rejected any form of ornamentality in architecture. However, far more so than Loos, Wittgenstein strove for an ascetic simplicity of lines in his designs.¹⁶

In his lectures on aesthetics from 1938, the visual as a mode of comprehending aesthetics returns:

It is remarkable that in real life, when aesthetic judgments are made, aesthetic adjectives such as "beautiful", "fine", etc., play hardly any role at all. Are aesthetic adjectives used in a musical criticism? You say: "Look at this transition", or "The passage here is incoherent". Or you say, in a poetic criticism, "his use of images is imprecise". The words you use

¹⁴ G. E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33", p. 27.

¹⁵ *CV*, p. 16; "Die Arbeit an der Philosophie ist—wie vielfach die Arbeit in der Architektur—eigentlich mehr die Arbeit an einem selbst. An der eigenen Auffassung. Daran, wie man die Dinge sieht. (Und was man von ihnen verlangt.)" *VB*, p. 16.

¹⁶ Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, pp. 28–35. Cf. also David Macarthur, "Working on Oneself in Philosophy and Architecture: A Perfectionist Reading of the Wittgenstein House", pp. 3–4. In this paper Macarthur links Wittgenstein's ethical stance in philosophy with his style and tastes in architecture.

are more akin to “right” and “correct” (as these words are used in ordinary speech) than to “beautiful” and “lovely”.¹⁷

And: “If I say of a piece of Schubert’s that it is melancholy, that is like giving it a face (I don’t express approval or disapproval.) I could instead use gestures or dancing. In fact, if we want to be exact, we do use a gesture or a facial expression.”¹⁸ But also, “When we make an aesthetic judgment about a thing, we do not just gape at it and say: ‘Oh! How marvelous!’ We distinguish between a person who knows what he is talking about and a person who doesn’t.”¹⁹ In earlier periods beauty in art was understood as a manner of depicting or representing the Absolute. Wittgenstein, to describe aesthetics, does not appeal to a single principle like beauty, but he draws attention to the *language* actually used—which is far more intricate and precise than mere attributions of beauty. It is based on remarks like these that it is possible to speak of a “linguistic turn” in aesthetics, after Wittgenstein.²⁰

In this point, there is a difference to the early Wittgenstein, who in his wartime journals of 1916 wondered whether “the essence” of artistic vision is contemplating the world “with a happy eye” (20 October), mentioned above, and “For there is certainly something in the conception that the end of art is the beautiful. And the beautiful is what makes happy.” (21 October 1916)²¹ As his remarks from lectures from 1938 show, he has turned to a more practical approach to aesthetics, towards paying attention to more disparate phenomena of aesthetic appreciation in particular contexts. For instance, he explains,

If a man goes through an endless number of patterns in a tailor’s, [and] says: “No. This is slightly too dark. This is slightly too loud.”, etc., he is what we call an appreciator of material. That he is an appreciator is not shown by the interjections he uses, but by the way he chooses, selects, etc. Similarly in music: “Does this harmonize? No. The bass is not quite loud enough. Here I just want something different ...”²²

Wittgenstein furthermore displays sensitivity towards the necessity of acquaintance with the historical context for aesthetic judgment, as for instance in this remark:

17 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, p. 3.

18 Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, p. 4.

19 Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, p. 6.

20 Stefan Majetschak, *Ästhetik*, pp. 136–7.

21 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks* p. 86e; *Tagebücher* p. 181.

22 Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, p. 7.

In certain styles of architecture a door is correct, and the thing is you appreciate it. But in the case of a Gothic Cathedral what we do is not at all to find it correct—it plays an entirely different role with us. The entire *game* is different. It is different as to judge a human being and on the one hand to say, “He behaves well” and on the other hand “He made a great impression on me.”²³

Gothic architecture as a prime example of medieval high culture is built to make an impression in the ultimate sense of evoking awe and the feeling of smallness and embeddedness in a larger, timeless reality. Its spires point to heaven, aiming to evoke faith in God, and so to express the Absolute. In Wittgenstein's terms, an entirely different “game” is played in medieval aesthetic than that of modernity, its visual emblems have to be ‘read’ differently. As he continues,

The words we call expressions of aesthetic judgment play a very complicated role, but a very definite role, in what we call a culture of a period. To describe their use or to describe what you mean by a cultured taste, you have to describe a culture. What we call a cultured taste perhaps didn't exist in the Middle Ages. An entirely different game is played in different ages.²⁴

By contrast to individual taste (and thus the feel for the “rightness” of a certain tone, suit color, or door proportions), in the Middle Ages, aesthetics was treated as an objective domain deriving its standards and subject matter primarily from religion.

As Anat Matar notes in *Understanding Wittgenstein, Understanding Modernism*, unlike most modernists Wittgenstein is precisely interested in maintaining the tension in language of a total perspective and that of particular, everyday objects, rather than completely embracing relativism, which, after all, is as Matar formulates it: “a way of eradicating tension”.²⁵ Beside his references to a way of seeing “sub specie aeternitatis”, alongside the contemplation of everyday objects, like ovens, this tension is best visible in *Philosophical Investigations*, where he is largely concerned with perspicuous presentation of language as a method of solving philosophical entanglements. In §122, Wittgenstein diagnoses the main source of misunderstandings in philosophy as the fact that “we do not *command a clear view* of the use of our words”. He goes on, “A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in ‘seeing connex-

23 Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, p. 8.

24 Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, p. 8.

25 Anat Matar, “Introduction.”, *Understanding Wittgenstein, Understanding Modernism*, p. 5.

ions'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate cases*.²⁶ Clearing up misunderstandings in language, which can lead to skewed philosophical theories based on abuse of language, (in *Tractarian* terms, of wanting to say too much) is for Wittgenstein the core of philosophical activity (present already in the *Tractatus* in 4.112). It is the activity of showing a particular view. The demand for a "perspicuous presentation", for overlooking language, sounds very much like his remark from 1930, where he expressed the yearning for a kind of a total perspective that overlooks the world from above, while leaving everything "as it is".²⁷ The similarity is all the more striking if the following remark from the later *Philosophical Investigations* is considered, §124, "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is."²⁸

However, the kind of order Wittgenstein seeks to achieve via perspicuous presentation is not the view on the totality of language, but local orders based on particular uses of language. He writes for instance in §132,

We want to establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order with a particular end in view; one out of many possible orders; not *the* order. To this end we shall constantly be giving prominence to distinctions which our ordinary forms of language easily make us overlook.²⁹

As Alois Pichler noted upon investigating Wittgenstein's own English translations of perspicuous presentation, namely *übersichtliche Darstellung* and found that it was often not treated as a *terminus technicus*, but referred to in different manners, always implying an elucidation of a philosophical problem from within ordinary language. The term Wittgenstein most often uses in his lectures at Cambridge is variants of "synopsis", or "to synopsise", meaning to elucidate by com-

26 *PU*, §122, "[...] daß wir den Gebrauch unserer Wörter nicht *übersehen*. [...] Die übersichtliche Darstellung vermittelt das Verständnis, welches eben darin besteht, daß wir die 'Zusammenhänge sehen'. Daher die Wichtigkeit des Findens und Erfindens von *Zwischengliedern*."

27 *VB*, pp. 4–5.

28 *PU*, §124, "Die Philosophie darf den tatsächlichen Gebrauch der Sprache in keiner Weise antasten. Denn sie kann ihn auch nicht begründen. Sie läßt alles, wie es ist."

29 *PU*, §132, "Wir wollen in unserm Wissen vom Gebrauch der Sprache eine Ordnung herstellen: eine Ordnung zu einem bestimmten Zweck; eine von vielen möglichen Ordnungen; nicht *die* Ordnung. Wir werden zu diesem Zweck immer wieder Unterscheidungen *hervorheben*, die unsere gewöhnlichen Sprachformen leicht übersehen lassen."

paring, by viewing together.³⁰ It is related to his method of seeking “family resemblances” (*Familienähnlichkeiten*) between phenomena, as opposed to generalized, overarching definitions.³¹

The tension between a total perspective and attention to local, particular cases of philosophical problems caused by linguistic entanglement is mentioned in the foreword to *Philosophical Investigations*. There, Wittgenstein wrote in 1945,

After several unsuccessful attempts to weld my results together into such a whole, I realized that I should never succeed. The best that I could write would never be more than philosophical remarks; my thoughts were soon crippled if I tried to force them on in any single direction against their natural inclination.—And this was, of course, connected with the very nature of the investigation. For this compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction.—The philosophical remarks in this book are, as it were, a number of sketches of landscapes which were made in the course of these long and involved journeyings.³²

Wittgenstein had given up on providing a unified, total view on language as in the *Tractatus*, but was all the more interested in following its organic twists and turns, its “natural inclination”. Wittgenstein concludes, “Thus this book is really only an album.”³³ Rather than offering a perspicuous presentation of ‘the whole’, he offered images or snapshots, as it were, of insights on local workings of language in its intertwining with particular ordinary practices. The resulting aesthetic of the *Philosophical Investigations* is comparable to modernist literature like the fragmented language snippets of Gertrude Stein, T. S. Eliot or James Joyce.

Antonia Soulez focused more on the organic aspect of the aesthetics in Wittgenstein’s later works. As she notes, by the time of the writing of *Philosoph-*

30 Alois Pichler, *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen: Vom Buch zum Album*, pp. 181–3.

31 *PI*, §§ 67, 77, 108, 164, 179, 236.

32 *PI*, “Preface”, p. vii; “Nach manchen missglückten Versuchen, meine Ergebnisse zu einem [...] Ganzen zusammenschweißen, sah ich ein, daß mir dies nie gelingen würde. Daß das beste, was ich schreiben konnte, immer nur philosophische Bemerkungen bleiben würden, daß meine Gedanken bald erlahmten, wenn ich versuchte sie, gegen ihre natürliche Neigung, in einer Richtung weiterzuzwingen.—Und dies hing freilich mit der Natur der Untersuchung selbst zusammen. Sie nämlich zwingt uns, ein weites Gedankengebiet, kreuz und quer, nach allen Richtungen hin zu durchreisen.—Die philosophischen Bemerkungen dieses Buches sind gleichsam eine Menge von Landschaftsskizzen, die auf diesen langen und verwickelten Fahrten entstanden sind.” *PU*, “Vorwort”, p. 231.

33 *PI*, “Preface”, p. vii; “So ist also dieses Buch eigentlich nur ein Album.” *PU*, “Vorwort”, p. 232. Alois Pichler documented Wittgenstein’s writing process for the work that came to be called *Philosophical Investigations* in *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen*.

ical *Investigations*, Wittgenstein had become more interested in the “whole” of organic forms, life as it took on concrete shape in the so-called life-form (*Lebensform*) as the axiomatic basis of philosophical explanation.³⁴ In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein sets aside his *Tractarian* view of language as analyzable based on single propositions. He calls that view “a picture that held us captive” in §115 (“ein Bild hielt uns gefangen”). However, he does not reject pictures as such, but his later method consists in revealing deep-ingrained notions to be based on pictures. Rather than analyzing single propositions, in the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein is more interested in the entirety of the ways in which language is intertwined with social and material reality. He writes in §7, “I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the ‘language-game’.” (“Ich werde auch das Ganze: der Sprache und der Tätigkeiten, mit denen sie verwoben ist, das ‘Sprachspiel’ nennen.”)

The most well-known of Wittgenstein’s contributions to philosophy of perception is his considerations on “aspect seeing” or seeing as in Part II of the *Philosophical Investigations*, where he investigates the manner in which perception changes according to the concept applied to the picture. He discusses that imagination is required to see various aspects of ambiguous images, such as the famous duck-rabbit example from Gestalt psychology, an image that can be seen as a duck or as a rabbit.³⁵ The example shows that even if the material of that which is perceived remains exactly the same, the conceptual framework—“duck” or “rabbit”—applied changes the contents of perception. Later on in the *Philosophical Investigations*, he utilizes the same example to explain children’s games, namely the manner in which children play by treating an object, for instance a carton box “as” that which it represents in their fantasy, namely a house:

And if you knew how to play this game, and, given a particular situation, you exclaimed with special expression “Now it’s a house!”—you would be giving expression to the dawning of an aspect.

If I heard someone talking about the duck-rabbit, and *now* he spoke in a certain way about the special expression of the rabbit’s face I should say, now he’s seeing the picture as a rabbit.

34 Antonia Soulez, “Modernism with Spirit: Wittgenstein and the Sense of the Whole”, p. 174.

35 *PI*, II, xi, p. 194.

But the expression in one's voice and gestures is the same as if the object had altered and had ended by *becoming* this or that.³⁶

He continues by giving examples from music: when listening to a piece it is possible to detect subtle changes and to declare it "a march" or "a dance". This passage shows that he considers children's games continuous with the phenomenon of aspect change—of seeing an object *as x* or *y*—and as continuous with aesthetic judgment, for instance of music.

Wittgenstein continually switches back and forth between musical and visual metaphors, but the visual does predominate when explaining aspect perception. He writes, for instance,

Take as an example the aspects of a triangle. This triangle can be seen as a triangular hole, as a solid, as a geometrical drawing; as standing on its base, as hanging from its apex; as a mountain, as a wedge, as an arrow or pointer, as an overturned object which is meant to stand on the shorter side of the right angle, as a half parallelogram, and as various other things.³⁷

By infrequent though pointed references to aesthetics, it is suggested that it is work on the aesthetics of language that can effect the transformation of perception:

Here it occurs to me that in conversation on aesthetic matters we use the words: "You have to see it like *this*, this is how it is meant"; "When you see it like *this*, you see where it goes wrong"; "You have to hear this bar as an introduction"; "You must hear it in this key"; "You must phrase it like *this*" (which can refer to hearing as well as to playing).³⁸

36 *PI*, II, xi, p. 206; "Und wer nun so spielen könnte, und in einer bestimmten Situation mit besonderem Ausdruck ausriefe 'Jetzt ist es ein Haus!'—der würde dem Aufleuchten des Aspekts Ausdruck geben. Hörte ich Einen über das H-E-Bild [Hasen-Ente-Bild] reden, und *jetzt*, in gewisser Weise, über den besonderen Ausdruck dieses Hasengesichts, so würde ich sagen, er sehe das Bild jetzt als Hasen. Der Ausdruck der Stimme und Gebärde aber ist der Gleiche, als hätte sich das Objekt geändert und wäre nun endlich zu dem oder jenem *geworden*." *PU*, II, xi, pp. 540–1.

37 *PI*, II, xi, p. 200; "Betrachte nun als Beispiel die Aspekte des Dreiecks. Das Dreieck kann gesehen werden: als dreieckiges Loch, als Körper, als geometrische Zeichnung; auf seiner Grundlinie stehend, an seiner Spitze aufgehängt; als Berg, als Keil, als Pfeil oder Zeiger; als ein umgefallener Körper, der (z.B.) auf der kürzeren Kathete stehen sollte, als ein halbes Parallelogramm, und verschiedenes anderes." *PU*, II, xi, p. 530.

38 *PI*, II, xi, p. 202; "Da fällt mir ein, daß in Gesprächen über ästhetische Gegenstände die Worte gebraucht werden: 'Du musst es *so* sehen, so ist es gemeint'; 'Wenn du es *so* siehst, siehst du, wo der Fehler liegt'; 'Du musst diese Takte als Einleitung hören'; 'Du musst nach dieser Tonart hinhören'; 'Du musst es *so* phrasieren' (und das kann sich auf's Hören wie auf's Spielen beziehen)." *PU*, II, xi, p. 534.

He notes the importance of imagination to perception, “[It is possible] not to take the bare triangular figure for the picture of an object that has fallen over. To see this aspect of the triangle demands *imagination*.”³⁹ Seeing aspects, for Wittgenstein, does not only depend from the conceptual framework, but arguably also from the narrative surrounding the object that is seen. He sketches a doodle that looks like it could be part of a foreign alphabet and writes, “And I can see it in various aspects according to the fiction I surround it with.”⁴⁰ Later on, he explicitly relates the imaginative capacity of aspect seeing to art, namely to appreciation of music,

The concept of an aspect is akin to the concept of an image. In other words: the concept ‘I am now seeing it as’ is akin to ‘I am now having *this* image’.

Doesn't it take imagination to hear something as a variation on a particular theme? And yet one is perceiving something in so hearing it.⁴¹

This passage underlies the interlinkage between perception and imagination. If to see something involves seeing something “as something”, i. e. under a certain aspect, then perception is more than mere exposure to unprocessed sense data. Rather, it is structured by one's background knowledge, the ability to hear or see something as a variation of a certain pattern and therefore in a larger context.

Depending on which parts of the picture are interpreted as belonging together, the content of the perception changes. In distinguishing different aspects in perceptions, he notes, “It is almost as if ‘seeing the sign in this context’ were an echo of a thought.”⁴² Far from being a merely passive, physiological process, perception is here described as an echo of a thought, a thought that is per definition communicable to others, in contrast to immediate perceptual content. Wittgenstein writes, for instance, “One *kind* of aspect might be called ‘aspects of organization’. When the aspect changes parts of the picture go together

39 *PI*, II, xi, p. 207; “[Man könnte] die bloße Dreiecksfigur nicht für das Bild eines umgefallenen Gegenstands [halten]. Um diesen Aspekt des Dreiecks zu sehen braucht es *Vorstellungskraft*.” *PU*, II, xi, p. 542.

40 *PI*, II, xi, p. 210; “Und je nach Erdichtung, mit der ich [ein bildliches Zeichen] umgebe, kann ich es in verschiedenen Aspekten sehen.” *PU*, II, xi, p. 546.

41 *PI*, II, xi, p. 213; “Der Begriff des Aspekts ist dem Begriff der Vorstellung verwandt. Oder: der Begriff ‘ich sehe es jetzt als ...’ ist verwandt mit ‘ich stelle mir jetzt *das* vor’. Gehört dazu, etwas als Variation eines bestimmten Themas zu hören, nicht Fantasie? Und doch nimmt man dadurch etwas wahr.” *PU*, II, xi, p. 551.

42 *PI*, II, xi, p. 212; “Es ist beinahe, als ob das ‘Sehen des Zeichens in diesem Zusammenhang’ ein Nachhall eines Gedankens wäre.” *PU*, II, xi, p. 549.

which before did not.”⁴³ Seeing or, in the case of music, hearing something a certain way requires *imagination*, even though it is a perception of something that is already there.⁴⁴ And the private language argument in the *Philosophical Investigations* §§243–315 deals with perception of allegedly interior states, such as pain, be they in oneself or in others.

In Wittgenstein's last work, the posthumously published *On Certainty*, the notion of overseeing the world, or a “world-picture” (*Weltbild*) re-occurs. By contrast to the *Tractatus*, and like in his latter works in general, it is more practice-oriented.

94. But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: it is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false.⁴⁵

The basic assumptions that make up one's (largely unconscious) world-picture, such as that—in Wittgenstein's examples taken from his Professor Moore that one has hands or that the Earth existed before one's birth are not held because one has verified them. Wittgenstein furthermore draws attention to the frequent isomorphy in the use of “to see” (*Sehen*) and “to know” (*Wissen*, Latin *videre*) in ordinary language in *On Certainty* §90, meaning that quite often insisting one “sees” something quite often rests on basic, world-view shaping assumptions of the beholder, one's very often unquestioned background knowledge.

The Picture Theory of Language and the Inexpressibility of Ethics

In the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein was pursuing the question how language refers to the world. He introduces his picture theory of language (*Abbildungstheorie*) in 2.1, “We make to ourselves pictures of facts”, and explains in 2.11, “The picture presents the facts in logical space, the existence and non-existence of atomic

43 *PI*, II, xi, p. 208; “Eine Art der Aspekte könnte man ‘Aspekte der Organisation’ nennen. Wechselt der Aspekt, so sind Teile des Bildes zusammengehörig, die früher nicht zusammengehörig waren.” *PU*, II, xi, p. 543.

44 In this sense, Wittgenstein's philosophical position evokes Kant's claim that the imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) is a necessary constituent of perception.

45 “Aber mein Weltbild habe ich nicht, weil ich mich von seiner Richtigkeit überzeugt habe; auch nicht weil ich von seiner Richtigkeit überzeugt bin. Sondern es ist der überkommene Hintergrund, auf welchem ich zwischen wahr und falsch unterscheide.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Über Gewissheit*, §94.

facts.”⁴⁶ Just like elements of a picture represent things (2.13) and the configuration of the elements in picture shows the relation of these things to each other (2.14), so is also a proposition (or a sentence) to be imagined as a picture, or a model of reality (4.01). Wittgenstein’s Cambridge student Georg H. von Wright later recounts the story behind this idea:

It was in the autumn of 1914, on the eastern front. Wittgenstein was reading a magazine about a lawsuit in Paris concerning an automobile accident. At the trial a miniature model of the accident was presented before the court. The model here served as a proposition; that is, as a description of a possible state of affairs. It has this function owing to a correspondence between the parts of the model (the miniature houses, cars, people) and things (houses, cars, people) in reality. It now occurred to Wittgenstein that one might reverse the analogy and say that a *proposition* serves as a model or *picture*, by virtue of a similar correspondence between *its* parts and the world. The way in which the parts of the proposition are combined—the *structure* of the proposition—depicts a possible combination of elements in reality, a possible state of affairs.⁴⁷

While projection, or “*Abbildung*”, is a *terminus technicus* in geometry, expressing the projection of an object onto a different scale and onto a different medium while following rules of proportion, Wittgenstein was careful to note a wide variety of modeling types apart from expressing merely spatial relations. He even calls musical notes a picture of music in 4.011, even though they do not *prima facie* look like a picture of an object. Wittgenstein thus deconstructs the view of objects as primarily material, and understands an object as that which is objectifiable by means of a form of presentation.⁴⁸ As he notes in 2.171, “The picture can represent every reality whose form it has. The spatial picture, everything spatial, the coloured, everything coloured, etc.”⁴⁹ A colored picture can depict color patterns; and a spatial picture depicts spatial configurations. A proposition in terms of a picture derives its meaning from what is the case in reality if it were true (as stated in 2.06 and 4.022–4.024). So, for instance, the meaning of

46 TLP 2.1, “Wir machen uns Bilder der Tatsachen”; TLP 2.11, “Das Bild stellt eine Sachlage im logischen Raume, das Bestehen und Nichtbestehen der Sachverhalten vor.”

47 Georg H. von Wright, “A Biographical Sketch”, p. 70.

48 This is how 4.1272 can be read: “So one cannot, e.g. say ‘There are objects’ as one says ‘There are books’. Nor ‘There are 100 objects’ or ‘There are \aleph_0 objects’. And it is senseless to speak of the number of all objects. The same holds of the words ‘Complex’, ‘Fact’, ‘Function’, ‘Number’, etc. [...] (It is as senseless to say, ‘there is only one 1’ as it would be to say: 2+2 is at 3 o’clock equal to 4.)” In the notebook entry of 15.6.1915, he writes, “Relations and attributes etc. are also *objects*.” Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 154.

49 TLP 2.171, “Das Bild kann jede Wirklichkeit abbilden, deren Form es hat. Das räumliche Bild alles Räumliche, das farbige alles Farbige, etc.”

“A brown cup is on the desk” is that which would be the case if it were true in the particular context of speaking, namely when a brown cup really is on the desk.

Wittgenstein was very well aware that visual images lack the logical complexity of language, that they cannot for instance express negation, conjunction or implication.⁵⁰ Christian Erbacher studied the manuscripts leading up to the finalized version of the *Tractatus* and concludes that, purely numerically, the term *Abbildung* is used in the mathematical sense of geometric projection in the early phases of the work, whereas in the later drafts, the use of *Bild* in the sense of a visible form (*Gestalt*) increases, and in the final stages, the use of *Bild* in the sense of imagery in language (*Sprachbild*) amalgamates with the mathematical and the visual meanings.⁵¹ Erbacher reminds the readers that linguistic imagery, that is tropes, too work according to the principle of projecting meaning from one semantic field to another, by means of which less well known matters are understood in the light of more familiar ones.⁵² (And the metaphor contains the sense of figural movement in its name from the Greek verb *metapherein* meaning to carry over or transfer.)

It is significant that Wittgenstein writes in terms of depiction (*Abbildung*), because he argues that the form of the proposition, spatiality or color, cannot itself be explained in language, but it is rather “shown” by the manner in which language works. This is what he insists on in 4.022, “The proposition shows its sense. The proposition shows how things stand, if it is true. And it says, that they do so stand.”⁵³ In other words, what it is to be spatially related or to be of a certain color⁵⁴ is not itself propositionally definable. His claim that there is a “form” that which language shares with reality (as stated, e. g. in 2.171 and 4.12) is perhaps more intuitively understood from the fundamental claim of the *Tractatus*, as unassumingly stated in 4.0312, namely, “My fundamental thought is that the ‘logical constants’ do not represent. That the logic of the facts cannot be represented.”⁵⁵ Logical constants, namely negation, implication,

50 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 26.11.1914, quoted in Stefan Majetschak, *Ludwig Wittgensteins Denkweg*, p. 65.

51 Christian Erbacher, *Formen des Klärens*, pp. 81–94.

52 Erbacher, *Formen des Klärens*, p. 92.

53 TLP 4.022, “Der Satz zeigt, wie es sich verhält, wenn er wahr ist. Und er sagt, daß es sich so verhält.”

54 Empirical definitions based on wavelengths of light are not sufficient to define the complexities of color references in human languages. Wittgenstein’s last collection of notes, published posthumously as *Remarks on Color*, is entirely dedicated to the “grammar” of color attributions.

55 TLP 4.0312, “Mein Grundgedanke ist, daß die ‘logischen Konstanten’ nicht vertreten. Daß sich die Logik der Tatsachen nicht vertreten läßt.”

conjunction or disjunction do not represent in the same sense in which empirical concepts such as “house” or “car” represent possible objects in the world. For him, “logic” is not a science among other sciences, dealing with a specific province of reality, described by laws of logic (like the Law of Contradiction), in a specific vocabulary, namely using logical constants (“and” “or” “not” “implies”) and variables (like p , q). Rather, the laws of logic are immanent in the way language works. In 4.1221, Wittgenstein compares the manner in which internal, logical features of language are shown in language to facial traits, which are expressive without propositionally saying anything.⁵⁶

What we mean, for instance, by “negation” when we use the logical constant “not” may look like a representation of an isolable abstract entity, perhaps an “idea of negation”. But, as 4.0621 points out, “not” does not have a meaningful content. For, to say for instance, not-not- p does not add anything to the meaning of p . James Conant explains this argument against the hypostatization of negation with the example that the negation sign can be completely abolished from logic, negation being henceforth expressed by a **bold lettering** of the negated proposition.⁵⁷ This shows that negation is not an entity, because the sign of negation does not work like a name labeling a thing. Similarly, other logical constants can be reduced to each other, the way implication can be expressed only using “not” and “or”, showing that they, too work differently from empirical concepts. This language-immanent logic is what Wittgenstein also termed the “scaffolding of the world” (*das Gerüst der Welt*) in 6.124, where he writes, “The logical propositions describe the scaffolding of the world, or rather they present it. They ‘treat’ of nothing.” And in 6.13, “Logic is not a theory but a reflexion of the world.”⁵⁸ That logical propositions *present* the form, or to use his imagery, the scaffolding of the world, as opposed to expressing it in their content (“they ‘treat’ of nothing”), goes hand in hand with Wittgenstein’s claim that this form cannot itself be expressed in language.

At the same time as Wittgenstein was occupied with devising a philosophical model of language as a means of picturing the world, his *Abbildungstheorie*, he was just as concerned with clearly demarcating the limits of language as a means of projecting meaning. This is what he announces in the foreword:

56 Christian Erbacher refers to the “showing” character of language as its “body-language”. Cf. “Can One Sentence Say What Another Sentence Can Only Show?”, p. 89.

57 James Conant, “What ‘Ethics’ in the *Tractatus* is *Not*”, p. 66.

58 *TLP* 6.124, “Die logischen Sätze beschreiben das Gerüst der Welt, oder vielmehr, sie stellen es dar. Sie ‘handeln’ von nichts”; *TLP* 6.13, “Die Logik ist keine Lehre, sondern ein Spiegelbild der Welt.”

The book will, therefore, draw a limit to thinking, or rather—not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought).⁵⁹

This is why, when he introduces the picture theory of language, he also introduces criteria for expressibility and inexpressibility. The afore-mentioned claims on the inexpressibility of the proposition's own referring relation to the world are to be understood in this context. For instance, in 4.12, he writes,

Propositions can represent the whole reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it—the logical form.

To be able to represent the logical form, we should have to be able to put ourselves with the propositions outside logic, that is outside the world.⁶⁰

It is this impossible outside perspective that Wittgenstein rejects, and it is only consistent that he would apply this rejection to his own propositions of the *Tractatus* in the book's notorious ending:

6.54 My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.⁶¹

And: 7 “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.” (“Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen.”) In fact, the whole of the *Tractatus* is an attempt to say the unsayable from a perspective outside the world, for the book's very first sentences are general statements about the

59 *TLP*, “Preface”, p. 23; “Das Buch will also dem Denken eine Grenze ziehen, oder vielmehr—nicht dem Denken, sondern dem Ausdruck der Gedanken: Denn um dem Denken eine Grenze zu ziehen, müssten wir beide Seiten dieser Grenze denken können (wir müssten also denken können, was sich nicht denken läßt). Die Grenze wird also nur in der Sprache gezogen werden können und was jenseits der Grenze liegt, wird einfach Unsinn sein.” *TLP*, “Vorwort”, p. 9.

60 *TLP* 4.12, “Der Satz kann die gesamte Wirklichkeit darstellen, aber er kann nicht das darstellen, was er mit der Wirklichkeit gemein haben muss, um sie darstellen zu können—die logische Form. Um die logische Form darstellen zu können, müssten wir uns mit dem Satze außerhalb der Logik aufstellen können, das heißt außerhalb der Welt.”

61 *TLP* 6.54, “Meine Sätze erläutern dadurch, daß sie der, welcher mich versteht, am Ende als unsinnig erkennt, wenn er durch sie—auf ihnen—über sie hinausgestiegen ist. (Er muss sozusagen die Leiter wegwerfen, nachdem er auf ihr hinaufgestiegen ist.) Er muss diese Sätze überwinden, dann sieht er die Welt richtig.”

world as a whole: 1 “The world is everything that is the case” (“Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist.”) and 1.1 “The world is the totality of facts, not things” (“Die Welt ist die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen, nicht der Dinge.”) Furthermore, in the *Tractatus*, his own propositions seemingly express the manner in which language refers to the world (its “logical form” as in e.g. 4.12) and so they pretend to the impossible perspective from outside of the referring relationship to the world. Wittgenstein’s imagined ideal reader would have, by the end of the book at the latest, realized that what seemed to be straight forward sentences proposing “truths” about “the world” are fictional and language cannot work in that manner at all. Rather than stating empirically verifiable “facts”, the sentences have a different function—they “show” their meaning, like a ladder that enables the reader to “see the world rightly” (6.54). They show for instance the alterity of logical operations that cannot be treated the same as truth-functional contentful propositions.

While Wittgenstein did begin his philosophical work on the *Tractatus* with formal-logical questions on language and meaning, he became increasingly preoccupied with ethical considerations. “Ethics” itself is indeed only briefly explicitly mentioned in the work, most prominently in the context of its “inexpressibility”. For instance,

6.421 It is clear that ethics cannot be expressed.
Ethics are transcendental.
(Ethics and aesthetics are one.)⁶²

And,

6.43 If good or bad willing changes the world, it can only change the limits of the world, not the facts; not the things that can be expressed in language.
In brief, the world must thereby become quite another. It must so to speak wax or wane as a whole.
The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy.⁶³

62 TLP 6.421, “Es ist klar, daß sich die Ethik nicht aussprechen last. Die Ethik ist transzendent. (Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins.)”

63 TLP 6.43, “Wenn das gute oder böse Wollen die Welt ändert, so kann es nur die Grenzen der Welt ändern, nicht die Tatsachen; nicht das, was durch die Sprache ausgedrückt werden kann. Kurz, die Welt muss dann dadurch überhaupt eine andere werden. Sie muss sozusagen als Ganzes abnehmen oder zunehmen. Die Welt des Glücklichen ist eine andere als die des Unglücklichen.”

Expressions of willing good or evil are not expressions of facts, that which can be said in language (cf. *TLP* 2, 3, 4, 4.1). Rather, they are expressed in someone's relation to the world "as a whole". Because he had asserted that meaning (*Sinn*) and value (*Wert*) lie "outside the world" and not amongst the facts that make up the world (6.41, cf. also 1, 1.1), he claims propositions cannot express "the higher" (*das Höhere*), i.e. "ethics" (6.42).

Like in logic, in which logical operations are "shown" in language as opposed to themselves being definable in language (as stated in 4.022, 4.121, 4.1212), ethics and aesthetics are treated as belonging to that which cannot be expressed in truth-functional, empirically verifiable language, because they do not belong among the isolable facts of the world, but to that which is "shown".⁶⁴ After stating in 6.421 that "it is clear that ethics cannot be expressed [...]", in 6.43 he goes on to assert that "good and bad willing" pertain to "the limits of the world" and make up "the world of the happy" as opposed to "the world of the unhappy". Furthermore, the very propositions he uses to "say" something about ethics later seemingly self-destruct, along with all the other *Tractarian* propositions, in its notorious ending.

The ending of the *Tractatus* is notorious because the question how to understand the self-characterization of its own claims as "nonsense" (*Unsinn*) in 6.54 has sparked embittered exegetical battles. Here Wittgenstein claims that his propositions elucidate when the reader recognizes that they are nonsense, climbs them like a ladder and throws them away. As the foreword of the book forewarns, the *Tractatus* is not to be taken as a textbook (*Lehrbuch*). Rather, it is written with the purpose of providing pleasure (*Vergnügen*) to those who read it with understanding.⁶⁵ The first school of interpretation is that of logical positivism. Rudolf Carnap and other members of the Vienna Circle were inspired by the *Tractatus* and assimilated it rapidly to their own philosophical ends. They took it to be a manual providing a method of analytical philosophy that allowed them to reduce philosophy to empirically verifiable propositions. Everything else, which Wittgenstein declared "inexpressible" was to be segregated from language. The ethical, belonging to the realm of the unsayable, should not be defined by metaphysical theories, but should be consigned to the realm of (subjective) "value", in contrast to "fact". The "ineffability" reading arose in opposition to the positivist reading, and so it privileges the unsayable over the empirically verifiable. The unsayable is therefore not simply to be reduced away, but the si-

⁶⁴ In "What 'Ethics' in the *Tractatus* is Not", James Conant shows the parallels between the inexpressibility of logic and that of ethics.

⁶⁵ "Foreword", *TLP*, p. 23; "Vorwort", *TLP*, p. 9.

lence we are to keep about is itself expressive of “deeper truths”, which escape language, but which are “shown”. Thus, according to Elisabeth Anscombe, the most prominent proponent of the ineffability reading, the unsayable is something that exists much in the same way other things exist and can be thought about, only not talked about.⁶⁶

On the resolute reading, which was first introduced by James Conant and Cora Diamond,⁶⁷ both positivists and ineffabilists express merely two sides of the same coin and are both wrong. In delegating the ethical to the realm of value that is unsayable because it is not reducible to natural laws, positivists, too, treat the ethical as an isolable realm, namely “value”. As Diamond criticizes, Carnap et al. treat value as a unified subject matter, and “as capable of being given some single account, covering the evaluation of good strawberries or sewage effluent and good and evil deeds or good and bad human lives”.⁶⁸ As for the ineffability reading, it treats the ethical as belonging to a realm of “deeper truth”, not expressible in propositional terms, but nonetheless existing as possible subject matter of thought. Both readings thus treat ethics as something, an “it”, which we cannot speak of, but of which nonetheless some sort of a unified, though mysteriously non-verbal account is possible. These two readings are therefore called “irresolute”, because they do not take Wittgenstein’s terms of silence far enough.

Cora Diamond allows that according to the *Tractatus*, we must not expect our philosophical questions to find the same sort of informative answers as natural sciences give us, she does not entirely reject the perspective “from outside” that most philosophical questions demand. For Diamond, there is no doubt that we are not meant to take Wittgenstein’s exhortations literally. They do not refer to some ‘deeper truths’ we could know and would be able to put into words if only our language were more refined. However, she argues that the perspective “from outside” is to be understood metaphorically. She points out Wittgenstein’s repeated appeals to the imagination, and suggests that art can show the ethical in a way truth-functional propositions cannot.⁶⁹ Similarly, Kjell S. Johannessen has argued that on Wittgenstein’s terms, “showing” in philosophy is akin to the kind of intransitive understanding necessary for understanding something a work of art, as opposed to understanding it by identifying its referent.⁷⁰ In “Can One Sentence Say What Another Sentence Can Only Show?”, Christian Er-

66 Cf. her *Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*, p. 162.

67 Cf. their “On Reading the *Tractatus* Resolutely”.

68 Cora Diamond, “Ethics, Imagination, and the Method of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”, p. 163.

69 Diamond, “Ethics, Imagination, and the Method of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”, pp. 158–60.

70 Kjell S. Johannessen, “Philosophy, Art and Intransitive Understanding”, pp. 237 ff.

bacher has taken up Johannessen's notion of intransitivity and the resolute reading of the *Tractatus* and has argued that Wittgenstein's claims of unsayability do not gesture towards something inexpressible, but rather simply bear witness to the diversity of language that extends far beyond words merely being employed as labels for things.⁷¹

Indeed, the notion that art shows that which is otherwise unsayable, for instance ethics, is already suggested in the *Tractatus* itself. The inexpressibility of ethics through language is complemented with the parenthetical remark in 6.421, "(Ethics and Aesthetics are one.)" ("(Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins.)"). Also, the remark in the *Notebooks* from 7 October 1916, mentioned above, is on the isomorphy of the ethical and aesthetic perspective, both understood as viewing the world from the empirically impossible aspect *sub specie aeternitatis*. This suggests that both ethics and aesthetics entail a certain *perspective* implying the Greek meaning of *aisthesis*, namely, perception, but also that *art* can grant us this view, which is otherwise empirically unavailable. This means that accepting the resolute view of the unsayable in the *Tractatus*, for instance ethics, does not commit one to relativism in ethics.⁷² Claiming that ethics or the good life (the expression used in the *Notebooks* cited above) cannot be expressed along the lines of the object-label schema is not resigning ourselves to the fact that there is something that our language is contingently powerless to express. Rather, it is a testimony to the circumstance that language is a more complex phenomenon than generally assumed and can represent reality in more ways than merely labeling referents.

Wittgenstein's deeply respectful stance towards ethics is expressed in a letter from 20 October 1919 to Ludwig von Ficker, the publisher of the *Tractatus*, whom he writes by way of explanation,

And it will probably be helpful for you if I write a few words about my book: [...] the point of the book is ethical. [...] my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have *not* written. And precisely the second part is the important one.⁷³

71 Erbacher, "Can One Sentence Say What Another Sentence Can Only Show?". Cf. esp. p. 89.

72 Wittgenstein himself declares his own view in the *Tractatus* as a *realism* in 5.64.

73 Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Letters to Ludwig von Ficker", p. 94; "Und da ist Ihnen vielleicht eine Hilfe, wenn ich Ihnen ein paar Worte über mein Buch schreibe: [...] der Sinn des Buches ist ein Ethischer. [...] Mein Werk bestehe aus zwei Teilen: aus dem, der hier vorliegt, und aus alledem, was ich nicht geschrieben habe. Und gerade der zweite Teil ist der Wichtige." *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker*, p. 35.

Even though he barely mentions ethics in the *Tractatus* (only in 6.42, 6.421, 6.422, 6.423 and indirectly in 6.43), Wittgenstein apparently considers his work as a whole to have an ethical point. This ethical point is *not* put into propositional language, in accordance with his claim that only empirically truth-functional propositions can meaningfully be said. As he states in 6.41, value and anything expressing “the point of the world” (*Sinn der Welt*) is categorically different from the contingent facts of the world, and must therefore lie “outside the world” (“Es muss außerhalb der Welt liegen.”).

Another textual evidence that Wittgenstein’s view on ethics was by no means derogatory can be found in his “Lecture on Ethics”, held on 17 November 1929 in Cambridge. He never refers to his *Tractarian* picture theory of language, however he does again introduce visual tropes. He describes the method of his enquiry as aesthetic, and likens it to the physiognomic enquiry:

Now I’m going to use the term Ethics in a slightly wider sense, in a sense in fact which includes what I believe to be the most essential part of what is generally called Aesthetics. And to make you see as clearly as possible what I take to be the subject matter of Ethics I will put before you a number of more or less synonymous expressions each of which could be substituted for the above definition, and by enumerating them I want to produce the same sort of effect which Galton produced when he took a number of photos of different faces on the same photographic plate in order to get the picture of the typical features they all had in common.⁷⁴

It is easy to dismiss Wittgenstein’s lecture based on the now disreputable reference to the pseudo-science of physiognomy that made use of Francis Galton’s method of composite photography. However, Wittgenstein’s point is not to establish exact scientific criteria for identifying ethics (and the problem with nineteenth-century physiognomy was the pretense to being an exact science for identifying for instance criminality by means of specific facial traits). Rather, he calls his approach an aesthetic one—it has to do with imagery he is presenting, which together should give us a picture of what he understands as ethics. He proclaims that there cannot be a “scientific book on Ethics”, grasping the kind of absolute value ethics demands:

I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor that if a man could write a book about Ethics which really was a book on Ethics this book would with an explosion destroy all the other books in the world.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 43.

⁷⁵ Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 46.

Recalling the terms used in the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein contrasts “Ethics” and “facts, facts, and facts, but no Ethics”.⁷⁶ Wittgenstein rebels against the notion that ethics can be practiced like a systematic exact science akin to Newtonian physics.⁷⁷

Some of the examples of images he uses to depict ethics characterize the ethical attitude as for instance a wonder at the existence of the world. He immediately adds that this is a “misuse of language”, in the sense that one can wonder at the existence of this or that state of affair in the world, but not at the world as a whole, for he cannot imagine it not existing.⁷⁸ In a sense, feeling wonder at the existence of the world is not the same as being struck by an informative fact. Rather, as he puts it “How extraordinary that anything should exist.”⁷⁹ And just like in the *Tractatus* tautologies and contradictions mark the limits of sense, stating wonder at the totality of all facts (i.e. the world) is, like a tautology, a “misuse of language”, for in masquerading as an informative sentence, it actually lets down any expectations of referring to any specific fact in the world. As he remarks, “But it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing.”⁸⁰ Therefore, ethics, designated as “unsayable” and “nonsense” in the *Tractatus* is the explicit topic of this lecture, in which, though he admits of a certain “misuse of language”, Wittgenstein nonetheless expresses great regard for.

He compares his talk of ethics to the use of allegory in religious language, “For when we speak of God and that he sees everything and when we kneel and pray to him all our terms and actions seem to be parts of a great and elaborate allegory which represents him as a human being of great power whose grace we try to win etc. etc.”⁸¹ The problem with using empirical language in expressing religious experience (which for Wittgenstein is closely related to ethics⁸²) is that it assimilates this experience with scientifically verifiable facts of the world, which it per definition cannot be put on equal footing with. He relates

⁷⁶ Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 45.

⁷⁷ For an overview of the kind of view Wittgenstein is rejecting, which is based in eighteenth-century British empiricism, cf. James Griffin’s “Naturalizing Ethics: The Newtonizers”.

⁷⁸ Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 47.

⁷⁹ Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 47.

⁸⁰ Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 48.

⁸¹ Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 48.

⁸² Cf. his private note from 1929: “What is good is also divine. Queer as it sounds, that sums up my ethics.” *CV*, p. 3e; “Wenn etwas gut ist, so ist es auch göttlich. Damit ist seltsamerweise meine Ethik zusammengefaßt.” *VB*, p. 3.

the following example on the conceptual impossibility of assimilating miracles to empirical language,

Take the case that one of you suddenly grew a lion head and began to roar. Certainly that would be as extraordinary a thing as I can imagine. Now whenever we should have recovered from our surprise, what I would suggest would be to fetch a doctor and have the case scientifically investigated and if it were not for hurting him I would have him vivisected. And where would the miracle have got to?⁸³

He continues, that like miracles, the ethical view, or the attribution of absolute value in general disappears if it is vivisected according to the standards of exact sciences. What we *mean* by miracles and by absolute value is a gesturing outside the realm of calculable verification, “For all I wanted to do with them [i.e. nonsensical expressions of absolute value] was just *to go beyond* the world and that is to say beyond significant language.”⁸⁴ Wittgenstein concludes,

My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk ethics or religion was to run against the boundaries of language. [...] Ethics, so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.⁸⁵

Though not personally explicitly religious,⁸⁶ Wittgenstein admits to a deep respect just for the sort of outside perspective on the world that he made such a meticulous effort in the *Tractatus* to demonstrate as nonsensical.

In the lecture, Wittgenstein explicitly terms his approach as also “aesthetic”. However, due to the equation of ethics and aesthetics in the *Tractatus*, it is possible to argue that the *literary form* of the *Tractatus* complements the philosophical purpose of the book. In the letter to his publisher, Wittgenstein had called this purpose “ethical”, but within the *Tractatus*, its purpose is stated in 4.112:

The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a theory but an activity.
[...]

83 Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, pp. 49–50.

84 Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 51.

85 Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, p. 51.

86 Wittgenstein remarked several years later, while working on *Philosophical Investigations* “I am not a religious man, but I cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view.” Cf. Maurice Drury’s “Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein”, p. 761.

The result of philosophy is not a number of “philosophical propositions”, but to make propositions clear.⁸⁷

Similarly as in the foreword, where Wittgenstein denied providing a textbook (*Lehrbuch*), he here again insists that he is not proposing new philosophical doctrines, but is embarking on an activity of elucidation.

In *Formen des Klärens*, Christian Erbacher argues that the literary form of presentation of Wittgenstein's works is crucial to his (in his own words: ethical) understanding of philosophy as an activity, rather than a static body of doctrines. The literary form of the *Tractatus*, including the graphic presentation of text and the clearly orchestrated rhetorical tropes, contribute toward the activity of *showing* the elucidatory activity of philosophy.⁸⁸ The motif of “showing” meaning in the *Tractatus* can be understood as aesthetic in the sense of *aisthesis* as related to the activity of rendering perceptually salient. Erbacher argues that in his style, Wittgenstein demonstrates an ethics of clarity.

Wittgenstein's later reticence in matters of ethics is consistent with the conclusion of the *Tractatus* in proposition 7, according to which that which cannot be talked about (in factual terms) should be passed over in silence, and the claim in the “Lecture on Ethics” that speaking of ethics is to “run against the boundaries of language”. In the later writings, ethics is mentioned only sporadically, such as in §77: “In such a difficulty always ask yourself: How did we *learn* the meaning of this word (‘good’ for instance)? From what sort of examples? in what language-games? (Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings).”⁸⁹ Instead of the futile exercise of trying to define “the good” discursively, Wittgenstein is asking the reader to pay attention to the ways in which our *use* of the term “good” is interwoven with concrete activities of life. He asks the reader to remember being taught a concept, which is the same as asking him or her to remember being initiated in a way of life in which such a concept had a role to play (and these memories may range from the early childhood and being taught that it is “good” to share one's toys to university courses in ethics). A “language game” (*Sprachspiel*) is introduced as “the

87 TLP 4.112, “Der Zweck der Philosophie ist die logische Klärung der Gedanken. Die Philosophie ist keine Lehre, sondern eine Tätigkeit. [...] Das Resultat der Philosophie sind nicht ‘philosophische Sätze’, sondern das Klarwerden von Sätzen.”

88 Erbacher, *Formen des Klärens*. Cf. especially pp. 64–94.

89 PU, §77, “Frage dich in dieser Schwierigkeit [i.e. of finding definitions in ethics] immer: Wie haben wir den die Bedeutung dieses Wortes (‘gut’ z.B.) *gelernt*? An was für Beispielen? In welchen Sprachspielen? (Du wirst dann leichter sehen, daß das Wort eine Familie von Bedeutungen haben muss.”

whole” of both language and practical activities it is related to in §7: “I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, the ‘language-game’.”⁹⁰ Therefore, from Wittgenstein’s point of view, rather than talked about, ethics typically *shows* in the activities of life, in what is considered of relevance to a life-form.

On the Eastern Front with Dostoevsky: How Literature “Shows” Ethics

In the spring of 1916, Wittgenstein was on the eastern front with Austro-Hungarian troops; he had been summoned there only a few months before the diary entry in which he mentions Dostoevsky. Dr. Max Bieler, Wittgenstein’s close friend during this period, remembers,

In April (?) 1916, Wittgenstein suddenly received orders to leave for the front. [...] He took with him only what was absolutely necessary, leaving everything else behind [...] Among a few other books he took with him was *The Brothers Karamazov*. He liked this book very much. We often spoke about the figure of the *staretz*.⁹¹

While he was working as an engineer behind the lines, Wittgenstein was said to have enthusiastically read Tolstoy, however, when he received the orders to leave for the front in the spring of 1916, from which he reportedly did not expect to come back, one of the few possessions he brought with him was *The Brothers Karamazov*.⁹²

It is there, on the front lines that Wittgenstein works on the ending of the *Tractatus*.⁹³ For instance on 5 July 1916, he notes, anticipating a similar formulation in the *Tractatus*, 6.43: “If good or evil willing affects the world it can only affect the boundaries of the world, not the facts, what cannot be portrayed by

90 *PU*, §7, “Ich werde [...] das Ganze: der Sprache und der Tätigkeiten, mit denen sie verwoben ist, das ‘Sprachspiel’ nennen.”

91 Max Bieler, “Ludwig Wittgenstein in 1915–1916”, pp. 307–8. Other sources situate this order in late March, 1916. McGuinness marks Dr. Bieler’s hesitation in the conversation with “(?)”. Brian McGuinness, *Wittgenstein: A Life*, p. 235.

92 This fact is also emphasized by Ray Monk in *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, p. 136, and James C. Klagge in *Wittgenstein in Exile*, p. 136.

93 Wittgenstein himself comments a shift in interest in his writing while on the front. On 2 August 1916 he notes: “Ja, meine Arbeit hat sich ausgedehnt von den Grundlagen der Logik zum Wesen der Welt.” (“Yes, my work has extended from foundations of logic to the essence of the world.”) Cf. *Notebooks*, p. 79e; *Tagebücher* 79.

language but can only be shown in language.”⁹⁴ Whereas the final version chosen for the *Tractatus*, 6.43 is fairly general—Wittgenstein writes simply “not that which is expressible through language” (“nicht das, was durch die Sprache ausgedrückt werden kann”), the version from the *Notebooks* is more detailed. Here that which can be said is expressed as that which can be projected through language (*abgebildet durch die Sprache*), and that which cannot be said as shown in language (*gezeigt in der Sprache*), therefore including allusions to the picture theory of linguistic reference (*Abbildungstheorie*) characteristic of the *Tractatus*. This note is valuable because it suggests a possibility that is not explicit in the *Tractatus*, namely that ethics, while it cannot be directly pictured or projected (*abgebildet*) through language, can be shown *in* language. Furthermore, the final version of the thought formulated on 5 July, as printed in the *Tractatus*, 6.43 adds the notion of happiness, complementing the notion of the waxing and waning of the world, “the world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy.”

The next day, on 6 July 1916, Wittgenstein notes in his journal,

And in this sense Dostoevsky is right when he says that the man who is happy is fulfilling the purpose of existence.

Or again we could say that a man is fulfilling the purpose of existence who no longer has any purpose except to live. That is to say, who is content.

The solution of the problem of life is to be seen in the disappearance of this problem. [TLP 6.521]

But is it possible for one so to live that life stops being problematic? That one is *living* in eternity and not in time?⁹⁵

94 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 73e; “Wenn das gute oder böse Wollen eine Wirkung auf die Welt hat, so kann es sie nur auf die Grenzen der Welt haben, nicht auf die Tatsachen, auf das, was durch die Sprache nicht abgebildet, sondern nur in der Sprache gezeigt werden kann.” *Tagebücher*, pp. 167–8.

95 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, pp. 73e–74e.; “Und insofern hat wohl auch Dostojewski recht, wenn er sagt, daß der, welcher glücklich ist, den Zweck des Daseins erfüllt. Oder man könnte auch so sagen, der erfüllt den Zweck des Daseins, der keinen Zweck außer dem Leben mehr braucht. Das heißt nämlich, der befriedigt ist. Die Lösung des Problems des Lebens merkt man am Verschwinden dieses Problems. [S. 6.521] Kann man aber so leben, daß das Leben aufhört, problematisch zu sein? Daß man im Ewigen *lebt* und nicht in der Zeit?” *Tagebücher*, p. 168. The square brackets added by the editors, Wittgenstein’s students Elisabeth Anscombe and Henrik von Wright, indicate corresponding passages in the *Tractatus*.

The hesitant Dostoevsky reference, attributing a philosophical insight to the novelist is embedded in other diary entries circling around questions pertaining to the meaning of life, the relation between good, evil and happiness.⁹⁶ Paradoxically, Wittgenstein attributes to Dostoevsky the ability “to say” something worthwhile about matters like happiness and the fulfillment of the purpose of life, even though the claim to have fulfilled the purpose of life implies a total view on one’s life as a whole that he had declared inexpressible in language in the entry from the day before.⁹⁷

The insight Wittgenstein ascribes to “Dostoevsky” is likely to stem from *The Brothers Karamazov*, the book Wittgenstein had with him at the time, and from which he was able to cite by heart, according to his friends.⁹⁸ And indeed interpreters like Hans Biesenbach have identified the gloss Wittgenstein gives on Dostoevsky with a passage from the 1906 German edition of *The Brothers Karamazov*, namely from one of the characters—Ivan Karamazov’s—own literary creation, “The Grand Inquisitor”:

But he alone can take over the freedom of men who appeases their conscience. With bread you were given an indisputable banner: give man bread and he will bow down to you, for there is nothing more indisputable than bread. But if at the same time someone else takes over their conscience—oh, then he will even throw down your bread and follow him who has seduced his conscience. In this you were right. For the mystery of man’s being is not only in living, but in *what one lives for*. Without a firm idea of what he lives for, man will not consent to live and will sooner destroy himself than remain on earth, even if there is bread all around him.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Cf. for instance the entry made on 11 June 1916, or 13 August 1916.

⁹⁷ I make this point in my “Literarische Sprache, Intersubjektivität und Gemeinschaft bei Wittgenstein und Dostojewski”, pp. 225–6.

⁹⁸ Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, p. 136; Duncan Richter, *Historical Dictionary of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy*, p. 60.

⁹⁹ *BK*, p. 254. (my italics); “Aber die Freiheit des Menschen beherrscht nur der, der ihr Gewissen beruhigt. Mit dem Brote wurde Dir eine unbestreitbare Macht angeboten: gibst Du Brot, so wird sich der Mensch vor Dir beugen, denn es gibt nichts Überzeugenderes als Brot; wenn aber zu gleicher Zeit irgendein anderer hinter Deinem Rücken sein Gewissen erobert—o, dann wird er selbst Dein Brot verlassen und jenem folgen, der sein Gewissen umstrickt. Darin hattest Du recht. Denn das Geheimnis des Menschenlebens liegt nicht im blossen Dasein, sondern *im Zweck des Lebens*. Ohne eine feste Vorstellung davon, wozu er leben soll, wird der Mensch gar nicht leben wollen, und er wird sich eher vernichten, als daß er auf Erden leben bliebe—selbst dann nicht, wenn um ihn herum Brote in Fülle wären.” In *Anspielungen und Zitate im Werk Ludwig Wittgenstein*, p. 86. Biesenbach quotes the edition Wittgenstein most likely possessed in 1916: Fyodor Michailowitch Dostojewski, *Die Brüder Karamasoff* (1880), translated by K. E. Rahsin in 1906, p. 414. I will occasionally refer to this translation and provide key terms from this edition, however I refrain from exhaustively citing from it, since Wittgenstein’s

In “Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky”, Brian McGuinness cites the same passage from the novel as the source of Wittgenstein’s Dostoevsky reference in the *Notebooks*.¹⁰⁰ The passage in question is an excerpt from Ivan’s *poema*, which is designed to demonstrate the validity of his nihilism to his younger brother Alesha. It is a literary or poetic support of Ivan’s fatal conclusion, that “all is permitted”, which indirectly leads to the murder of his father. In the passage cited, Ivan’s Grand Inquisitor addresses Christ and attributes to him the view that people need more than just to survive, more than just bread, the material that ensures their continued existence—they need a purpose (*Zweck*) to their life. He contrasts mere survival (*bloßes Dasein*) with a purposeful life: without a purpose, people are violently unhappy and would rather end their life. Rather than in mere satiation, this fulfillment of purpose lies in living in accordance with their conscience.¹⁰¹ By contrast, the Grand Inquisitor himself propagates providing material sustenance, and enslaving people by encouraging dependence on ecclesiastical structures for one’s daily bread. While it does not explicitly mention happiness, this passage fits Wittgenstein’s preoccupation with “the purpose of life”. However, while the Grand Inquisitor concedes this view to Christ, he ultimately negates it, because he is planning to execute Christ the next day. He is only stopped in this intent by Christ’s wordless kiss.

There is another quote in the same novel that explicitly and affirmatively brings up the notion of happiness as fulfillment of the “purpose of being” that Wittgenstein attributes to Dostoevsky. It is a teaching of Staretz Zosima in a conversation with lady Khokhlakova (“A Lady of Little Faith”): “For people are created for happiness, and he who is completely happy can at once be deemed worthy of saying to himself: ‘I have fulfilled God’s commandment on this earth.’”¹⁰² This passage has so far, to my knowledge, never been considered as having inspired Wittgenstein’s *Notebook* entry from 6 July 1916,¹⁰³ even though

interest was existential rather than philological, and he was more interested in conceptual rather than lexical analysis. Hence, the exact wording of his edition of *The Brothers Karamazov* (which he never quoted *verbatim*) is only conditionally relevant for present purposes.

100 Brian McGuinness “Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky”, p. 230.

101 Thus evoking Christ’s saying that “man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth from God’s mouth” Matthew 4,4. Dostoevsky explicitly referred to this Biblical passage in discussing this passage from this novel against “socialist” claims that all misery comes from poverty. Cf. Joseph Frank, *Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 286.

102 *BK*, p. 55; “[...] zum Glück sind die Menschen geschaffen, und wer vollkommen glücklich ist, der ist gewürdigt, sich selbst sagen zu dürfen: ‘Ich habe das Gebot Gottes auf dieser Erde erfüllt.’” *BK* (1906), p. 90.

103 I also put forward this thesis in my “Literarische Sprache, Intersubjektivität und Gemeinschaft bei Wittgenstein und Dostojewski”, p. 224.

Wittgenstein was known to have been especially fascinated with the character of Zosima.¹⁰⁴ Staretz Zosima claims that a life without the sincere pursuit of active love is devoid of meaning: “it will be merely a dream, and your whole life will flit by like a phantom.”¹⁰⁵ What Wittgenstein appreciated in *The Brothers Karamazov* was Dostoevsky’s narration of the miracle of Cana in Alesha’s dream of Staretz Zosima: rather than emphasizing the miraculous nature of the transformation of water into wine, Alesha is mainly touched by the love God expresses for his people by giving them joy.¹⁰⁶ However, just like Wittgenstein, Staretz Zosima does not talk about “ethics”. In the *Tractatus* and *The Brothers Karamazov* alike ethics is only briefly mentioned.

The only character that ever mentions “ethics” in *The Brothers Karamazov* is Rakitin, the opportunistic seminarian-careerist and the novel’s petty villain. In Book XI, after Dmitrii Karamazov’s arrest, Rakitin visits Dmitrii with the object of writing an article about his case. Dmitrii retells their conversation to Alesha, who also regularly visits him in prison. In Dmitrii’s words, he and Rakitin were talking about

“Ideas, ideas, that’s what! Ethics. [BK 1906: *Ethik*] What is ethics?”

“Ethics?” Alyosha said in surprise.

“Yes, what is it, some sort of science?” [BK 1906: “wohl irgendeine Wissenschaft”]

“Yes, there is such a science ... only ... I must confess I can’t explain to you what sort of science it is.”

“Rakitin knows. Rakitin knows a lot, devil take him!”

[...] He wants to write an article about me, about my case, and begin his role in literature [BK 1906: “sich damit in die Literatur einführen”] that way, that’s why he keeps coming, he explained it to me himself. He wants something with a tendency: ‘It was impossible for him not to kill, he was a victim of his environment,’ and so on, he explained it to me. [...]”¹⁰⁷

Rakitin apparently understands ethics as an exact science, for he also refers to Claude Bernard, a physiologist whose *Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* introduces principles of scientific research to medicine.¹⁰⁸ On the first glance, Rakitin seems to consider ethics in close relation to aesthetics. For, by writing an article on the “ethical” topic of Dmitrii’s innocence in face of his corrupting social environment, he wants to “begin his role in literature”,

104 Cf. Richter, *Historical Dictionary of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy*, pp. 60–1.

105 BK, p. 57.

106 James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (eds.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Public and Private Occasions*, pp. 92–3.

107 BK, p. 588.

108 BK, p. 588 and p. 792, fn. 4.

as he puts it. However, as Dmitrii's conversation with Alesha continues, we find out that Rakitin has a highly derogative view of literature.

Dmitrii comments to Alesha, "He [i. e. Rakitin] also writes verses, the scoundrel [...]"¹⁰⁹ He then proceeds to read the poem—or in Dmitrii's words, "the jingle" (*BK* 1906 "albernes Gedicht")—Rakitin has written with the object of seducing the widow lady Khokhlakova for her money, called "For the Recovery of My Object's Ailing Little Foot". Dmitrii comments that Rakitin—"the swindler!"—had told him the whole story, that he meant to "grab a hundred and fifty thousand, marry a certain widow, and buy a stone house in Petersburg". Dmitrii also recounts Rakitin's words,

"For the first time in my life," he said, "I've dirtied my hands writing poetry, for the sake of seduction—that is, for the sake of a useful cause. If I get the capital away from the foolish woman, then I can be of civic use."

Because they have a civic excuse for every abomination!

"And anyway," [Rakitin] said, "I've done a better job of writing than your Pushkin, because I managed to stick civic woes even into a foolish jingle."¹¹⁰

Rakitin's view caricatures a unity of ethics and aesthetics that puts literature in the service of a higher "civic use". He is repeatedly called a "scoundrel" throughout the novel and obviously does not represent a model for ethical behavior. The dismissive treatment of Rakitin's notion of ethics as a "science" complements Wittgenstein's rejection of the Newtonian notion that ethics can be codified like a science—as the conclusion of Wittgenstein's "Lecture on Ethics" states, "Ethics, so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable can be no science."¹¹¹

In contrast, Staretz Zosima does not speak about "ethics", however he does in a manner speak about *eudaimonia*, an ethical topic: about what, on his view, constitutes a good life. His most direct words on the subject are, incidentally, from a conversation with the same naïve, but well-intentioned widowed landowner lady Khokhlakova mentioned above. It is to her comment that he looks healthy and "so cheerful, so happy" that he answers with the line discussed further above,

¹⁰⁹ *BK*, p. 589.

¹¹⁰ *BK*, p. 590.

¹¹¹ Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics", p. 51.

[...] since I seem so cheerful to you, nothing could ever gladden me more than your saying so. For people are created for happiness, and he who is completely happy can at once be deemed worthy of saying to himself: ‘I have fulfilled God’s commandment on this earth.’ All the righteous, all the saints, all the holy martyrs were happy.¹¹²

Father Zosima understands happiness in the conversation with Khokhlakova, not as direct pleasure seeking, but as the fruit of the effort of “active love”. Zosima encourages lady Khokhlakova to practice active love, and “If you do not attain happiness, always remember that you are on the right road, and try not to leave it.”¹¹³

The novel introduces Staretz Zosima’s teachings more fully in the Book VI, and as written by his disciple Alesha in the form of a manuscript. Here a notion of good life is introduced, namely the dictum that “life is paradise”: “We are all in paradise, but we do not know it, and if we did want to know it, tomorrow there would be paradise the world over.”¹¹⁴ This is proclaimed by Monk Zosima’s young brother Markel shortly before his death, and in similar formulations by Zosima himself shortly before endangering his life by refusing to shoot at a duel,¹¹⁵ and Zosima’s mysterious visitor shortly before he ruins his reputation and his family’s life by confessing a crime he committed years ago, even though all the possible benefactors of such a confession were long dead. It is suggested that the reason paradise is not realized is alienation. Zosima criticizes the “freedom” in the world, to satisfy, even increase one’s needs, and claims that this never-ending increase of needs leads to “for the rich [to] *isolation* and spiritual suicide, for the poor [to] *envy and murder*” (original italics).¹¹⁶

Furthermore, the idea of life already being paradise is closely intertwined with the ideal of “brotherhood”, as uttered by Zosima’s mysterious visitor. The latter, too, subscribes to the paradisiacal view on life and adds, “Until one has indeed become the brother of all, there will be no brotherhood”,¹¹⁷ an idea repeated later by Zosima in his “Talks and Homilies”.¹¹⁸ The notion of paradise furthermore has cosmological implications, for the love and responsibility for all includes the whole world. Zosima insists, “[...] all is like an ocean, all flows and connects; touch it in one place and it echoes at the other end of the

112 *BK*, p. 55.

113 *BK*, p. 58.

114 *BK*, p. 288.

115 *BK*, p. 298.

116 *BK*, p. 313.

117 *BK*, p. 303.

118 *BK*, p. 316.

world".¹¹⁹ This view is very much complementary to Wittgenstein's notion of "the mystical" in the *Tractatus*, 6.45, "The contemplation of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole. The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling."¹²⁰ Wittgenstein evokes a kind of primordial, oceanic feeling of unity very much evocative of Zosima's words in the novel.

Zosima, like Wittgenstein, introduces an "outside" perspective by mentioning a connection "to the higher heavenly world"¹²¹ (BK 1906: "mit einer höher, erhabeneren Welt"):

Much on earth is concealed from us, but in place of it we have been granted a secret, mysterious sense of our living bond with the other world, with the higher heavenly world, and the roots of our thoughts and feelings are not here but in other worlds. That is why philosophers say it is impossible on earth to conceive the essence of things. God took seeds from other worlds and sowed them on this earth, and raised up his garden; and everything that could sprout sprouted, but it lives and grows only through its sense of being in touch with other mysterious worlds; if this sense is weakened or destroyed in you, that which has grown up in you dies. Then you become indifferent to life, and even come to hate it.¹²²

Gesturing towards a "higher" reality is also Wittgenstein's strategy of pointing towards "ethics". He writes in 6.41:

If there is a value which is of value, it must lie outside all happening and being-so. For all happening and being-so is accidental.

What makes it non-accidental cannot lie in the world, for otherwise this would again be accidental.

It must lie outside the world.¹²³

119 BK, p. 319.

120 TLP, 6.45, "Die Anschauung der Welt sub specie aeterni ist ihre Anschauung als—begrenzt—Ganzes. Das Gefühl der Welt als begrenztes Ganzes ist das Mystische."

121 BK, p. 320.

122 BK, p. 320. The "philosophers" Staretz Zosima mentions are most likely the Stoics, who conceived of *logoi spermatokoi* or seeds of reason as the hidden motivating force behind all life forms, and Neoplatonists, who incorporated this concept into their own thinking and inherited it to early Christian philosophers. The later Christianized central ideas of Greek philosophy, while maintaining distinctions important to Christian thought. Cf. Marcus Plested, "Philosophy", p. 447.

123 TLP, 6.41, "Wenn es einen Wert gibt, der Wert hat, so muss er außerhalb alles Geschehens und So-Seins liegen. Denn alles Geschehen und So-Sein ist zufällig. Was es nichtzufällig macht, kann nicht in der Welt liegen, denn sonst wäre dies wieder zufällig. Es muss außerhalb der Welt liegen."

And in 6.42: “Hence there can be no ethical propositions. Propositions cannot express anything higher.” (“Darum kann es auch keine Sätze der Ethik geben. Sätze können nichts Höheres ausdrücken.”) Unlike Rakitin, who considers ethics to be codifiable according to principles of exact sciences, which operate on facts, Zosima, like the author of the *Tractatus*, considers the possibility of a perspective from a “higher world” as essential for any sort of value beyond the contingency of facts. Staretz Zosima contrasts the earth and “other” worlds, and locates value—that which gives life meaning as opposed to making one “indifferent” to life or even making one “hate” it—in those “other mysterious worlds” as opposed to “earth”. It is quite possible that Zosima may have inspired Wittgenstein’s idea of a separation between contingent facts “in” the world and value “outside the world”.

Regarding Wittgenstein’s thesis that the ethical may be “shown” aesthetically, one may point towards recurrent motifs throughout the novel *The Brothers Karamazov* that link the moral state of characters with their attitudes towards reading and writing, especially literature, revealing the motif of a correlation between ethics and aesthetics congenial to Wittgenstein.¹²⁴ The villains have a marked dislike for literature and reading: As mentioned above, Rakitin considers poetry “dirty” and only to be used to achieve civic goals; Smerdiakov, who later on in life commits murder, only utters one brief grim comment after being forced to read a novel by Gogol, namely: “It’s all about lies”, and also finds history books “boring”.¹²⁵ Fyodor Karamazov owns a big, locked bookcase.¹²⁶ He, too, quotes literary and Biblical books, however, he does not seem to display a thorough acquaintance with them. His ambivalent attitude to books is in keeping with his ambivalent character: even though he is completely irresponsible and opportunistic, he is potentially likable and described as naïve.¹²⁷ In Nina Perlina’s sense “ascending” characters, that is, characters that undergo a positive moral development from within the logic of the novel, like Dmitrii, love literature and quote it profusely.¹²⁸ Staretz Zosima, on the other hand, repeatedly quotes from the Bible, but he is never brought into connection with literature in terms of art. However, he is described as being able to “read” people, a capacity

124 Cf. e.g. Nina Perlina’s *Varieties of Poetic Utterances: Quotation in The Brothers Karamazov*, where she analyzes how heroes and villains, as well as (morally) “ascending” and “descending” characters quote other writers. The more negative the moral evaluation of the character, the more inaccurate are their (mis-)quotations.

125 *BK*, p. 125.

126 *BK*, p. 125.

127 *BK*, p. 9.

128 Perlina, *Varieties of Poetic Utterances*, pp. 27–30.

Wittgenstein was fascinated by.¹²⁹ For instance, Zosima identifies lying and self-deception as the root of Fyodor Karamazov's vices, his stock response in covering up that he is in fact ashamed of himself. In response, the latter says, theatrically but tellingly, "it's as if you pierced me right through and read inside me".¹³⁰ Ivan is the most prolific author within the novel, for he is first introduced by his bibliography, before he even appears on the scene as a character. His articles in newspapers are mentioned, reviews of books that made him well-known in literary circles, and an article published "in one of the big newspapers" dealing with ecclesiastical courts. It is only after listing these accomplishments and commenting on the uproar caused by the latest article that the narrator proclaims, "And then suddenly, just at that time, the author himself appeared among us."¹³¹ But when Ivan is confronted with his texts in "The Devil. Ivan Fyodorovich's Nightmare", he is ashamed, as if his texts were weighing on his conscience. Lastly, the contrast between Alesha and Rakitin's approach to authorship is perhaps the most instructive in differing attitudes to an ethics of language in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

Rakitin is described as opportunistically presenting himself. For instance, Madame Khokhlakova "considered Rakitin a most devout and religious young man—so skillful was he in manipulating everyone and presenting himself to everyone according to the wishes of each, whenever he saw the least advantage to himself."¹³² Rakitin's authorship is accordingly highly utilitarian and manipulative. He means "to begin his role in literature" by writing an article on Dmitrii. When his scheme to woo lady Khokhlakova with his "jingle", in order to marry into her capital and use it for "civic goals"¹³³ does not succeed, and she throws him out, he publishes a nasty article about her in the journal *Rumors*,¹³⁴ out of revenge. Like Alesha, Rakitin, too has written a text about Staretz Zosima "*The Life of the Elder, Father Zosima, Fallen Asleep in God* published by diocesan authorities". But when he is questioned about it on trial, he reacts similarly to Ivan when confronted with his former texts—he is embarrassed and "almost ashamed". He mumbles, "I didn't write it for publication ... they published it afterwards",¹³⁵ suggesting perhaps that what he does not have a clear conscience about what he wrote in that text. Alesha's manuscript on the Staretz *From the*

129 Rush Rhees, *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, p. 79.

130 BK, p. 43.

131 BK, p. 16.

132 BK, p. 328.

133 BK, pp. 588–90.

134 BK, p. 591.

135 BK, p. 667.

Life of the Hieromonk and Elder Zosima, Departed in God, Composed from His Own Words by Alexei Fyodorovich Karamazov, presented as Book VI in the novel, and discussed above, is emphatically introduced as based on actual conversations with the elder, and thus “composed from his own words”.¹³⁶ This implies that Alesha’s manuscript, in contrast with Rakin’s, does the old man’s life justice and faithfully represents his teachings.

However, Alesha’s merit is not just that he simply sticks to the facts particularly well in his writings. There is a suggestion that he has a literary talent, as well. Alesha is capable of absorptive storytelling, as is revealed in his conversation with Lise, where he explains his failed attempt to give money to Captain Snegirev. He tells her that this gesture was meant as an apology for the public humiliation the Captain suffered at Dmitrii’s hands. In the beginning Alesha is ashamed because his attempt failed and he managed to humiliate the poor man even more, but then, as he warms up, his narration proves more and more engrossing,

Alesha sat down at the table and began telling his story, but from the first words he lost all his embarrassment and, in turn, carried Lise away. He spoke under the influence of strong emotion and the recent extraordinary impression, and succeeded in telling it well and thoroughly.¹³⁷

It seems that he has quite a literary talent for telling stories, even if they ‘really’ happened. We find out that he had cultivated this talent with Lise in the past, in his “Moscow days”, “Sometimes they both day-dreamed together and made up long stories between them, mostly gay and amusing ones.”¹³⁸ His narration is vivid, “Lise was greatly moved by his story. Alesha managed to paint the image of ‘Ilyushechka’ (Captain Snegirev’s son) for her with ardent feeling.”¹³⁹ They discuss why the poor Captain did not accept the two hundred rubles Alesha wanted to give him and what words he should use to convince the proud man to take it without losing his face. However, here the ethical, in this case, malignant potential of their attention to aesthetics, words and style is revealed, when Lise asks,

Listen, Alexei Fyodorovich, isn’t there something in all this reasoning of ours, I mean, of yours ... no, better, of ours ... isn’t there some contempt for him, for this wretched man

136 BK, p. 286.

137 BK, p. 214.

138 BK, p. 214.

139 BK, p. 214.

... that we are examining his soul like this, as if we were looking down on him? That we have decided so certainly, now, that he will accept the money?¹⁴⁰

With her fumbling pronouns, Lise reveals her utter absorption in Alesha's narration—and absorption is a key aesthetic category according to Denis Diderot. (It is not an accident that Denis Diderot is repeatedly mentioned throughout *The Brothers Karamazov*: in this scene his central aesthetic category of absorption allows the reader to see Alesha's simple everyday narrative under the aspect of an artwork, as having literary qualities.¹⁴¹)

Lise experiences Alesha's narrative as if she too had some moral responsibility for his depiction of Captain Snegirev—thus introducing an ethical category, which would have been of great interest to Wittgenstein's view of ethics and aesthetics. Alesha, as discussed above, seriously states that there is no contempt in him for that man. He quotes his Staretz that “most people need to be looked after like children, and some like the sick in hospitals”, and he and Lise rapturously vow to “look after people this way!” The very manner they talk about and to other people shows their identification with Staretz Zosima's teaching on active, redeeming love. Alesha, however adds, “sometimes I am very impatient, and sometimes I don't see things”,¹⁴² implying that active aesthetic shaping of language and behavior is mutually interdependent with one's perception of others.

However, Alesha's high opinion of the Staretz is temporarily disappointed, when the latter dies and there is a quick onset of the “odor of corruption” emanating from his corpse in Chapter I of Book VII. In the words of Father Ferapont, Zosima's fanatical opponent at the monastery, he started to stink.¹⁴³ There is no miracle of incorruptibility associated with sainthood that would have crowned Zosima's life with a triumphal ending. At least in terms of the orthodox Christian semiosphere, it would seem that Zosima's teaching on active love is falsified with this absence of a miracle, at least according to Zosima's opponents at the monastery. The novel's narrator allows that Zosima might still have been a saint. He notes,

For before then it had also happened that monks of very righteous life, whose righteousness was in all men's eyes, God-fearing elders [*Startzi*] had died, and even so, from their humble

140 *BK*, p. 217.

141 I argue similarly in Tea Jankovic (my unmarried name) “Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky on Aesthetics and the ‘Inner’ Life”, p. 114.

142 *BK*, p. 217.

143 *BK*, p. 335.

coffins, too, there had come an odor of corruption, appearing quite naturally as in all dead men, yet this did not produce [...] even the least excitement.¹⁴⁴

He supposes that the scandal surrounding Zosima’s decay had more to do with distrust of the institution of eldership, and, most importantly in the envy other monks felt for Zosima’s enormous popularity. The narrator continues,

For although the late elder had attracted many to himself, not so much by miracles as by love, and had built up around himself, as it were, a whole world of those who loved him, nevertheless, and still more so, by the same means he generated many who envied him, and hence became his bitter enemies, both open and secret, and not only among the monastics, but even among laymen.¹⁴⁵

To use Wittgenstein’s terms, Zosima’s ethics of active love was not verified by miracles *in the world*, rather it reflected, to use a *Tractarian* term, in the whole of the world around him—“a whole world of those who loved him”.

Yet, Alesha is deeply shaken by Zosima’s opponents’ pernicious talk about the old monk’s death. Rakitin finds Alesha in a deep crisis after the tumults surrounding Staretz’s funeral and his unexpectedly swift decay. The opportunistic seminarian sees his chance to earn extra money, for Grushen’ka had promised him twenty-five rubles if he brings Alesha to her. He is gleeful for the chance to see Alesha’s “fall” “from the saints to the sinners”,¹⁴⁶ for he is certain that she will seduce him. Agrafena Alexandrovna, also known as Grushen’ka, is namely already the object of erotic rivalry between Alesha’s older brother, Dmitrii Fyodorovich, and his father, Fyodor Pavlovich.

In the beginning, it seems that everything is going according to Rakitin’s plan. Grushen’ka springs on Alesha’s lap “like an affectionate cat” and says, “I’ll cheer you up, my pious boy! No really, will you let me sit on your lap for a while, you won’t be angry? Tell me—I’ll jump off.” However, despite appearances, already the story is taking quite a different turn:

Alyosha was silent. He sat afraid to move; he heard her say: “Tell me—I’ll jump off,” but did not answer, as if he were frozen. Yet what was happening in him was not what might have been expected, or what might have been imagined, for example, by Rakitin, who was watching carnivorously from where he sat. The great grief in his soul absorbed all the feelings his heart might have conceived [...] [T]his woman, of whom he was afraid most of all, who was sitting on his knees and embracing him, now aroused in him suddenly quite a

144 BK, p. 330.

145 BK, p. 331.

146 BK, p. 343.

different, unexpected, and special feeling, a feeling of some remarkable, great, and pure-hearted curiosity [...]¹⁴⁷

Apparently, she does not entirely conform to his expectations of a cold-hearted seductress.

Grushen'ka, in turn, notices his "tender look", and in reaction to Rakitin's crude remarks she confesses to Alesha that she does see herself as a "low woman", worthy of his contempt and that she has long began thinking of him as "her conscience".¹⁴⁸ Paired off with an elderly merchant in her teenage years, after being abandoned by her fiancé, she had festered in shame and anger for five years. However, when she hears the news, she exclaims, "The elder Zosima died! Oh Lord, I didn't know!" ... She jumps off his lap and "Alyosha gave her a long, surprised look, and something seemed to light up in his face." He suddenly turns to Rakitin and says "loudly and firmly":

[...] did you see how she spared me? I came here looking for a wicked soul—I was drawn to that because I was low and wicked myself, but I found a true sister, I found a treasure, a loving soul ... [...]¹⁴⁹

The minute deviation in Grushen'ka's behavior from the expected scenario is sufficient for "something [...] to light up in his face".

However, Rakitin insists that Grushen'ka's intention was "to eat [him] up", like a cat would eat up a chicken he takes Alesha to be.¹⁵⁰ She, too, confesses, "I wanted to ruin you",¹⁵¹ because she was convinced he despised her. She confirms Rakitin's choice of words, "Looking at you, I was determined: I'll eat him up. Eat him up and laugh. See what a wicked bitch I am, and you called me your sister!"¹⁵² But, Alesha, too, confesses, "I came here seeking my own ruin".¹⁵³ However, he is touched by her willingness to put behind her the wrongs suffered and to forgive and love at the first gesture of kindness.¹⁵⁴ She is completely transformed by his words. She turns to Alesha, "All my life I've been waiting for such

147 *BK*, p. 349.

148 *BK*, p. 350.

149 *BK*, p. 351.

150 *BK*, p. 351.

151 *BK*, p. 353.

152 *BK*, p. 354.

153 *BK*, p. 355.

154 *BK*, p. 355.

a one as you, I knew someone like that would come and forgive me. I believed that someone would love me, a dirty woman, not only for my shame.”¹⁵⁵

Touched by the news of Staretz’s death, by Alesha’s chaste love, his calling her a “true sister”, she is immediately able to throw off all the bitterness that went into the making of her and Rakitin’s cynical plan for Alesha, and to return his sibling-love. Alesha, in turn, goes back to the monastery and experiences an epiphany (“Cana of Galilee”): he dreams of meeting Zosima at a wedding feast, he is convinced again of the triumph of love over death and decay. Waking up from the dream, he ecstatically kisses the earth: “he fell to the earth a weak youth and rose up a fighter, steadfast for the rest of his life [...]”¹⁵⁶ Three days later, he obeys Zosima’s last bidding and leaves the monastery, for his “sojourn in the world”.

Several aspects of what Zosima says in his teachings are shown in this little narrative. The idea that “Life is paradise” if only people forgave one another and acted like brothers to each other: Alesha’s smitten and grieved mood because of Staretz Zosima’s death was completely transformed into ecstatic joy because of Grushen’ka. He was able to “be a brother” to her, and she, in turn, turned out to be “a true sister”. One of the last words Zosima said to Alesha and his other visitors on his deathbed refers to Dmitrii having to take on great suffering, “‘Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.’ Remember that.”¹⁵⁷ This is at the same time the epigraph of the entire novel, a Biblical reference to John 12.24. Though it may seem on the surface that Staretz Zosima’s death and decay make his teachings appear ironic, his death allows his word to grow like a seed and bear fruit. Some of Zosima’s “fruits” are for instance his spiritual son, Alesha, but also, indirectly—Grushen’ka, whose name in Russian means “little pear”. Their further development *shows* what Staretz Zosima *says* in his teachings, and this development is depicted primarily in the change in their perception of the world and of other characters.¹⁵⁸

Alesha was able to see the best in Grushen’ka, while not yielding to the obvious temptation of joining the erotically and potentially murderously charged triangle between her and his brother and father. In contrast to Rakitin, who was “watching carnivorously”¹⁵⁹—implying a very un-ascetic outlook despite

155 *BK*, p. 357.

156 *BK*, p. 363.

157 *BK*, p. 285.

158 Cf. Tea Jankovic, “*The Brothers Karamazov* as a Philosophical Proof”, p. 203.

159 *BK*, p. 349.

his monastic garb—Alesha had a “tender look”¹⁶⁰ upon Grushen’ka. He was able to actively see her, to “read” the situation beyond the obvious clichés of a “fallen woman” and to see in her heart, just like Zosima was able to. By changing his perception of Grushen’ka and being able to see even her, “the woman he was most afraid of”, seemingly the villain of the story thus far, as “a true sister”, he was able to live Zosima’s teaching of being “a brother to all”,¹⁶¹ and to show the beginnings of what “the author” from the novel’s Foreword says about him, that he “bears within himself the heart of the whole”.¹⁶²

To use the language of *Tractatus*, 6.43, Alesha’s “good willing” (*das gute Wollen*) is not expressed in what he says—as Grushen’ka exclaims, “I don’t know, I don’t know what he told me [...]”¹⁶³—but rather shown in his “tender look”, in his entire treatment of her. His entire outlook, “his world” is different from Rakitin’s angry and “carnivorous watching”, just like, in Wittgenstein’s terms, “the world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy” (*TLP* 6.43). He is able to “see the world rightly”. (*TLP* 6.54) Alesha’s capacity for love expands: we see Alesha’s world “wax as a whole”, while Rakitin’s “wanes” (*TLP* 6.43). This is shown in spatial metaphors immediately after the scene with Grushen’ka: Rakitin, his plans frustrated and revealed, shouts at Alesha, “The devil take you one and all! [...] Go by yourself, there’s your road!” Then we see him “turning abruptly into another street, he left Alesha alone in the dark”, whereas “Alyosha walked out of town, and went across the fields to the monastery”.¹⁶⁴ In his musings, Alesha connects Rakitin’s inner state with his outer situatedness, “As long as Rakitin thinks about his grudges, he will always walk off into some alley...”¹⁶⁵ In stark contrast, we see Alesha in the fields, under the starry skies,

over him, the heavenly dome, full of quiet, shining stars, hung boundlessly. From the zenith to the horizon the still-dim Milky Way stretched its double strand. Night, fresh and quiet, almost unstirring, enveloped the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the church gleamed in the sapphire sky. The luxuriant autumn flowers in the flowerbeds near the house had fallen asleep until morning. The silence of the earth seemed to merge with the silence of the heavens, the mystery of the earth touched the mystery of the stars... [sic] Alyosha stood gazing and suddenly, as if he had been cut down, threw himself to the earth.¹⁶⁶

160 *BK*, p. 350.

161 *BK*, p. 303.

162 *BK*, p. 3.

163 *BK*, p. 357.

164 *BK*, p. 359.

165 *BK*, pp. 358–9.

166 *BK*, p. 362.

In Zosima’s terms, Alesha experienced the primordial unity, the feeling that “all is like an ocean, all flows and connects”. Rakitin’s “world”, focused on himself and his grudges, in terms of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* 6.43 “waned” to the size and feel of a side-alley, whereas, Alesha’s—like his newfound love for the formerly unlovable—“waxes” and envelopes all of the earth. While his love thus far had been mainly concentrated on the late Staretz, Grushen’ka helps him achieve the kind of all-encompassing sibling love and responsibility for all that Zosima preached. To put it in terms of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy, Alesha and Rakitin have the exact same material reality before them, namely the scene with Grushen’ka, but they see her under entirely different aspects: Rakitin, who is watching “carneously” sees her in terms of a prey, Alesha, with his “tender” view, like a sister.

The scene described above would appear to provide factual evidence for Staretz Zosima’s teachings: it appears to demonstrate that Alesha’s active love of Grushen’ka, his ability to see her as a sister and look after her transforms his world into the “world of the happy”, to use Wittgenstein’s term. However, there is another complication that casts doubt on Alesha’s power of judgment and allows the novel to retain its paradoxical structure. Namely, both Alesha and his partner in making up stories and “looking after people”, Lise, are accurately described in terms typical of nineteenth-century representations of hysterical symptoms. Lise’s mother repeatedly refers to her daughter as “in hysterics”.¹⁶⁷ Sven Linnér points out that Lise’s behavior, up to the seemingly miraculous healing of her paralysis by Zosima can be explained by this diagnosis.¹⁶⁸ Concerning Alesha, consider the scene in which he exhibits similar uncontrollable fits his mother, the “shrieker” had, after the father, Fyodor Karamazov, made his characteristically crude remarks about her,

[...] something very strange suddenly happened to Alyosha—namely the very same thing [Fyodor] had just told about the “shrieker” repeated itself with him. He suddenly jumped up from the table, just as his mother was said to have done, clasped his hands, then covered his face with them, fell back in his chair as if he’d been cut down, and suddenly began shaking all over in a *hysterical* attack of sudden trembling and silent tears.¹⁶⁹

If Alesha is a hysteric, then his behavior can be seen under an entirely different aspect. His sudden change of mood from depression to ecstatic elation, his sudden and almost manic enthusiasm for Grushen’ka do not any longer appear as a

167 E.g. p. 181 in “At the Khokhlakov’s”.

168 Sven Linnér, *Staretz Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov: A Study in the Mimesis of Virtue*, p. 51.

169 *BK*, p. 137. Added emphasis.

moral conversion into the *Tractarian* “world of the happy”, but as signs of mental imbalance.¹⁷⁰ Indeed, the description of Alesha’s ecstasy under the starry skies contains the remark, “Alyosha stood gazing and suddenly, as if he had been cut down, threw himself to the earth.”¹⁷¹ As Rice has noted, this suspiciously sounds like an oncoming epileptic attack—a disease that Dostoevsky himself suffered of. This ecstatic mystic union can be read as one of the “textbook case examples” of a nineteenth-century diagnosis of hysteria: “an ecstatic visionary state analogous to those of epileptics”, to cite Krafft-Ebing’s medical treatise of 1879.¹⁷² According to Krafft-Ebing, symptoms of hysteria are emotionality exhibited for instance in sobbing, as well as convulsions, forgetfulness, “abrupt changes in levels of excitement”, overactive imagination and religious ecstasy, all of which can be diagnosed in Alesha throughout the course of the novel.¹⁷³

It is likely that this complication in the novel did not escape Wittgenstein, for he was very interested in Freud’s writings, even if he was also critical of him,¹⁷⁴ and it is likely that he was able to link this passage to Freud’s definition of the hysteric:

hysterics are undoubtedly imaginative artists, even if they express their phantasies *mimetically* in the main and without considering the intelligibility to other people; the ceremonials and prohibitions of obsessional neurotics drive us to suppose that they have created a private religion of their own.¹⁷⁵

To view Alesha as a hysteric is to view his discipleship to Staretz Zosima’s teaching of active love as a “private religion”. His ability to tell stories in such a way as to completely absorb Lise can be seen as a shared fantasy of imaginative artists, unintelligible to other people. Just as, within the logic of the novel, we can never be sure whether Staretz Zosima is an imposter or a saint, we are never quite sure

170 I argue similarly in a briefer fashion in Jankovic, “*The Brothers Karamazov as a Philosophical Proof*”, pp. 204–5.

171 BK, p. 362.

172 Cf. James L. Rice, “The Covert Design of ‘The Brothers Karamazov’”, pp. 370–1.

173 As Rice notes, Dostoevsky was very much up to date on current psychiatric and medical developments, and Krafft-Ebing’s treatise was published a year before *The Brothers Karamazov*. Cf. “The Covert Design”, p. 368.

174 Cf. Wittgenstein, *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, especially pp. 42–3.

175 Sigmund Freud, “Preface to Reik’s *Ritual: Psychoanalytic Studies*”, p. 261, quoted in Jonathan Lear’s “The King and I”, p. 13; “Der Hysteriker ist ein unzweifelbarer Dichter, wemgleich er seine Phantasien im wesentlichen mimisch und ohne Rücksicht auf das Verständnis der anderen darstellt; das Zeremoniell und die Verbote des Zwangneurotikers nötigen uns zum Urteil, er habe sich eine Privatreligion geschaffen”, “Vorrede”, p. 9.

whether Alesha’s judgment of Grushen’ka is right, and whether his ecstatic religious communion with the night sky, the earth, and love for all mankind is an expression of his overwrought pathological imagination or real, visionary hope.¹⁷⁶

This complication is indeed in keeping with Wittgenstein’s non-foundationalist view of ethics, as unverifiable by any isolable fact in the world. Rather than being *something* in the world that can be proven or disproven, ethics (or Zosima’s attitude of active love) is an attitude to the world as a whole, legible in the aspects under which one views things. The reader, too, is free to decide whether to see Alesha as a hysteric, or to see him “tenderly”, as Alesha regards others. In fact, already the Foreword to *The Brothers Karamazov* foreshadows this multi-spectivity of its main protagonist:

Starting out on the biography of my hero, Alexei Fyodorovich Karamazov, I find myself in some perplexity. Namely, while I do call Alexei Fyodorovich my hero, still, I myself know that he is by no means a great man, so that I can foresee the inevitable questions, such as: What is notable about your Alexei Fyodorovich that you should choose him for your hero? What has he really done? To whom is he known, and for what? Why should I, the reader, spend my time studying the facts of his life?

This last question is the most fateful one, for I can only reply: perhaps you will see from the novel. But suppose they read the novel and do not see, do not agree with the noteworthiness of my Alexei Fyodorovich? I say this because, to my sorrow, I foresee it. To me he is noteworthy, but I decidedly doubt that I shall succeed in proving it to the reader. [...]¹⁷⁷

The narrator hopes that the reader will “see” Alesha’s noteworthiness, even though there is nothing in the “facts of his life” that proves it. He hopes that the reader will see Alesha under the right aspect, but the character he is presenting to the reader can just as well be seen as completely unremarkable (indeed—a simple hysterical fanatic). He hopes that the reader will see Alesha in a positive light, not just as an “odd man”: “He is a strange man, even an odd one. [...] it sometimes happens that it is precisely he [an odd man], perhaps, who bears within himself the heart of the whole, while the other people of his epoch have all for some reason been torn away from it for a time by some kind of flooding wind.” It is indeed possible that a hysteric recognizes and “bears” what he calls “the heart of the whole”, while other, ‘normal’ people do not.

176 James L. Rice analyzes the scene in terms of Dostoevsky’s own pronouncements about the closeness of hysteria and “heroism” and in terms of nineteenth-century Russian doctors’ classification methods of hysteric symptoms and shows how neatly Alesha fits “the textbook case” of hysteria (he is, after all “the hero” of the novel according to the Foreword (*BK*, p. 3)).

177 *BK*, p. 3.

In constructing a reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* in Wittgenstein's terms, it may seem that the ethical perspective commended is an all-encompassing inclusive tolerance of each and every point of view. However, such a reading does not account for the novel's very clear pressure towards Zosima's "truth".¹⁷⁸ For, his main opponents in the novel that stir up the "scandal" surrounding his death, Father Ferapont and Rakitin, are clearly disqualified in their moral standing: for instance, for all his moralizing against worldly materialism, Father Ferapont rejects bread in keeping with his rigid monastic fasting rules, however he does eat "mushrooms and berries" collected from the forest.¹⁷⁹ It is suggested that his seemingly supernatural ability to see the invisible world of demons is largely due to their hallucinogenic properties. Furthermore, the narrator is in fact astounded at the proportions the smelly scandal surrounding Father Zosima's death later assumed.¹⁸⁰ That Father Zosima's word has authoritative weight within the logic of the novel, despite its *prima facie* disqualification by his unseemly death, is best seen in the case of Mikhail, "the mysterious visitor". Mikhail was quite monologically counseled by Zosima to confess a murder, even though all the possible benefactors of such a confession were long dead. Mikhail died happy, feeling as if he were already "in paradise".¹⁸¹ However, his reputation and his family's life were effectively ruined, making us pause over the worth of such a "paradise". Staretz Zosima obviously saw absolute value in the confession of the truth, regardless of the consequences. Furthermore, relativism is also not the best interpretation of Wittgenstein's view on ethics, despite their vagueness. For, Wittgenstein's own "Lecture on Ethics" in 1929, which again links ethics to aesthetics ("ethics includes aesthetics"¹⁸²), also emphasizes absolute over relative value.

In order to examine the possibilities of an aesthetic representation of absolute value, it is instructive to turn to another novel of Dostoevsky's. *Crime and Punishment* was supposedly Wittgenstein's favorite book upon his return to Cambridge, and around the time of the "Lecture on Ethics", according to Wittgenstein's Russian teacher.¹⁸³ This novel shows on the one hand the factual contingency of Raskolnikov's murder of a pawn shop lady and her sister, as well as the enormous sway it can have over a murderer's conscience—going so far as to turn

178 He is introduced as "He has the truth; he knows the truth; so it is not dead upon the earth", *BK*, p. 30.

179 *BK*, p. 168.

180 *BK*, p. 331.

181 *BK*, p. 312.

182 Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics", p. 43.

183 Fania Pascal, "Wittgenstein: A Personal Memoir", p. 514.

himself in even though there would not have been factual consequences to his act, since he seemed to be able to get away with it. It shows both the necessity felt in moral actions, shared with the kind of certainty felt in mathematics and irreducible to empirical knowledge, as well as the difference between theoretical inferences akin to arithmetic and the ethical dimension of actions.

The murder and confession plot of *Crime and Punishment* manifests family resemblances to the episode of the “Mysterious Visitor” described later in *The Brothers Karamazov*. However, the episode of the “Mysterious Visitor” appears jarring, because the murder Mikhail committed was fourteen years before the narrated tale, and most readers are inclined to let him go on with his life. By contrast, *Crime and Punishment* shows the horrifically graphic act of murder, and leaves the reader less inclined to forgive Raskolnikov all too soon. That is why the latter more clearly shows the kind of necessity felt in absolute value, whereas Zosima’s firm council to Mikhail that he should confess may appear cruel and senseless, because so much time has passed. However, purely plot-wise, Raskolnikov and Mikhail are in very similar situations.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, Mikhail, Zosima’s “mysterious visitor”, agrees to the latter’s council to confess his murder. Despite their outwardly different circumstances and motives for murder, Raskolnikov and Mikhail both could have gotten away with their crime, yet are both gently but firmly coaxed into confessing by readings from the Gospels, the one by the saintly prostitute Sonia, the other by the future monk Zosima. Zosima reads the epigraph of the novel to Mikhail: “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”¹⁸⁴ Raskolnikov asks Sonia to read him the story of Lazarus’s resurrection from the dead. However, in contrast to the “fruitfulness” of Zosima’s own death discussed above, it is unclear what fruit Mikhail’s confession and consequent illness and death bear, except his own, possibly deluded bliss. Both Mikhail (in *The Brothers Karamazov*) and Raskolnikov (in *Crime and Punishment*) experience peace and an ecstatic joy after their confession: Mikhail dies soon after feeling “as in Heaven”, Raskolnikov first suffers months of doubt and anger at his “weakness” for having turned himself in, later, with Sonia’s love, experiences an internal change and ecstatically speaks of a “resurrection”.¹⁸⁵ The absolute value attached to confessing the murder in both cases seems to outweigh any calculations about possible advantageous or disadvantageous factual outcomes of their respective confession.

184 A reference to John 12:24.

185 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 549.

Both committed murder out of a theoretical inference. Raskolnikov argued that ethics was for lesser men, while the truly great ones, like Napoleon, got away with thousand-fold murder to achieve their goals. His murder of the pawn lady and her sister who happened to appear on the scene is haphazard, in discrepancy with his magnanimous theory. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Mikhail murdered the woman whom he was in love with, because he was certain that he could not bear the thought of her marrying another man. He proceeds in “infernal arithmetic”,¹⁸⁶ and, like Raskolnikov, robs her and arranges the crime scene to make it look like a clumsy robbery.

However, neither of their equations works out. Raskolnikov feels the force of his guilt almost immediately after the murder. The next morning he wakes up and immediately works himself to a frenzy and wonders if his “punishment was already beginning”.¹⁸⁷ He roams the streets of St. Petersburg as if in a trance, experiences hallucinations, and feels unworthy of others’ love. In both cases, another man is arrested in their stead: the serf Petr instead of Mikhail, and a religious fanatic who turns himself in to take on suffering instead of Raskolnikov. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, the serf Petr dies in prison, and as Mikhail tells Zosima, in a formulation almost identical to Raskolnikov’s: “And after that the punishment begun.”¹⁸⁸ Mikhail tries telling himself that Petr died because of the cold from roaming about drunk, and tries assuaging his conscience by philanthropic deeds, but he increasingly feels the weight of his guilt, presumably for both deaths. This punishment, the “secret agony” lasts for fourteen years, while he is outwardly living a good and respectable life. Mikhail is introduced as being in “a prominent position, [...] universally respected, wealthy and well-known for his philanthropy”.¹⁸⁹ He married a “fine and intelligent wife”, who bore him three children, yet he feels unworthy to caress them, or even to look into their faces.¹⁹⁰ He later notes, “For fourteen years I have been in hell.”¹⁹¹

Their stories embody the remark in the *Tractatus*, 6.422, that factual rewards and punishments are not the criteria of validity of ethical laws, but that rather ethical rewards and ethical punishments lie in the action itself. That Mikhail was not outwardly punished did not invalidate the law forbidding murder and did not take away his felt guilt; the punishment was “in the action itself” (6.422), in the guilt he felt. The isolation, “secret agony” and inability to love

186 BK, p. 305.

187 Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 91.

188 BK, p. 306.

189 BK, p. 301.

190 BK, p. 307.

191 BK, p. 308.

and receive love were the real punishment for murder, despite his outwardly brilliant life. He confesses and adds, “I cast myself out from among people.”¹⁹² His actual punishment, the public shame and declaration of insanity, are in contrast compared to “paradise”. When Zosima visits him at his death bed, Mikhail claims,

I feel joy and peace for the first time after so many years. There was heaven in my heart from the moment I had done what I had to do. Now I dare to love my children and to kiss them. [...] And now I feel God near, my heart rejoices as in Heaven ... I have done my duty.

Zosima too, finds his face “tender and joyful”.¹⁹³

Similarly, Raskolnikov, had he been a more ruthless character, could have waited out the stir caused by the murder and could have quietly used whatever he had stolen from the pawn-broker to gradually better his condition. Yet he finds the guilt psychologically insupportable. After his confession, his actual punishment, like Mikhail’s, is also depicted in ecstatically rewarding terms. The “Epilogue” of *Crime and Punishment* shows Raskolnikov, who, after he has accepted his condition, is happier than the readers have until then known him. He finally abandons his self-imposed isolation and grasps Sonia’s hand “with rapture”. Sonia, who has followed him to Siberia after his deportation to a prison camp finally experiences requited love from him. They are described as “both pale and ill, but in those white and worn faces already beamed the dawn of a restored future, and full resurrection to a new life.” Even his relation to the other convicts changed; he had despised them thus far, and they had even conspired to kill him. However apparently even in the prison camp a new kindness now seemed possible. He thinks to himself, “Perhaps now all will change! [...] Life—full, real, earnest life, was coming.” His transformation recalls what Mikhail described as the Kingdom of Heaven becoming concrete, once people forgave and loved each other.¹⁹⁴

Both Mikhail and Raskolnikov could have gotten away with murder, yet their feelings of guilt are portrayed as a greater punishment than prison, their confession and public shame and punishment a greater reward than an outwardly good life. Furthermore, the reasons for the necessity of their confessions had nothing to do with factual considerations. Nobody gained anything from them, all the possible benefactors were either dead, as in Mikhail’s case, or unwilling, as

¹⁹² *BK*, p. 310.

¹⁹³ *BK*, p. 311.

¹⁹⁴ Dostoevsky, *BK*, pp. 549–50.

the fanatical man who turned himself in instead of Raskolnikov, with the object to take on suffering, any suffering. In fact, people close to them had the most to lose because of their confession: Mikhail's family and Sonia, who gently but firmly insisted Raskolnikov confess even though he was one of her only friends (apart from the woman who came to be the collateral damage of his murder) and protector in St. Petersburg.

Even on his way to confess, he thought, "But is it right, is it all so right?" he thought again, going down the stairs. 'Can it be that it's impossible to stop now and revise it all ... and not go?'"¹⁹⁵ Within the logic of the novel, the feeling of necessity, of certainty of the rightness of confession is not explicable by facts and predictable consequences. Rather, it is implied that this necessity cannot be analyzable any further, neither into an exact explanation, nor any kind of explanation expressible in factual language. Both Mikhail's and Raskolnikov's attempts at theoretical explanations and cold calculations fail in the inescapable weight of their felt guilt. Accordingly, Sonia never even attempts to give an eloquent explanation for the necessity of Raskolnikov's confession or a defense of his deed. She simply follows him out of love and shares his banishment, certain of his guilt. The necessity to confess is described vaguely, obliquely—but it is convincingly shown within the aesthetics of the novel, as stemming somehow from a duty to "people", to "the whole world".¹⁹⁶

The weight of absolute value is never explicitly analyzed or put into words in Dostoevsky's works. Rather it shows in the character's everyday dialogs, and their decisions. This is perhaps why Wittgenstein admired Dostoevsky's moralism more than that of a philosopher like Kierkegaard. For he observes that Dostoevsky is capable of "pushing" one into an ethical perspective, whereas Kierkegaard "incises".¹⁹⁷ It is arguably precisely the paradoxical structure of Dostoevsky's novels, the multi-aspectivity of his characters, which matches Wittgenstein's own insistence on the 'outsidedness' and "indefinability" of ethics.

¹⁹⁵ Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, pp. 525 and 523.

¹⁹⁶ Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*, p. 525.

¹⁹⁷ He noted in one of his private diaries, "Der Reine hat eine Härte, die schwer zu ertragen ist. Darum nimmt man die Ermahnungen eines Dostojewski leichter an, als eines Kierkegaard. Der eine drückt noch, während der andere schon *schneidet*." (original emphasis) Coded remarks, quoted in Hans Biesenbach's *Zitate und Anspielungen in Wittgensteins Werken*, p. 87.

Wittgenstein on Post-Cartesian Subjectivity: Presenting Interiority and Reading Bodies

Like ethics, Wittgenstein's characterization of the subject in both his early and late work is largely negative, in the sense that he is primarily concerned to show what the subject or subjectivity is *not*. The point of 5.541, 5.542 and 5.5421 in the *Tractatus* is that it is a mistake to treat the subject like any other object that can be named in an ordinary proposition. In 5.5421, Wittgenstein attributes this assumption to modern psychology of his time: “[...] there is no such thing as the soul—the subject, etc.—as it is conceived in contemporary superficial psychology.”¹⁹⁸ He persists in his criticism of modern psychology more than two decades later, in *Philosophical Investigations*:

The confusion and barrenness of psychology is not to be explained by calling it a “young science” [...] For in psychology there are experimental methods and *conceptual confusion*. [...] The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of solving the problems which trouble us; though problem and method pass one another by.¹⁹⁹

This diagnosis on the state of psychology of his day at the end of the book arguably follows from Wittgenstein's analysis of the limits of representing interiority, that is, mental states such as intention or pain. This concern is known as Wittgenstein's private language argument. As Chantal Bax argues, later Wittgenstein's considerations on the ‘legibility’ of bodies can be framed in terms of his account of aspect seeing: to see someone's posture as hesitant, for instance, is to notice it under the aspect of hesitancy.²⁰⁰ On this view, ‘interiority’ is not hypostasized and considered ‘inside’ the body, but the material reality of someone's body can be ‘read’ as hesitant, or for instance, as reserved. Remarks such as §537 in *Philosophical Investigations* support this thesis. He writes there, “It is possible to say ‘I read timidity in this face’ but at all events the timidity does not seem to be merely associated, outwardly connected, with the face; but fear is there, alive,

198 TLP 5.5421, “[...] die Seele—das Subject etc.—wie sie in der heutigen oberflächlichen Psychologie aufgefasst wird, [ist] ein Unding.”

199 PI, II, xiv, p. 232; “Die Verwirrung und Öde der Psychologie ist nicht damit zu erklären, daß sie eine ‘junge Wissenschaft’ sei [...] Es bestehen nämlich, in der Psychologie, experimentelle Methoden und *Begriffsverwirrung*. [...] Das Bestehen der experimentellen Methode läßt uns glauben, wir hätten die Mittel, die Probleme, die uns beunruhigen, loszuwerden; obgleich Problem und Methode windschief einander vorbeilaufen.” PU, II, xiv, p. 580.

200 Chantal Bax, *Subjectivity after Wittgenstein: The Post-Cartesian Subject and the ‘Death of Man’*, p. 64.

in the features.”²⁰¹ In Henry W. Pickford's interpretation of similar passages—which he reads as drawing their inspiration from Tolstoy's psychological fiction—he notes, “What Wittgenstein is denying here is a version of the Cartesian divide, here between *intransitive* expressive qualities on the one hand, and a *transitive* expression of a psychological state on the other [...]”²⁰² However, in order to fully explicate this reading of Wittgenstein, it is necessary to first turn to what he denies: the hypostasized treatment of the subject as an introspectively available ‘thing’.

In the *Tractatus*, the propositions starting with 5.6ff elaborate the negative view of the subject: rather than thinking of it as an object of inquiry, among other objects of empirical sciences, Wittgenstein considers it in its *liminal* function. The subject is not to be found in the world: as 5.631 asserts, a book called *The World as I found It* would, among other things, would contain a report on the author's body parts and functions, but not on the author's “I”. Of “it” no mention would be made—even though it would of course permeate the whole book, since the author is that “I” that reports on the world he has found:

The thinking, presenting subject; there is no such thing. If I wrote a book “The world as I found it”, I should also have therein to report on my body and say which members obey my will and which do not, etc. This then would be a method of isolating the subject or rather of showing that in an important sense there is no subject: that is to say, of it alone in this book mention could not be made.²⁰³

The next sentence, 5.632 states, “The subject does not belong to the world but it is a limit of the world.” (“Das Subjekt gehört nicht zur Welt, sondern es ist eine Grenze der Welt.”) And in 5.633 Wittgenstein elaborates on this by comparing the knowledge of the subject with the impossibility of the eye seeing itself. The world, defined as the totality of all facts in 1., 1.1, and 1.11, cannot accommodate for a subject who is herself not a verifiable state-of-affairs, as facts are defined in

201 *PU*, §537, “Man kann sagen ‘Ich lese die Furchtsamkeit in diesem Gesicht’, aber jedenfalls scheint mit dem Gesicht Furchtsamkeit nicht bloß assoziiert, äußerlich verbunden; sondern die Furcht lebt in den Gesichtszügen.”

202 Henry W. Pickford, *Thinking with Tolstoy and Wittgenstein: Expression, Emotion and Art*, p. 63.

203 *TLP*, 5.631, “Das denkende, vorstellende Subjekt gibt es nicht. Wenn ich ein Buch schriebe ‘Die Welt, wie ich sie vorfand’, so wäre darin auch über meinen Leib zu berichten und zu sagen, welche Glieder meinem Willen unterstehen und welche nicht etc., dies ist nämlich eine Methode, das Subjekt zu isolieren, oder vielmehr zu zeigen, dass es in einem wichtigen Sinne kein Subjekt gibt: Von ihm allein nämlich könnte in diesem Buche *nicht* die Rede sein.”

2. We cannot talk about the subject, because it is in virtue of being a subject that we have access to the world we can talk about in the first place. The subject is “outside the world”, just like value, defined in 6.41 as outside all the contingent “happening and being-so” (*Geschehen und So-Sein*) that make up the world, and is not expressible in informative language. According to *Tractarian* logic, it therefore keeps company with other pseudo-empirical concepts we use when we mean to express necessity: logic, ethics, and aesthetics. The pseudo-propositions of classical logic are not informative about facts in the world because they are not true or false, but always and self-evidently true.

In 5.633 and 5.6331, Wittgenstein compares the impossibility of stating facts about the subject with the impossibility of seeing the eye through which one sees. From the point of view of the subject—and that is of course the only point of view any of us is granted—my only experience of being a subject is, apart from acknowledging my body’s obedience, the experience that all my experience is *my* experience. In 5.634 this is contrasted with the experience of accidental things in the world, of states of affairs that are thus-and-so, but could be otherwise. The notion of the subject implies a certain necessity that is not justified by any number of accidental facts. As discussed above, the necessity of logic lies in the self-evident truths of tautology, that of ethics in the non-empirical absolute imperative. The necessity of the subject lies in the circumstance that the very possibility of facts and propositions is only comprehensible if there are subjects to apprehend these very same facts and propositions. Hence a universe without sentient beings would, by definition, not be called a “world”. The notion of a world as a totality of facts and the notion of a subject, who is herself not one of the facts, are logically interdependent.

Wittgenstein mentions solipsism, the thesis that the subject is the only reliably existing reality. However, Wittgenstein’s treatment of solipsism (for instance in 5.641) is not only affirmative, but also nicely shows the absurd consequences of treating the impossibility of a master theoretical perspective as itself an empirically verifiable theory. If we tried to state the “truth” of solipsism, as above, if we let the impossibility of a master theoretical perspective *itself* harden into a theory that awaits to be proven or disproven, we would assume a perspective on the self, the theorizing subject, from the outside. Such a view would imply all the classical discomforts associated with solipsism: the impossibility of objective predication and the non-existence of the shared world. If the world is “my world” (5.641), there is no method of conclusively proving that it is also your world, or his world: that there is anything “other” than myself. Consigning matters of the subject to the limits of the world and language is therefore

not an expression of resignation, rather a satisfaction of idle and futile philosophical questions.²⁰⁴

The dismissal of solipsism is manifest in the contrast between the explicit purpose of the *Tractatus* voiced in the preface and the discussion of solipsism in 5.62, which ends with the remark, “That the world is my world, shows itself in the fact that the limits of the language (the language which only I understand) mean the limits of my world.”²⁰⁵ By contrast, Wittgenstein introduces the *Tractatus* in the preface as follows, “The book deals with the problems of philosophy and shows, as I believe, that the method of formulating these problems rests on the misunderstanding of the logic of our language.”²⁰⁶ Solipsism is an example of a philosophical problem that Wittgenstein “treats”, like a disease.²⁰⁷ Wittgenstein treats solipsism by disentangling the underlying misunderstandings of the logic of language—the misunderstanding that the subject can be hypostatized apart from the world. His casual use of the first-person plural in the preface furthermore dismantles the solipsist’s pretensions to a language that only he understands as a boundary of *his* world. Rather, the preface’s non-problematic appeal to readers who would read his book with understanding and pleasure, and to the “logic of our language” establishes the public nature of language, which cannot be hijacked by philosophical constructs such as solipsism (here the *Tractatus* is, in my opinion, anticipating the private language argument in the *Philosophical Investigations*).

Thus, drawing a limit to language “from within”, as the Foreword to the *Tractatus* demands, the subject’s engagements with the world clarifies the subject’s a priori implication in her world, as opposed to setting up a theory that may lead to the problematic metaphysics implied in the solipsist view. In this light, Wittgenstein can proclaim the collapse of solipsism into realism in 5.64, that is, a return to the world in an unproblematic manner. As Anthony J. Cascardi has formulated this point, “Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus* makes no distinction between inner and outer sense, hence it has no need to reconcile representations ‘in consciousness’ [which can hyperbolically be termed ‘solipsistic’] with the way

204 Cf. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Big Typescript*, §310.

205 *TLP* 5.62, “Dass die Welt *meine* Welt ist, das zeigt sich darin, dass die Grenzen *der* Sprache (der Sprache, die allein ich verstehe) die Grenzen *meiner* Welt bedeuten.”

206 *TLP*, “Preface”, p. 23; “Das Buch behandelt die philosophischen Probleme und zeigt—wie ich glaube—dass die Fragestellung dieser Probleme auf dem Missverständnis der Logik unserer Sprache beruht.” *TLP*, “Vorwort”, p. 9.

207 And here we see the beginnings of his later “therapeutical” approach to philosophy, as expressed in *PI*, §255: “Der Philosoph behandelt eine Frage; wie eine Krankheit.”

things are in the world [i.e. realism].”²⁰⁸ That is why he can claim that ‘inner’ representations, that is, thoughts, if true and in their totality yield “a picture of the world” in 3.01.²⁰⁹ In keeping with the motif of “showing” in the *Tractatus*, the subject indeed becomes manifest in the book, in Wittgenstein’s off-handed remarks such as in 6.54, that the reader “who understands *me*” (“*der, welcher mich versteht*” [added emphasis]) will in the end recognize the nonsensicality of *Tractarian* propositions.

There is another private note from 1930, which is not only an example of the ‘outside’ perspective characteristic of Wittgenstein’s early aesthetics, but in which he also considers the possibility that art “shows” what he otherwise considers inexpressible, namely interiority or subjectivity. In this remark, Wittgenstein juxtaposes language art (texts), theater and photography and considers their potential of—to use Johannessen’s expression—intransitively showing by simulating an otherwise impossible outside perspective. Because it is a rare text in which Wittgenstein discusses aesthetic matters at length, it is worth citing in full:

Engelmann told me that when he rummages round at home in a drawer full of his own manuscripts, they strike him as so splendid that he thinks it would be worth making them available to other people. (He says it’s the same when he is reading through letters from his dead relations.) But when he imagines publishing a selection of them the whole business loses its charm and value and becomes impossible. I said that was like the following case: Nothing could be more remarkable than seeing a man who thinks he is unobserved performing some quite simple everyday activity. Let us imagine a theatre; the curtain goes up and we see a man alone in a room, walking up and down, lighting a cigarette, seating *himself*, etc. so that suddenly we are observing a human being from outside in a way that ordinarily we can never observe ourselves; it would be like watching a chapter of biography with our own eyes,—surely this would be uncanny and wonderful at the same time. We should be observing something more wonderful than anything a playwright could arrange to be acted or spoken on the stage: life itself.—But then we do see this every day without its making the slightest impression on us! True enough, but we do not see it from *that* point of view.—Well, when E. looks at what he has written and finds it marvelous (even though he would not care to publish any of the pieces individually), he is seeing his life as a work of art created by God and, as such, it is certainly worth

208 Anthony J. Cascardi, “Wittgenstein and Modernism in Literature: Between the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*”, p. 28. Cascardi fruitfully compares Wittgenstein’s notion of the subject with modernist writers’ (like Virginia Woolf’s) method of writing a “stream of consciousness”, as opposed to attempts to depict the world ‘objectively’, independently from any one point of view and consciousness. I would add that, though Wittgenstein like Woolf does dissolve the subject/object dichotomy, he nonetheless maintains the apodictic claim of absolute value, whereas Woolf, like many modernists, rejects any general notions of value.

209 *TLP*, 3.01, “Die Gesamtheit der wahren Gedanken sind ein Bild der Welt.”

contemplating, as is every life and everything whatever. But only an artist can so represent an individual thing as to make it appear to us like a work of art; it is *right* that those manuscripts should lose their value when looked singly and especially when regarded *disinterestedly*, i. e. by someone who doesn't feel enthusiastic about them in advance. A work of art forces us—as one might say—to see it in the right perspective but, in the absence of art, the object is just a fragment of nature like any other; *we* may exalt it through our enthusiasm but that does not give anyone else the right to confront us with it. (I keep thinking of one of those insipid snapshots of a piece of scenery which is of interest for the man who took it because he was there himself and experienced something; but someone else quite justifiably look at it coldly, in so far as it is ever justifiable to look at something coldly.)

But it seems to me too that there is a way of capturing the world *sub specie aeterni* other than through the work of the artist. Thought has such a way—so I believe—it is as though it flies above the world and leaves it as it is—observing it from above, in flight.²¹⁰

210 CV, pp. 4e-5e [translation slightly modified to be closer to the German original]; “Engelmann sagte mir, wenn er zu Hause in seiner Lade voll von seinen Manuskripten krame, so kämen sie ihm so wunderschön vor, dass er denke, sie wären es wert, den anderen Menschen gegeben zu werden. (Das sei auch der Fall, wenn er Briefe seiner verstorbenen Verwandten durchsehe.) Wenn er sich aber eine Auswahl davon herausgegeben denkt, so verliere die Sache jeden Reiz und Wert und werde unmöglich. Ich sagte, wir hätten hier einen Fall ähnlich folgendem: Es könnte nichts merkwürdiger sein, als einen Menschen bei irgend einer ganz einfachen alltäglichen Tätigkeit, wenn er sich unbeobachtet glaubt, zu sehen. Denken wir uns ein Theater, der Vorhang ginge auf und wir sähen einen Menschen allein in seinem Zimmer auf und ab gehen, sich eine Zigarette anzünden, *sich* niedersetzen, u. s. f., so, daß wir plötzlich von außen einen Menschen sähen, wie man sich sonst nie sehen kann; wenn wir quasi ein Kapitel einer Biographie mit eigenen Augen sähen,—das müsste unheimlich und wunderbar zugleich sein. Wunderbarer als irgend etwas, was ein Dichter auf der Bühne spielen oder sprechen lassen könnte. Wir würden das Leben selbst sehen.—Aber das sehen wir ja alle Tage, und es macht uns nicht den mindesten Eindruck! Ja, aber wir sehen es nicht in *der* Perspektive.—So, wenn E. seine Schriften ansieht und sie wunderbar findet (die er doch einzeln nicht veröffentlichen möchte), so sieht er sein Leben als ein Kunstwerk Gottes, und als das ist es allerdings betrachtenswert, jedes Leben und Alles. Doch kann nur der Künstler das Einzelne so darstellen, dass es uns als Kunstwerk erscheint; jene Manuskripte verlieren *mit Recht* ihren Wert, wenn man sie einzeln, und überhaupt, wenn man sie *unvoreingenommen*, das heißt, ohne schon vorher begeistert zu sein, betrachtet. Das Kunstwerk zwingt uns—sozusagen—zu der richtigen Perspektive, ohne die Kunst aber ist der Gegenstand ein Stück Natur, wie jedes andre, und dass *wir* es durch die Begeisterung erheben können, das berechtigt niemand es uns vorzusetzen. (Ich muss immer an eine jener faden Naturaufnahme[n] denken, die der, der sie aufgenommen interessant findet, weil er dort selbst war, etwas erlebt hat; der Dritte aber mit berechtigter Kälte betrachtet, wenn es überhaupt gerechtfertigt ist, ein Ding mit Kälte zu betrachten.) Nun scheint mir aber, gibt es außer der Arbeit des Künstlers noch eine andere, die Welt *sub specie aeterni* einzufangen. Es ist—glaube ich—der Weg des Gedankens, der gleichsam über die Welt hinfliege und sie so lässt, wie sie ist—sie von oben vom Fluge betrachtend.” VB, pp. 4–5.

What Wittgenstein is *not* interested in when discussing the workings of aesthetics in showing interiority, is the interiority of actual people. In fact, he thinks that texts and photographs presented *solely out of personal bias* do not succeed in capturing attention: relatives' letters and vacation photographs usually only interest those acquainted with the people involved (if at all). By contrast, what Wittgenstein is interested in when trying to explicate the way art works is not the presentation of a particular person's thoughts—e.g. from a letter—or experience of nature—from photographs—but the manner in which art works are capable of encapsulating interiority, or mindedness, and rendering it communicable, in a manner that discursive language is not. They do this intransitively, in a sense, for, as Wittgenstein explains regarding theater, what a theater scene presents is not informative in the sense of revealing the whereabouts and activities of an actual person. For as Wittgenstein argues, we do see people pacing to and fro “every day without it making a slightest impression on us”, so the informative content of the perception is not what he is interested in. As he counters, we do not see it from “*that*” perspective. (“Ja, aber wir sehen es nicht in *der* Perspektive.”) Rather, the whole convention of a stage with a curtain introduces the shared *pretense* of a person's activities and whereabouts. Wittgenstein stresses the German reflexive form of “to sit”, “*sich* niedersetzen” (“seating *himself*”) in his imaginary theater scene: what the beholder sees is not just bodily movements, but the mindedness ‘behind’ these movements, namely the intention to sit. The actor's movements are described as absent-minded, so the aspect of mindedness is obviously not another element *in* the scene: the actor does not sit down with a special, theatrical emphasis. The character is presented to the audience, but the actor acts as if the audience were not there, allowing the viewers the unusual perspective on somebody as they are when nobody is watching: for instance in their nervousness as legible from their rapid pacing to and fro in the room and seating himself. Members of the audience are able to actually see what it is to seat *oneself*. As Engelmann has noted in his reminiscences of Wittgenstein,

his enthusiasm [...] is aroused by what is banal (in the highest sense of the word). The significance of that banality, which is closely bound up with the most central problem of the contemporary moral-aesthetic scene—that of the border between genuine and sham emotion—was discovered and discussed by Karl Kraus. (This also is Adolf Loos's problem in architecture.) And it is always and only simplicity which, if successful, hits the very centre of the target.²¹¹

211 Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein, with a Memoir*, p. 86.

Wittgenstein's ideal was that art (be it literature, theater or architecture) should be simple and express the banalities of the everyday, as opposed to being overtly theatrical.

In his paper on contemporary photography, "Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday", Michael Fried discusses this very remark of Wittgenstein's in relation to Denis Diderot's aesthetics.²¹² Even though Diderot's notion of theater as presenting a "*tableau*", in which actors observed the convention of the invisible "fourth wall" separating them from the audience was out of fashion in the 1930s (and had even become "a bourgeois cliché"²¹³), when Wittgenstein wrote this remark, there are still notable parallels. On Fried's reading of Diderot's writings on drama and painting, Diderot focuses on precisely the anti-theatricality of actors and painted figures—their being presented to the viewers as if unaware of a beholder's presence, which is obviously an illusion since painting portraits requires sustained attention by the painter, and, obviously, actors act in front of audiences. Fried places Diderot's art-critical texts in the context of the trend in eighteenth-century French painting, as exhibited in Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's *The Young Draughtsman* or *The House of Cards*, Jean-Baptiste Greuze or Édouard Manet's works, which presented people as absorbed in an activity—sketching or building a house of cards—and themselves unaware of being seen.²¹⁴ On Fried's interpretation, these paintings show a fascination with "mindfulness" (German: *Geistigkeit*) as manifest in the everyday activities, as opposed to only in religious themes.²¹⁵

Fried argues that, for Diderot, this anti-theatrical aspect is crucially interrelated with the effect of absorption in the viewers—the kind of *oubliance de soi* beholders experience while contemplating a painting or watching a theater play. The viewers are absorbed in the artwork (and, one could go as far as saying, experiencing an identification with the figure presented) when they are formally eliminated by the artwork and are allowed the leisure of contemplation without involvement. This formal elimination is achieved precisely by painting a portrait

212 Michael Fried, "Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday", pp. 517–25.

213 Fried, "Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday", p. 522. However, it can be argued that even Brechtian theater is *not a negation* of this effect, for its *Verfremdungseffekt* depends on the jarring experience of actors breaking the Diderotian "fourth wall" and addressing the audiences. This shows just how deeply engrained the shared pretense of a separated world in theater still is.

214 In Fried's book *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting And Beholder In The Age Of Diderot*, he argues for the centrality of the notions of absorption and theatricality (the conscious relation to a beholder) in eighteenth-century French art based on, primarily, Denis Diderot art-critical *salon* texts. Cf. pp. 2–4.

215 Fried, "Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday", p. 498.

of a person apparently unaware of being beheld. As Fried writes, such paintings strive “to establish the ontological fiction that the beholder does not exist”.²¹⁶ Fried suggests that Wittgenstein’s notion “the view *sub specie aeternitatis* from the outside”, as noted in his private journal on 7 October 1916 and his later remark on the ‘separated’ artistic perspective in theater, manifests remarkable proximity to Diderot’s illusionism.²¹⁷ In a more general discussion of the Western theater tradition, and with references to Fried, Stanley Cavell, too, notes the fundamental separation of the stage and audience by remarking that even if members of the audience wanted to encounter one of the characters in a play they were watching, they were ontologically unable to do so, even though, they are of course perfectly capable of disrupting the play by climbing on the stage and approaching one of the actors. He remarks,

We know we cannot approach [the character in the play], and not because it is not done but because nothing would count as doing it. Put another way, they and we do not occupy the same space; there is no path from my location to his. (We could also say: there is no distance between us, as there is none between me and a figure in my dream, and none, or no one, between me and my image in a mirror.)²¹⁸

Lastly, in her discussion of Denis Diderot’s illusionism, Andrea Kern has called the effect of observing the rule of an invisible fourth wall (and creating the illusion for the audiences of seeing someone as he is when nobody is watching) the illusion of being able to observe a *self-sufficient world*, to take up an outside perspective on the entire world of the protagonist whose life we are observing. This formulation manifests even more proximity to Wittgenstein’s early notion of aesthetics as a view on the world “from the outside”.²¹⁹

Even though he wrote nowhere near as much on the topic of aesthetics of theater and art in general as Denis Diderot, Wittgenstein’s remark raises new questions on the relation between artificiality and the illusion of “life itself”. Wittgenstein’s claim that art provides a privileged view on life—from “outside”—seems *prima facie* paradoxical, because of the obvious artifice involved in making art, emphasized for instance by the theater curtains. He is struck by a scene from everyday life, “a person alone in his room walking up and down, lighting a cigarette, seating himself etc.” just like Diderot was fascinated by Chardin’s paintings, often of a lone figure absorbed in some everyday

216 Fried, “Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday”, p. 500.

217 Fried, “Jeff Wall, Wittgenstein, and the Everyday”, p. 521.

218 Cf. Stanley Cavell, “The Avoidance of Love. A Reading of King Lear”, p. 334. (Cavell acknowledges his indebtedness to Fried in footnotes 13 and 26.)

219 Cf. Andrea Kern, “Illusion als Ideal der Kunst”, pp. 171–3.

activity. He furthermore insists that a theater scene does not add anything to the *content* of the perceived experience. Therefore, according to Wittgenstein, the aesthetic perspective functions not by glorifying the everyday but primarily by *framing* the scene as an aesthetic perspective, precisely by means of theater curtains. As Friedlander remarked on this very excerpt, the outside perspective that Wittgenstein evokes in the end of his considerations of theater, “It is a matter not so much of distancing oneself but rather of constructing something that allows the overseeing.”²²⁰ For Wittgenstein, art provides the necessary conditions of symbolic ‘outsiderness’ for being able to contemplate such everyday moments at all. Paradoxically, theater is able to present the everyday only by not being theatrical, only if the actors act as if they were not being observed and thus present this everyday mode of being to aesthetic contemplation. By providing a view from “outside” the staged world, theater provides the otherwise impossible view on subjectivity, as intertwined with everyday life.

In *Philosophical Investigations*, the problem of an adequate representation of interiority is treated by way of the private language argument. Wittgenstein strives to show by many intricate examples that there cannot be a private linguistic reference to purely ‘interior’ states in one’s body, even pain. This does not imply—as popularly understood—that he denies expressions of personal feelings and sensations. Rather, the point of the argument is to show that even the most private epistemological objects, such as feelings and sensations, are dependent for their intelligibility upon the existence of a public language; that is: they are logically interlinked with the possibility of their outward expression. For instance, in §293 he deconstructs the notion that private sensations and mental states are interior objects comparable to a beetle in a box:

Now someone tells me that *he* knows what pain is only from his own case!—Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a “beetle”. No one can look into anyone else’s box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.—But suppose the word “beetle” had a use in these people’s language?—If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty.—No, one can ‘divide through’ by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is.²²¹

²²⁰ Eli Friedlander, “Wittgenstein, Benjamin, and Pure Realism”, p. 121.

²²¹ *PU*, §293, “Nun, ein jeder sagt es mir von sich, er wisse nur von sich selbst, was Schmerzen seien!—Angenommen, es hätte jeder eine Schachtel, darin wäre etwas, was wir ‘Käfer’ nennen. Niemand kann je in die Schachtel des Anderen schauen; und Jeder sagt, er wisse nur vom Anblick *seines* Käfers, was ein Käfer ist.—Da könnte es ja sein, dass Jeder ein anderes Ding in seiner

Statements like this, which form the core of the private language argument, are sometimes taken to indicate a crude behaviorism on Wittgenstein's part: the reductive notion that human mindedness is solely to be understood from external behavior and in accordance with public practices.²²² However, §293 concludes in the following manner: "if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation' the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant."²²³ This means that Wittgenstein does not mean to abolish inner life *per se*. His formulation is explicitly conditional: *if* we hypostasized 'interior' sensations and took them to be 'things' we refer to, then these postulated private interior objects would be irrelevant for our language. Rather, pain-language is inextricably linked to pain-expression, such as children's crying (as Wittgenstein notes in §244) and everyday pain practices, such as inquiring about someone's well-being, empathizing with them, consoling and medically treating them etc.²²⁴ By contrast to other post-Cartesian thinkers like Michel Foucault, for instance, Wittgenstein does not deny the existence of the subject. Rather, by use of counter-imagery, he points out all the ways in which the subjective perspective is falsely hypostasized and mystified. He insists on a wider diversity of language we use to refer to ourselves and the world.

It is easy to fall into the Cartesian trap of viewing the subject as another *kind* of thing, if one holds a simplified view of language according to which all linguistic reference works like attaching the right label on the right sort of thing. As he writes in §304, "The paradox disappears only if we make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way".²²⁵ Apart from comparing concepts to games, Wittgenstein emphasizes their practical character

Schachtel hätte. Ja, man könnte sich vorstellen, dass sich ein solches Ding fortwährend veränderte.—Aber wenn nun das Wort 'Käfer' dieser Leute doch einen Gebrauch hätte?—So wäre es nicht der der Bezeichnung eines Dings. Das Ding in der Schachtel gehört überhaupt nicht zum Sprachspiel; auch nicht einmal als ein *Etwas*: denn die Schachtel könnte auch leer sein.—Nein, durch dieses Ding in der Schachtel kann 'gekürzt werden'; es hebt sich weg, was immer es ist."

222 Cf. Iris Murdoch's criticism of Wittgenstein: "After all, there are experiences with private faces and no public names; and even readily nameable experiences need not be just a matter of touching off the spring of a public convention, a reflex that jerks one into a groove of language." Cf. her "Nostalgia for the Particular", p. 52.

223 *PU*, §293, "Wenn man die Grammatik des Ausdrucks der Empfindung nach dem Muster von 'Gegenstand und Bezeichnung' konstruiert, dann fällt der Gegenstand als irrelevant aus der Betrachtung heraus."

224 I make this point in: Jankovic, "Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky on Aesthetics and the 'Inner Life'", p. 112.

225 *PU*, §304, "Das Paradox verschwindet nur dann, wenn wir radikal mit der Idee brechen, die Sprache funktioniere nur auf *eine* Weise".

by comparing them with tools. In §11, he notes that just as a hammer, a saw and glue have different functions so do concepts like nouns, disjunctive or conjunctive prepositions are different linguistic operations rather than labels for different mysterious pre-existing objects (it is possible to imagine endless futile philosophical debates on the ontological status of the preposition “or”). Seen this way, language does not just work in one way, but it is a complex network of interrelated manners of engaging with the world. Language game rules are not to be imagined as a rigid, atemporally pre-existing grid of the world. Rather, they are inherently corrigible and expandable, as Wittgenstein remarks in §83, just like games: “And is there not also the case where we play and—make up the rules as we go along? And there is even one where we alter them—as we go along.”²²⁶ This accounts for creative uses of language paradigmatic in literature. Towards the middle of the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein points out the inherently social or public feature of game rules: knowing a concept, that is knowing a rule that governs moves in a game depends on a shared knowledge of these rules and on other ‘players’ that acknowledge one’s move as a valid move in a given context. He rejects the notion that to follow a rule or to employ a concept is in each case an individual’s interpretation of what the rule entails. Rather, in §202, he calls rule following, that is, language use as a whole a public “practice” (*Praxis*).

In *Subjectivity After Wittgenstein: The Post-Cartesian Subject and the ‘Death of Man’*, Chantal Bax identifies two axes on which Wittgenstein dissolves the Cartesian mind-body dichotomy—namely the assumption of an “inner/outer” and “individual/social” binaries. As an alternative, she argues that he emphasizes the subject’s embodiedness and social embeddedness.²²⁷ Wittgenstein consistently rallied against the Cartesian notion that mindedness is somehow ‘inside’ the body (like the *res cogitans* as opposed to the *res extensa*). In his notes on psychology, posthumously published as *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, he argues against the notion that memory is merely seeing a picture of the past before one’s eyes, or even the seemingly common-sense view that thinking is an ‘inner’ process. He writes that this cannot be so because even if memory “showed scenes with hallucinatory clarity, still it takes remembering to tell us that this is past.”²²⁸ As Bax shows, for Wittgenstein, the so-called ‘interior’ states are understood as always already embodied. She argues, “[W]hen we say of a

226 *PU*, §83, “Und gibt es nicht auch den Fall, wo wir spielen und ‘make up the rules as we go along’? Ja auch den, in welchem wir sie abändern—as we go along.”

227 Bax, *Subjectivity after Wittgenstein*, pp. 33–5.

228 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 2, p. 592.

person that she is thinking, we mean to say something about the way in which her (external) activities are performed. By means of words like ‘thought’ and ‘thinking’, we distinguish her activities from actions of a purely mechanical kind.”²²⁹ In other words, we see their behavior under the aspect of thinking. And indeed, Wittgenstein himself makes numerous remarks that subvert the seemingly ‘natural’ assumption that thoughts and mental states are ‘inside’ a person, accessible only by *introspection*, and can at best be deducted or guessed at by others. He writes for instance, “If I see someone writhing in pain with evident cause I do not think: all the same, his feelings are hidden from me.”²³⁰ By contrast, he proclaimed that “The human body is the best picture of the human soul” (“Der menschliche Körper ist das beste Bild der menschlichen Seele”²³¹) in the sense that when we say “I believe he is suffering”, we are not making hypotheses about an object hidden inside the suffering person’s body, “pain”, rather, we are quite capable of non-inferentially perceiving it.²³² Wittgenstein therefore relativizes a rigid “inner/outer” dichotomy by pointing out all the ways in which the supposedly ‘interior’ is directly legible from the human body.

The inherently public nature of language brings us to the second axis of Wittgenstein’s anti-Cartesianism, namely his rejection of the “individual/social” binary. The point of the private language argument is to show that private reference, even to sensations, which because of the obvious asymmetry between first and third person attributions of sensations would appear to be private objects *par excellence*, is not possible. In a long string of examples between §§243 and 315, Wittgenstein shows that nothing can count as a criterion for the correct attribution of a private concept to a private object, because our criterion of rightness is not the referent itself, independently from language, but the correct use of language, its public use by native speakers. Bax writes that, according to Wittgenstein, “the outer can be said to be the locus of the inner and can more specifically be said to be the locus of the inner against the background of the community of which someone is part.”²³³ It is worth adding that this “community” is not a set of particular people who have at some point decided upon a set of language game rules, rather it is a historically and culturally contextualized, but otherwise indefinite group of speakers. Wittgenstein stresses this point by insisting that even such phenomena as color perception are structured according to

229 Bax, *Subjectivity after Wittgenstein*, p. 37.

230 *PI*, II, p. 225; “Wen ich, mit offenbarer Ursache, sich in Schmerzen winden sehe, von dem denke ich nicht: seine Gefühle seien mir doch verborgen.” *PU*, II, p. 568.

231 *PI*, II, iv, p. 178; *PU*, II, iv, p. 496.

232 *PI*, II, iv, p. 178.

233 Bax, *Subjectivity after Wittgenstein*, p. 9.

our language use of color, in §381, “How do I know that this colour is red?—It would be an answer to say: ‘I have learnt English’.”²³⁴ The correctness of the attribution of the color red is not measured against a hypostasized referent, like a presumable Platonic idea of ‘Redness’, rather its criterion of correctness is the right use according to the language one speaks.

This does not mean that Wittgenstein entirely dismisses folk psychological notions of the wish to know what is ‘in’ somebody’s head, expressing perhaps puzzlement at their reasoning or their choices (this is best shown in §427). Wittgenstein does not criticize this everyday interiority metaphor, he only reminds us that it is, after all, only a picture. Bax helpfully discusses Wittgenstein’s example in terms of elucidating an asymmetry between first and third person attributions of mental states, as opposed to constructing a metaphysics of the interior. Whereas first personal attributions of pain are *expressions*, third personal attributions of pain are observations (or questions).²³⁵ For Wittgenstein’s examples of pain point toward this asymmetry in language, as in for instance §246,

In what sense are my sensations *private*?—Well, only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it.—In one way this is wrong, and in another nonsense. If we are using the word “to know” as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it?), then other people very often know when I am in pain.—²³⁶

First personally, one does not observe that one is in pain, one feels it. Third personally, it is wrong to categorically say that one does not know that someone is in pain, as Wittgenstein reminds the reader, this is quite often evident from their behavior. We see *them* under the aspect of pain. However, third personal attributions of sensations work observationally. The common-sense notion in which we speak of the privacy of one’s own mind is not the target of Wittgenstein’s insistent attacks (nor the ontological status of one’s own thoughts). Rather, it is the particular philosophical construct based on the “inner/outer” and “individual/social” *picture* that assumes thoughts and sensations to be objects, and the body like a container, that is under attack here. Similarly, Wittgenstein’s claims make out the asymmetry between first personal and third personal attributions

234 *PU*, §381, “Wie erkenne ich, daß diese Farbe Rot ist?—Eine Antwort wäre: ‘Ich habe Deutsch gelernt.’”

235 Bax, *Subjectivity after Wittgenstein*, pp. 40–7.

236 *PU*, §246, “Inwiefern sind nun meine Empfindungen *privat*?—Nun, nur ich kann wissen, ob ich wirklich Schmerzen habe; der Andere kann es nur vermuten.—Das ist in einer Weise falsch, in einer anderen unsinnig. Wenn wir das Wort ‘wissen’ gebrauchen, wie es normalerweise gebraucht wird (und wie sollen wir es denn gebrauchen!), dann wissen es Andre sehr häufig, wenn ich Schmerzen habe.)”

of sensations to be *language games*, for instance in §248, “The proposition ‘Sensations are private’ is comparable to: ‘One plays Patience by oneself’.” (“Der Satz ‘Empfindungen sind privat’ ist vergleichbar dem: ‘Patience spielt man allein.’”) And: “‘While you can have complete certainty about someone else’s state of mind, still it is always merely subjective, not objective, certainty.’—These two words betoken a difference between language-games.”²³⁷ This is not a frivolous dismissal of the reality of mental states, rather it is a claim that this asymmetry is best analyzed in *language*, in the conceptual framework we express the perceived aspect in.

Regarding the perception of the ‘inner’ life of other people, Wittgenstein suggests on the one hand that it is non-inferentially available, as already explained, but also that it is a capacity that can be exercised and improved on. For instance, towards the closing of the *Philosophical Investigations*, he asks, “Is there such a thing as ‘expert judgment’ about the genuineness of expressions of feeling?—Even here, there are those whose judgment is ‘better’ and those whose judgment is ‘worse’.”²³⁸ He continues, contrary to the notion of psychology as an exact science,

Experience, that is varied observation, can inform us [...]; only in scattered cases can one arrive at a correct and fruitful judgment, establish a fruitful connexion. And the most general remarks yield at best what looks like the fragments of a system.²³⁹

What is needed is “fruitful judgment”, establishing a “fruitful connection”, the kind of “synopsizing” that elucidates. The criteria of right judgment of others cannot be systematized. They are not formulated by means of empirical evidence of the kind needed in natural science, but closer to the interpretation of art and literature—as he goes on the kind of evidence needed is “imponderable” (*unwägbar*): “Imponderable evidence includes subtleties of glance, of gesture, of tone.” (“Zur unwägbaren Evidenz gehören die Feinheiten des Blicks, der Gebärde

237 *PI*, II, xi, p. 225; “‘Du kannst zwar über den Seelenzustand des Andern völlige Sicherheit haben, aber sie ist immer nur eine subjektive, keine objektive.’—Diese beiden Wörter deuten auf einen Unterschied zwischen Sprachspielen.” *PU*, II, xi, p. 571.

238 *PI*, II, xi, p. 227; “Gibt es über die Echtheit des Gefühlsausdrucks ein ‘fachmännisches’ Urteil?—Es gibt auch da Menschen mit ‘besserem’ und Menschen mit ‘schlechteren’ Urteil.” *PU*, II, xi, p. 574.

239 *PI*, II, xi, p. 228; “Erfahrung, also mannigfaltige Beobachtung, kann sie lehren [...] man kann nur [...] in verstreuten Fällen ein richtiges, fruchtbares Urteil fällen, eine fruchtbare Verbindung feststellen. Und die allgemeinen Bemerkungen ergeben höchstens, was wie Trümmer eines Systems aussieht.” *PU*, II, xi, p. 575.

des Tons.”)²⁴⁰ In fact, there are hints that the kind of capacity needed is an aesthetic one. In continuing the discussion on “expert judgment of the genuineness of expressions of feeling”, he considers “a genuine look of love”. Then he continues, “If I were a very talented painter I might conceivably represent the genuine and the simulated glance in pictures.” and “Ask yourself: How does a man learn to get a ‘nose’ [German: *einen Blick*] for something?”²⁴¹ For instance, it is possible to regard Chardin’s portraits of figures absorbed in an everyday activity and to describe the thoughts going on ‘in’ these painted figures’ heads, based on our shared cultural experience (that of drafting a sketch, blowing soap bubbles or constructing a tower of cards, as typically depicted in Chardin’s portraits). One might look at, for instance, his oil painting *Young Student Drawing* (1733–38), and ‘read’ rapt concentration in his arched back, and thoughts like “The back leg needs more shading, to express depth”, from one’s own experience of having drawn. This can be done with a minimum of psychologizing, since one needs not to infer and postulate the student’s inner states, but his exterior activity reveals the sort of thoughts one typically has in order to complete them.

Dostoevsky on “looking into hearts” and Wittgenstein’s Private Language Argument

Like the *Tractarian* subject who overcomes solipsism, the “ethical point” of *The Brothers Karamazov* is arguably the overcoming of isolation. As Mikhail Bakhtin asserts: “At the heart of the tragic catastrophe in Dostoevsky’s work there always lies the solipsistic separation of a character’s consciousness from the whole, his incarceration in his own private world.”²⁴² One might think, for instance, of Dostoevsky’s underground man, whose position teeters on total solipsism. But *The Brothers Karamazov*, the book Wittgenstein was reading while writing notes for the later published *Tractatus*, also offers material on the reflection of the (ethical) relation between the individual and the social, the private and the public. According to Staretz Zosima, the modern man “is isolated, and what does he care about the whole? They have succeeded in amassing more and more things, but have less and less joy.”²⁴³ Zosima’s ‘ethics’ is very much based on overcom-

²⁴⁰ *PI*, II, xi, p. 228; *PU*, II, xi, p. 576.

²⁴¹ *PI*, II, xi, p. 228; “Wäre ich ein höchst talentierter Maler, so wäre es denkbar, dass ich in Bildern den echten Blick und den geheuchelten darstellte. Frag dich: Wie lernt der Mensch einen ‘Blick’ für etwas kriegen?” *PU*, II, xi, 576.

²⁴² Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 10.

²⁴³ Dostoevsky, *BK*, p. 314.

ing alienation stemming from a focus on purely quantitative economic growth that became one of the major imperatives of modernity in the nineteenth century, and refocusing on a shared social “whole”.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein was reportedly fascinated with Father Zosima’s capacity to ‘look into hearts’ in that novel, inherited by the latter’s disciple Alesha. He said: “When I was a village schoolmaster in Austria after the war I read *The Brothers Karamazov* over and over again. I read it out loud to the village priest. There really were people like Staretz Zosima, people who could look into others’ hearts [...].”²⁴⁴ A large part of the *Philosophical Investigations*, too, deal with ‘reading’ the actions of others and deconstructing a rigid dichotomy between exterior behavior and ‘interior’ intentions and feelings. For instance, in the private language argument (§§ 243–315), Wittgenstein uses the famous example in which he compares pain to an interior thing like a beetle in a box in § 293. This example was in fact said to be inspired by Dmitrii Karamazov’s mysterious bag around his neck,²⁴⁵ in which he kept half of the money he borrowed from Katerina, and which was later used as evidence against him, as money he supposedly stole from his father after he had allegedly murdered him. In a coded remark, Wittgenstein explicitly turns to literary art to answer the question how to depict ‘interiority’; he suggests that to represent “how it is” to have a certain intention, one needs to turn to authors like Dostoevsky, who show this in minute detail.²⁴⁶

Gestures and conjectures on the intentions ‘behind’ them are an important motif in the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. The most prominent instance of “showing” ethics in the novel is the significance of the kiss in “The Grand Inquisitor”. In his *poema*, Ivan has the Grand Inquisitor explain in a long monologue to his prisoner, Christ, how the latter has become superfluous and must be burned

244 Wittgenstein’s former student Maurice Drury remembers Wittgenstein saying this. Cf. Rhees, *Recollections of Wittgenstein*, p. 79. As Ray Monk has suggested, the latter considered people like Staretz Zosima to have more valuable things to say about the human *psyche* than modern psychology which was modeled after exact sciences. Cf. *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, p. 549.

245 Cf. Duncan Richter’s “Beetle in the box”, *Historical Dictionary of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy*, p. 34.

246 “Wie ist das: die Absicht haben, etwas zu tun? Was kann ich drauf antworten? Eine Art der Antwort wäre: das zu sagen, was/das zu sagen/das sagen, was ein Romanschriftsteller sagt, Dostoevsky etwa, // wäre: einen Romanschriftsteller ... reden zu lassen/zu zitieren/aufzuschlagen // wenn/wo/er die Seelenzustände einer Person/eines Menschen/beschreibt/die/der/eine bestimmte Absicht hat.” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein’s Nachlass*, [180b, 17r; pp. 129, 135f; 228 §284; 230 §486] Quoted in Biesenbach, *Anspielungen und Zitate im Werk Ludwig Wittgenstein*, p. 87. The composite quote captures all the various formulations Wittgenstein used in several drafts of his manuscripts.

on a stake in order not to cause unrests. His Church had worked out a mechanism to keep the faithful satisfied—by giving them bread and an atmosphere of mystery—while taking away their freedom. Christ remains silent and only at the end of the speech does he kiss the Inquisitor on the lips, enacting love and forgiveness, which are the core of his teaching. The Inquisitor lets Christ escape prison, despite his previous resolution to execute him. Alesha, after silently listening to Ivan's reports of outrageous suffering of innocent children—Ivan's intensified version of the classical theodicy problem—and his depiction of the Catholic Church as a mechanism of enslavement, kisses his brother on the lips. Ivan at first laughingly accuses Alesha of "plagiarism" (*BK* 1906: "literarischer Diebstahl"), casting Alesha's action, copied from Ivan's *poema*, in literary-aesthetic terms. But he is at the same time delighted, showing that he has understood and accepted the unspoken 'message' of an unconditional love that overcomes all.

Furthermore, the novel presents an entire dialectics of bows. In the scene at the beginning of the novel, in which the family Karamazov, together with their cousin from Paris, Miusov, reunites in the monastery, seeking Staretz Zosima's moderating advice for their old feuds, the clash of ideologies is expressed by their behavior towards the monastic custom of asking blessing of a Staretz by bowing to him:

The elder Zosima came out accompanied by a novice and Alyosha. The hieromonks rose and greeted him with a very deep bow, touching the ground with their fingers, and having received his blessing, kissed his hand. When he had blessed them, the elder returned the same deep bow to each of them, touching the ground with his fingers, and asked a blessing of each of them for himself. [...] But now, seeing all this bowing and kissing of the hieromonks [Miusov] instantly changed his mind: gravely and with dignity he made a rather deep bow, by worldly standards, and went over to a chair. Fyodor Pavlovich did exactly the same, this time, like an ape, mimicking Miusov perfectly. Ivan Fyodorovich bowed with great dignity and propriety, but he, too, kept his hands at his sides [...] The elder let fall the hand he had raised for the blessing and, bowing to them once more, invited them to sit down.²⁴⁷

While the custom in orthodox monasteries is to ask blessing of a Staretz (or any priest or even icon) by bowing deeply, while tracing one's right hand on the floor, Miusov bows "wordly", while Fyodor mockingly imitates him. Ivan, while maintaining his dignity, chooses the Western style of bowing, with "his hands at his sides". With their body language, they signal clear distance from the orthodox monastic practices.

²⁴⁷ *BK*, p. 39.

Later in the same scene, Staretz Zosima bows to Dmitrii, which causes other characters to speculate on the meaning of this bow. There had been a fight between Dmitrii Karamazov and his father, and the former furiously cries, “Why is such a man alive!”, thus already apparently incriminating himself as the main murder suspect at the end of the novel. At this point, Zosima’s behavior is unexpected and unexplained:

The elder stepped towards Dmitri Fyodorovich and, having come close to him, knelt before him. Alyosha thought for a moment that he had fallen from weakness, but it was something else. Kneeling in front of Dmitri Fyodorovich, the elder bowed down at his feet with a full, distinct, conscious bow, and even touched the floor with his forehead.²⁴⁸

In the semantics of orthodox bows, the full bow consists not only in tracing one’s hand on the floor, but also in kneeling down and touching one’s forehead to the ground before the person or icon, as Zosima did to Dmitrii.

The other guests are perplexed as to the significance of this maximal bow. Fyodor Karamazov asks, “What’s this—bowing at his feet? Is it some sort of emblem?”²⁴⁹ (*BK* 1906: “Wohl wieder was Symbolishes?”) Alesha is disturbed, for he ‘reads’ the bow as a prefiguration of a future event: “the question was on the tip of his tongue, what this bow at his brother Dmitri’s feet prefigured [...] The bow struck Alesha terribly; he believed blindly that there was a secret meaning in it. Secret, and perhaps also horrible.”²⁵⁰ He runs into Rakitin and the later asks him straight out what the meaning of Zosima’s bow to Dmitrii was. Alesha admits that he does not know and Rakitin concludes, in his characteristic cynical manner,

I knew he wouldn’t explain it to you! Of course, there’s nothing very subtle about it, just the usual blessed nonsense, it seems. But the trick had its purpose. Now all the pious frauds in town will start talking and spread it over the whole province, wondering “what is the meaning of this dream?” The old man is really astute, if you ask me: he smelled crime. It stinks in your family.

Upon Alesha’s inquiry, he continues:

A crime in your nice little family. It will take place between your brothers and your nice, rich papa. So Father Zosima bumps his forehead on the ground, for the future, just in case. Afterwards they’ll say, “Ah, it’s what the holy elder foretold, prophesied,” though bumping your forehead on the ground isn’t much of a prophecy. No, they’ll say, it was

248 *BK*, p. 74.

249 *BK*, p. 75.

250 *BK*, p. 77.

an emblem, an allegory, the devil knows what! They'll proclaim it, they'll remember: "He foretold the crime and marked the criminal." [...]²⁵¹

Rakitin perfectly foretells the coming crime, only he is wrong to think that Dmitrii will be the murderer. Staretz Zosima himself explains his bow to Alesha a day later, on his deathbed, "I bowed yesterday to his great future suffering."²⁵² He continues,

Yesterday I seemed to see something terrible ... as if his eyes yesterday expressed his whole fate. He had a certain look ... so that I was immediately horrified in my heart at what this man was preparing for himself. Once or twice in my life I've seen people with the same expression in their faces ... as if it portrayed the whole fate of a person, and that fate, alas, came about.²⁵³

Zosima thus anticipated Dmitrii's affective impulse to kill his father, but also apparently his change of mind at the last moment. This would nonetheless bring him great suffering, because he would be sentenced for murder he did not commit. The Staretz mentions that he had seen this expression before "once or twice" in his life, and one occasion is certainly his meeting with Mikhail, his "mysterious visitor", who had confessed to Zosima that he had wanted to murder him, but had changed his mind in the last minute.²⁵⁴

It is perhaps this seemingly supernatural ability to 'read' people that was the reason for Wittgenstein's fascination for Zosima's ability to "look into others' hearts". Indeed, Zosima's character is introduced at the very beginning of the novel as somebody endowed with this special ability:

Many said of the elder Zosima that, having for so many years received all those who came to him to open their hearts, thirsting for advice and for a healing word, having taken into his soul so many confessions, sorrows, confidences, he acquired in the end such fine discernment that he could tell, from the first glance at a visiting stranger's face, what was in his mind, what he needed, and even what kind of suffering tormented his conscience; and

251 *BK*, p. 78.

252 *BK*, p. 285.

253 *BK*, p. 285.

254 Cf. also Katerina and Dmitrii's fight throughout the entire novel, consisting mainly of misunderstandings concerning the meaning of each other's bows. Katerina took Dmitrii's respectful bow to her after she asked money from him as a sign of mockery and contempt, which lead to her masochistic pursuits of his love. Edward Wasiolek analyses the intricacies in the semantics of the bows Katerina and Dmitrii offer one another in "Dmitry and Katerina".

he sometimes astonished, perplexed and almost frightened the visitor by this knowledge of his secret even before he had spoken a word.²⁵⁵

In keeping with the novel’s abundance of paradoxes, Zosima’s ability is multi-aspersive in the sense that it can be seen as both supernatural and as the product of his life-long experience in taking confessions which might have resulted in what Wittgenstein calls at the end of the *Philosophical Investigations*, “expert judgment” of human facial expressions.²⁵⁶

The motif of ‘reading’ people is not limited to Staretz Zosima. It seems that Alesha has inherited this capacity, as well. However, while Staretz Zosima’s ‘inner’ life is completely hidden from the reader, and he is presented in the simple, non-psychologizing language of medieval hagiography in Alesha’s manuscript, the readers do get an insight into his disciple Alesha’s growing people ‘reading’ skills. In Alesha’s case, the ability to see beyond the mere sum of given facts and to “synthesize” them in such a way as to elucidate the events of the novel is described as an aesthetic capacity. In the scene with Lise discussed in the previous section, in which Alesha’s account of his meeting with Snegirev utterly absorbs Lise, he notes, “sometimes I am very impatient, and sometimes I don’t see things.”²⁵⁷ He describes his occasional failures to “see things”, to notice crucial details that would help him “look after people” in a more loving way, not as a brute physiological fact, but as a personal failing, the fault of his impatience.²⁵⁸

Towards the end of the novel, there are two crucial examples of Alesha’s ability to take up an “outside” perspective and “synthesize” facts about his brothers in an elucidating and loving manner. In “Not you, not you!”, towards the end of the novel, Alesha suddenly feels the need to tell his brother Ivan that he is not guilty of their father’s murder. Ivan retorted, “with a pale, distorted smile, ‘I know I didn’t. Are you raving?’” Ivan knows intellectually that he did not commit the murder. However, his conscience had been tormenting him because he felt that in a conversation with Smerdiakov he half-inadvertently permitted the murder, and thus was its “author” if not its perpetrator. Alesha insists, “No, Ivan. You’ve told yourself several times that you are the murderer.” And, “You’ve said so to yourself many times, when you’ve been alone during these two dread-

255 *BK*, p. 29.

256 *PI*, II, p. 227.

257 *BK*, p. 217.

258 I argue similarly in Jankovic, “Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky on Aesthetics and the ‘Inner Life’”, p. 114.

ful months [...].”²⁵⁹ It is unclear how Alesha could have possibly known what Ivan had been saying to himself when he was alone. Indeed, Alesha attributes his knowledge to divine inspiration. He is described as “speaking now, as it were, not of himself, not of his own will, but obeying some irresistible command”. And he says, “you are mistaken: you are not the murderer. Do you hear? It was not you! God has sent me to tell you so.” Ivan is visibly shaken, showing that Alesha’s ‘reading’ of him touches upon some truth. However, he quickly recovers his bearings and his role of the cool-headed intellectual, “‘Alexey Fyodorovitch,’ he said, with a cold smile, ‘I can’t endure prophets and epileptics—messengers from God especially—and you know that only too well.’”²⁶⁰ However, in “Ivan’s Nightmare” in the same Book XI, the extent of Ivan’s guilty consciousness is revealed in his nightmare of a visitation by the Devil. By the time he is called to testify in Dmitrii’s trial for Fyodor Karamazov’s murder, and has the chance to at least alleviate his brother’s case, it appears that Ivan has completely lost his mind.

When Alesha is called to testify, he is able to contribute his fledgling people ‘reading’ capacity towards proving his brother Dmitrii’s innocence. In contrast to the episode with Ivan, in this case, Alesha’s ‘reading’ does not seem supernatural. In “Fortune Smiles on Mitya”, Alesha recounts at the witness stand how his brother had once sworn to him (before the murder) that he would save himself from disgrace and regain his honor, all the time pointing to his breast. Alesha had at first thought that Dmitrii was pointing at this heart, the proverbial seat of his honor and that he meant that he would avoid the temptation of doing violence to their father. But then he continued:

I remember precisely then some thought flashed through me that the heart isn’t in that part of the chest at all, but lower down, while he was hitting himself much higher, here, right under his neck and indicating that place. My thought seemed stupid to me then, but perhaps precisely then he was pointing to that amulet with the fifteen thousand roubles sewn up in it.²⁶¹

It is a crucial point in Dmitrii’s defense that he already possessed the money that was found on him at the point of his arrest, and that he did not murder and rob his father for it. It is from Dmitrii’s body language at the time that Alesha narrat-

²⁵⁹ *BK*, p. 601.

²⁶⁰ *BK*, p. 602.

²⁶¹ *BK*, pp. 677–8.

ed a proof for his brother’s innocence, perhaps inspiring the “beetle in the box” example in Wittgenstein’s private language argument.²⁶²

The theme of perceiving people ‘deeply’ is a major motif in *Notes from a Dead House*, which Wittgenstein was said to have considered Dostoevsky’s greatest novel.²⁶³ The semi-biographical novel describes the Siberian penal colony where Dostoevsky was himself detained in the 1850s and many of the prisoners he had encountered there. It proceeds from the point of view of a narrator, Gorianchikov, whose view of his fellow prisoners evolves from at first seeing only their repellent, violent exterior behavior, to a transformation through which he is able to recognize their humanity. The perspective of the narrator is most salient in the temporal structure of the novel. The first seven chapters serve as an introduction to the setting of the prison—chapters II, III, and IV are titled “First impressions”, chapters V and VI “The First Month”, and VII “New Acquaintances. Petrov”. The slow pace of the beginning of the novel replicates the experience of a slow passage of time in monotonous and unpleasant settings. In the middle of the novel, after chapter XI titled “The Performance”, the pace of the novel speeds up considerably as he gets to know the prisoners better—the second half of the novel covers ten years.

In “The Performance”, the narrator states, “You need only peel off the external, superficial husk and look at the kernel more closely, attentively, without prejudice, and you will see such things in the people as you never anticipated.”²⁶⁴ The narrator is invited to view a theater play put on by the prisoners and it is at this point that he realizes what has escaped him before: that “[the] highest and most sharply characteristic feature of our people is this sense of justice and the thirst for it. There is no cocky habit in the people of being in the forefront everywhere and *at all costs*, whether a man is worthy of it or not.”²⁶⁵ The narrator develops a capacity to see his fellows to the “kernel”, to see a nobility that he had not anticipated to discover in the prisoners.²⁶⁶ Before that, his obser-

262 Cf. p. 95 and fn. 245 of this work.

263 Norman Malcolm and Georg Henrik von Wright, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*, p. 45.

264 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 153.

265 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 153.

266 A similar reading is provided by Lewis Bagby, with a focus on an analysis the fictional editor’s introduction to the novel that foreshadows the ocular motif. Cf. his *First Words: On Dostoevsky’s Introductions*, pp. 45–60. As Bagby notes, “a fusion of the sensory or phenomenal world with another symbolic order must be experienced if we are to penetrate Dostoevsky’s novel in a manner that duplicates his and Gorianchikov’s prison revelation.” (p. 46), further, “The act of seeing in the special sense Dostoevsky wants to evoke requires penetration of surface phenomena.” (p. 47), and “transcendence comes when we ‘see’ through the darkness of physical

ventions of the prisoners were quite different. In the first chapter, "The Dead House", Gorianchikov notes, "Meeting them during these strolls, I liked to peer into their sullen, branded faces, trying to guess what they were thinking about."²⁶⁷ He notes soberly,

Here there were chance murderers and professional murderers, robbers and gang leaders. There were petty thieves, and tramps who lived by holdups or by breaking and entering. There were those about whom it was hard to decide what could have brought them there. And yet each of them had his own story, hazy and oppressive, like the fumes in your head after last night's drunkenness. Generally, they spoke little of the past, did not like to tell and clearly tried not to think about what had been.²⁶⁸

Gorianchikov therefore rarely got to know a prisoner through a direct tale of their life, but mostly through observing their behavior.

The theater performance that catalyzed the change in Gorianchikov's multi-aspective perception of the prisoners is described in a manner that oscillates between a view of them *as* prisoners and criminals on the one hand, and as absorbed and relishing that they are able "to spend if only an hour of unprisonlike time" on the other.²⁶⁹ He notes,

The curtain is about to rise. Now the orchestra starts to play... [...] One of the guitarists also knew his instrument splendidly. This was that same gentleman who had killed his father. As for the tambourine player, he simply performed miracles [...]!²⁷⁰

When the play started, the narrator is just as amazed at the performance as he is at the faces of his fellow prisoners in the audience, completely and childishly absorbed in what they saw:

Finally the curtain rose. Everybody stirred, shifted from one foot to the other, those in the back stood on tiptoe; someone fell off his log; one and all gaped their mouths and fixed their eyes, and total silence reigned... The performance began.

The narrator particularly describes the face of Alei, a prisoner standing beside him: "I remember how, each time an actor pulled some funny and clever stunt, and there was a general burst of laughter, I involuntarily turned at once

existence to the luminous and hallowed interior of ethical aspirations enacted in the world."(p. 53)

267 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 9.

268 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 11.

269 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 163.

270 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 155.

to Alei and tried to see his face.”²⁷¹ Later on in the chapter, the narrator confesses to a Diderotian *oubliance de soi* in absorption whilst looking at Alei, who is watching the performance: “I involuntarily lose myself in contemplating his peaceful, childlike face.”²⁷²

Like later Wittgenstein in his remark on theater discussed above, Dostoevsky’s narrator is just as interested in the absorptive effect theater had on its audiences as in the theater itself. Like Wittgenstein, the narrator particularly marvels at the simplicity and “artlessness” (or non-theatricality) of especially talented performers:

Filatka (Baklushin) was indeed magnificent. He played his role with astonishing precision. [...] To each empty word, to each of his gestures, he was able to give a sense and significance that corresponded perfectly to the character of his role. Add to this diligence, to this study, an astonishing, unfeigned gaiety, simplicity, artlessness, and you would certainly agree, if you had seen Baklushin, that he was a natural-born actor of great talent.

The narrator compares Baklushin favorably to actors from Moscow and Petersburg and claims that the former is superior to the latter. While the actors from the capitals “tried too hard to represent *muzhiks* [Russian peasant serfs]”, and ended up playing *paysans* (peasants they were acquainted with from French novels),²⁷³ Baklushin acted from an understanding of Russian peasants’ realities.

This seemingly minor remark reveals the deep class clashes of nineteenth-century Russia, which subterraneously structure the dynamics of this novel. The narrator Gorianichkov belongs to the upper “gentlemanly” class, while most of the prisoners are peasants. It is clear at the beginning that he had seriously underestimated the different worlds that are implied in different classes. The prisoners “generally took a dark and unfavorable view of former noblemen”, including him. He explains, “Even though they were already stripped of all their property rights and were completely equal to all the other prisoners—the prisoners would never recognize them as their comrades.”²⁷⁴ It is only after the theater performance—after seeing the “natural-born actor of great talent” Baklushin play a *muzhik*, a Russian serf, that he started to view the prisoners differently. Even though seeing Baklushin act himself is not the only factor in Gorianichkov’s change of perspective, it is remarkable that his gradual transformation follows immediately after the chapter “The Performance”, which is in the exact middle of the novel. At the end of the said chapter, when the actors and the au-

²⁷¹ Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 155.

²⁷² Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 163.

²⁷³ Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 156.

²⁷⁴ Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 28.

dience alike have gone to sleep in their prisoner barracks, Gorianchikov takes a long look:

I raise my head and look around at my sleeping comrades by the dim, flickering lights of a two-penny prison candle. I look at their pale faces, their poor beds, at all this rank poverty and destitution—look at it intently—and it's as if I want to make sure that all this is not the continuation of an ugly dream, but the real truth.²⁷⁵

Like Wittgenstein presenting his rabbit-duck example for multi-aspective perception, in this chapter the narrator's view of the prisoners flickers between seeing them as child-like and as criminals, as talented stage stars and as destitute convicts. The empathic view remains and continues in the next chapter, titled "The Hospital", which also commences Part Two of the novel.

In this chapter, Gorianchikov lands in the hospital and observes other prisoners, consumptives (i. e. tuberculosis patients) and those punished by floggings and treated in the hospital. He notices a detail that makes him especially compassionate with his fellow prisoners, namely that even the dying had to keep their fetters on their feet. He continuously returns to this subject, "Even consumptives died before my eyes in fetters." He argues,

Granted, the fetters themselves are not God knows how heavy. They weigh between eight and twelve pounds. For a healthy man, it's not burdensome to carry ten pounds. I was told, however, that after several years fetters begin to make your legs wither. [...] A weight, even a small one, even just ten pounds, attached permanently to your leg, does make the limb abnormally heavy, and in the long run may have a detrimental effect. [...] And, truly, if the medical authorities had obtained [...] relief just for the consumptives alone, that in itself would have been a real and great benefit. Granted, they say a prisoner is an evildoer and unworthy of any benefits; but need one aggravate the punishment for someone who has already been touched by the finger of God? And it is impossible to believe it is done for the sake of punishment alone. Even the court spares consumptives from bodily punishment. [...] It's impossible to fear that a consumptive will escape. Who could conceive of that, especially bearing in mind a certain degree in the development of the illness? [...] Fetters are simply a dishonor, a shame and a burden, physical and moral. At least they are supposed to be. They can never hinder anybody from escaping.²⁷⁶

This passage reveals the emotionality of Gorianchikov's outrage at the unnecessarily sadistic punishment. He describes a dying consumptive that lay opposite him at the hospital, "withering away".²⁷⁷ The young man, who had "agonized

²⁷⁵ Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, pp. 163–4.

²⁷⁶ Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, pp. 177–8.

²⁷⁷ Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 178.

painfully for a long time, several hours on end [...] threw off his blanket, all his clothes, and finally began tearing at his shirt; even that seemed heavy to him.” Gorianchikov observes, “All that was left on him was a wooden cross with an amulet and the fetters, through which it seemed he could now have drawn his withered leg.” After some time, “Finally, his wandering and shaky hand found the amulet on his chest and began tearing it off, as if it, too, was a burden to him, bothered him, weighed him down. We took the amulet off as well.”²⁷⁸ Later on, when the soldier on the watch came with guards to inspect the corpse, “he stopped in his tracks, as if frightened. The completely naked, withered corpse, with nothing on it but fetters, shocked him”.²⁷⁹ Gorianchikov describes the minute detail of leaving fetters on dying prisoners as emblematic of an unjust punitive system, and implies that even prisoners require a humane treatment.²⁸⁰

It is possible to notice certain family resemblances in the motifs of the novel and Wittgenstein’s interests. Gorianchikov’s development throughout the course of the novel manifests a dynamic nature of perception that Wittgenstein insisted on in his remarks on aspect seeing: he was able to view the other prisoners increasingly under the aspect of their shared humanity. The process of convergence of world views between the upper class narrator and the peasant prisoners resembles Wittgenstein’s considerations of what it would take to understand a completely foreign world view in his later philosophy. And Wittgenstein’s “picture” of trying to “look behind someone’s forehead” (*PI*, §427) in order to find out what the person is thinking is very much the situation Gorianchikov finds himself in, who “liked to peer into their sullen, branded faces, trying to guess what they were thinking about”.²⁸¹ Furthermore, Gorianchikov’s career path, of teaching rural school children upon release from prison,²⁸² very much resembles Wittgenstein’s decision to give away his inheritance and become a school teacher in rural Austria upon his return from the trenches of World War One.

278 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 179.

279 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 180.

280 The novel, as the first prison memoir in Russia, did stir a vast socio-cultural debate and the public started to be concerned with prisoners’ living conditions for the first time. Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation*, pp. 213–5.

281 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 9.

282 As Lewis Bagby notes in *First Words*, p. 56, even though the fictional editor of *Notes from the Dead House* considers Gorianchikov a “misanthrope” who has retreated from the world upon his release from prison, the latter’s decision to teach children can be read as an uplifting work he chose after the revelation of the kernel of humanity in prisoners that he had experienced at the penitential colony.

Wittgenstein and Bakhtin(s)

It is very likely that Wittgenstein discussed Dostoevsky with his close friend at Cambridge, Nikolai Bakhtin, Mikhail Bakhtin's brother. It is documented that in his lectures at Cambridge, Nikolai Bakhtin explicitly referred to Viacheslav Ivanov,²⁸³ a Russian scholar who first noticed the properties in Dostoevsky's writings that Mikhail Bakhtin later developed into his celebrated notions of "dialogicity" and "polyphony". Several scholars have pointed out that, in their treatment of language as an activity as opposed to a system, Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* resemble what Ivanov and Bakhtin describe as the dialogical quality of Dostoevsky's works.²⁸⁴ Furthermore, and more mysteriously, Ludwig Wittgenstein's scattered remarks on ethics, aesthetics and perception, strikingly resemble early Mikhail Bakhtin's thought, which cannot have been the result of his conversations with the latter's brother, because he only met Nikolai Bakhtin in the 1930s.²⁸⁵ Wittgenstein writes of ethics and aesthetics in terms of relation to the world "from outside", as opposed to "from midst" of things,²⁸⁶ and he, too, utilizes visual imagery to describe this relation. The "outsideness" of the author, who with his narration is able to shape and "aesthetically objectify" both fictional characters and social reality, has already been extensively discussed by Mikhail Bakhtin in "The Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity". Bakhtin writes of the "divinity of the author"²⁸⁷ and focuses on his visual capacity to see more of the character than the character can see of himself, and thus to "finalize" him. In his *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin also discusses the interrelation of ethics and aesthetics, as well as the phenomenon of "aesthetic seeing", which can shape the real world, as well as a fictional one.

283 McGuiness, "Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky", p. 237.

284 McGuiness, "Wittgenstein and Dostoevsky", p. 236; Pichler, *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen*, pp. 144 ff; David Rudrum, "Hearing Voices: A Dialogical Reading of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*".

285 When I refer to "early Bakhtin" in this context, I mean primarily the essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", written 1919 and the short work *Towards a Philosophy of the Act* (written 1919–1921). With "late Bakhtin", I refer to *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929), and in particular one of the essays from it, "The Hero, and the Position of the Author with Regard to the Hero, in Dostoevsky's Art".

286 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 83e; "Das Kunstwerk ist der Gegenstand sub specie aeternitatis gesehen; und das gute Leben ist die Welt sub specie aeternitatis gesehen. Dies ist der Zusammenhang zwischen Kunst und Ethik. Die gewöhnliche Betrachtungsweise sieht die Gegenstände gleichsam aus ihrer Mitte, die Betrachtung sub specie aeternitatis von außerhalb." *Tagebücher*, p. 178.

287 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 191.

In “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity” from 1919, Mikhail Bakhtin elaborates more than Wittgenstein on how the author’s “outsideness” contributes towards “aesthetic activity”, and he envisions the latter as a capacity that is at work in real life, as well, but that can paradigmatically be understood from art. He asks how it is possible for a human being, a subject, to know himself “as a whole”, to become an object for herself. While referring to a person as an “object” sounds alarming to twenty-first-century ears, attuned to post-colonial and feminist concerns, Bakhtin does very much emphasize the distinction between an artifact and a person as the object of aesthetic activity. In contrast to an artifact, a person is of course self-aware. Even so, the subject is not self-sufficient, for she cannot know herself in the sense that she cannot fully become an object to herself. The “I” can only partially experience itself. I cannot experience myself as a whole in the same way I experience other objects I relate to. Bakhtin goes on:

But in this act of self-objectification I shall never coincide with myself—*I-for-myself* shall continue to be in the *act* of this self-objectification, and not in its product, that is, in the *act* of seeing, feeling, thinking, and not in the *object* seen or felt. I am incapable of fitting all of myself into an object, for I exceed any object as the active *subiectum* of it.²⁸⁸

An object, is per definition, determined by a subject’s relation to it. The subject, on the other hand, as stated in the quote above, “exceeds any object as the active *subiectum* of it”.

Even the relation to my body is not objectifiable—“I can to some extent perceive myself through my outer sense”. This is not only the case for contingent, technological reasons: even if we arranged a roomful of mirrors to see ourselves from every angle, we would still not see *ourselves*. Bakhtin’s mirror examples emphasize that:

It would appear that in this case we see ourselves directly. But this is not so. We remain within ourselves and we see only our own reflection, which is not capable of becoming an immediate moment in our seeing and experiencing of the world. We see the *reflection* of our exterior, not *ourselves* in terms of our exterior. The exterior does not encompass all of me [...]²⁸⁹

We see our exterior, not the “concrete lived experience of our subjectivity”,²⁹⁰ or “life experienced from within”²⁹¹ that is Bakhtin’s concern (without belittling the

288 Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, p. 38.

289 Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, p. 32.

290 Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, p. 38.

role of the body for the self). We do not see ourselves as a whole, as a unity of exterior and interior, as the particular people we are.

To experience a person as a whole, a point outside this person is needed, another's consciousness that can encompass him.²⁹² Bakhtin remarks that even a glimpse of oneself in the mirror is never a simple look at oneself, but that it already involves a potential other beholder: "we almost invariably attitudinize a bit before a mirror, giving ourselves one expression or another that we deem to be essential or desirable."²⁹³ One sees oneself in the eyes of the other—there is no other way to objectify oneself. Only a possible other can see one as a whole—by encompassing one with his gaze outwardly, while at the same time meaning *oneself* as a whole, including one's "inner" self-activity, but also by rendering one's actions meaningful via their place in a storyline intertwined with others' storylines—that is, in knowing one by interpreting the whole of one's life.

"I"—one's entire self-activity: thinking, feeling, seeing—is necessarily determined in a relationship to the other. It is only in relation to the other's outside position, from which he can, according to early Bakhtin, behold the whole of one and the whole of one's life, that one is unified into a determinate person: "In this sense, one can speak of a human being's absolute need for the other, for the other's seeing, remembering, gathering, and unifying self-activity..."²⁹⁴ He speaks of this relation as the "aesthetic act" and of the outside view as the "aesthetic view", because it is creative in the sense that it shapes the person it refers to. By describing the author's capacity as being able to "encompass" the character he is authoring, in spatial metaphors, Bakhtin therefore does model his understanding of "aesthetic objectification" to the seeing of physical objects.

In contrast to the case of the artifact, this constitutive relation to the other is not instrumental. A person is not an aesthetic object because of his use or interest for us. Rather, Bakhtin speaks of the "organizing power of love".²⁹⁵ One becomes a determinate person in response to love: "Words of love and acts of genuine concern come to meet the dark chaos of my inner sensation of myself: they name, direct, satisfy and connect it with the outside world..."²⁹⁶ One's self-activity acquires a direction and form only in response to others' loving attention.

291 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 73.

292 For the sake of simplicity, I have adopted Bakhtin's masculine pronouns when referring to the subject/the hero. But of course, the subject can also be a heroine.

293 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 33.

294 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", pp. 35–6.

295 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 171.

296 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 50.

However, our encounters with others are scattered and their knowledge of us is fragmentary—because our fellow mortals are never outside of one *enough* to cognize all of one and all of one's life. Their judgment of one is based on partial knowledge, limited to specific circumstances, and colored by their interests and biases. In order to secure the dimension of necessity, Bakhtin focuses on the relationship between the author and the hero as a paradigm from which we are to understand the other forms of determining a person. For the author, having made up the hero, knows the hero as a whole (all of him and his whole life), his consciousness encompasses the hero's consciousness, i.e. he has the position of "supreme outsideness"²⁹⁷ in relation to the hero, because it is he who finalizes the hero.²⁹⁸

For Bakhtin, "critical readers", who read the work "artistically" participate in authoring, they co-create the heroes they read in this way.²⁹⁹ For Bakhtin emphasizes that the author and the hero are mutually defined as the creative and the determined consciousness, respectively:

The author's consciousness is the consciousness of a consciousness, that is, a consciousness that *encompasses* and [finalizes] the consciousness of a hero by supplying those moments which are in principle transgredient to the hero's consciousness and which, if rendered immanent, would falsify his consciousness. The author not only sees and knows everything seen and known by each hero individually and by all the heroes collectively, but he also sees and knows *more* than they do; moreover, he sees and knows something that is in principle inaccessible to them. And it is precisely in this invariably determinate and stable *excess* of the author's seeing and knowing in relation to each hero that we find all those moments that bring about the [finalizing] of the whole...³⁰⁰

The relationship between the author and the hero is a paradigm that shows how a person is defined as the person he or she is, in general, not only in the case of literary heroes.

Bakhtin's *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* was written around the same time as "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", and was also published posthumously. It uses a similar terminology in addressing "aesthetic activity" as a starting point for philosophy, however it introduces the notion of moral relevance. Here, Bakhtin distinguishes two domains: "actual Being", which is unrepeata-

297 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 191.

298 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", pp. 4–5.

299 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", pp. 29, 65.

300 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 12. I have chosen to use the term "to finalize" as opposed to Vadim Liapunov's translation "to consummate" for the Russian term *zavershit'*.

ble, unique, historically concrete, experienced life and “content”, in which “images and configurations” (*obraz*) of actual life are “objectified”, and thus abstracted and isolated from the unified, actually experienced historical Being.³⁰¹ The act, which figures on the interface of these two domains, is “like a two-faced Janus”,³⁰² with both a moral answerability and an answerability in terms of the theoretical validity of its contents.³⁰³ An act is both part of the actually experienced, historical world, and can be morally questioned, as well as, in its content, subject to the “immanent laws” of science, technology, art, and culture in general.³⁰⁴ He calls the sense of moral answerability “my non-alibi in Being”,³⁰⁵ that is, the double negation declaring the impossibility of claiming that one was not there when a certain moral response was required. This “non-alibi” is a necessary condition of an embodied and historical existence, in which everyone is allotted a specific space and time in “Being”, understood not in the reified sense of an already finished world, but as a “task” always still in the making by the “participative thinking” of everyone present.³⁰⁶ The facts that make up the world are not merely given, but are also brought into being by numerous interrelated decisions of people.

Aesthetic activity, though Bakhtin considers it closest to actually experienced life because of its “emotional-volitional” tone lacking in more abstract disciplines, is still counted among “objectified content”.³⁰⁷ This is because “aesthetic seeing”, paradigmatic of aesthetic activity, is for Bakhtin characterized as an activity of objectification, and thus of abstraction from actually experienced life:

From inside this seeing, there is no way out into life. This is in no way contradicted by the fact that one can turn oneself and one's own life into a content of aesthetic contemplation. The very act/deed of such seeing does not penetrate into the content; aesthetic seeing does not turn into a confession, and if it does, it ceases to be aesthetic seeing.³⁰⁸

Aesthetic seeing, also called “empathizing”, is, for Bakhtin, necessarily a view from the “outside”, a view that is “transgredient”, that sees more than the person that is seen, and that can give objective unity to the feelings of this other person, or, as suggested above, of oneself seen as another. By contrast, actually

301 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, pp. 2–3.

302 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 2.

303 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 3.

304 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 7.

305 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 40.

306 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, pp. 13, 20, 29.

307 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, pp. 2–3, 14, 15, 17 and 60.

308 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 14.

lived life can only be experienced from the “inside” of one’s personal experience. Therefore, for Bakhtin there is an inevitable loss of actuality, the kind of vitality that only the “interior” perspective can yield, in aesthetic seeing: if it pretends to be absolute, “aesthetic seeing is inevitably doomed to passing off an abstractly isolated part as the actual whole.”³⁰⁹

The objectification of ‘inner’ life is abstract, in the sense a theater play is abstract because it is separated from the rest of life and shown as an object. Bakhtin writes of the case of somebody who is living an “aestheticism”, that is who objectifies his own life like art: “All I can do is play a role, i.e., assume, like a mask, the flesh of another [...]”³¹⁰ However, if this aesthetic role playing assumes moral answerability, it is reintegrated into actual, experienced, participatory life:

But the aesthetic answerability of the actor and the whole human being for the appropriateness of the role played remains in actual life, for the playing of a role as a whole is an answerable deed performed by *the one playing*, and not the one represented, i.e. the hero. The entire aesthetic world as a whole is but a moment of Being-as-event, brought rightfully into communion with Being-as-event through an answerable consciousness—through an answerable deed by a participant. Aesthetic reason is a moment in *practical reason*.³¹¹

This characterization of aesthetics as a part of practical reason, that is, morality,³¹² is part of a more general trajectory in Bakhtin’s unpublished work that defines *the act* (*postupok*) as the binding link between objectified content of life—as exemplified in theater, art and culture in general, but also in science and technology—and actual, experienced life. The moral “ought”, in turn, is not defined by its content, but rather as “a certain attitude (*ustanovka*) of conscious-

309 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 17.

310 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 17. The negative characterization of theater in Bakhtin needs to be relativized. In his later work, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin turns to the medieval mystery play, the menippea, and carnival. As Dick McGraw notes in *Bakhtin and Theater*, Bakhtin considers that Dostoevsky’s works can be understood with the help of the genre of medieval mystery play (p. 42). Bakhtin writes of theatricalization in Dostoevsky’s “The Double”: “What results is a peculiar sort of mystery play, or rather morality play, in which the actors are not whole people but rather the spiritual forces battling within them, a morality play, however, stripped of any formalism or abstract allegorizing.” (*Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 217) He acknowledges that in Dostoevsky’s narratives, readers are often witnesses of moral struggles of characters, as if in a theater. Furthermore, McGraw analyses Bakhtin’s notion of the carnival as precisely dissolving the division between art and life, spectator and participant, and therefore as also to be understood under the category of theatricality (*Bakhtin and Theatre*, p. 51).

311 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 18.

312 Immanuel Kant introduces the notion of practical reason in his *Critique of Practical Reason* (*Kritik der praktischen Vernunft*).

ness”,³¹³ one that takes responsibility for the content it relates itself to. By realizing one’s moral answerability, one’s act—be it the production of a potentially destructive machine, or a social role assumed in a given situation as if in theater—loses its characteristic of an abstract content, and participates in the “whole” that he calls the world as task, the world that is yet to come to be through the acts of the involved participants. In Bakhtin’s terms, by grasping my non-alibi in being, every act, including every word becomes my unique and irreplaceable contribution to the world, understood as task: “I, too, exist actually—in the whole and assume the obligation to say *this* word.”³¹⁴

The latter Bakhtin also almost completely overturns his earlier views on aesthetic objectification. For one, he rightly rejects the idea of the very desirability of objectification of the subject through a finalizing, authoritative other. In “The Hero, and the Position of the Author with Regard to the Hero, in Dostoevsky’s Art”, he sharply criticizes his former position, and stresses a categorical difference between a determining relation to an object vs. that to another subject, a “Thou”.³¹⁵ He calls the former, when applied to people, “deadening”, a “second-hand definition”,³¹⁶ and “reifying”.³¹⁷ It is evident that his change of mind coincides with the change of his attitude towards Dostoevsky’s art. Whereas in his early work he criticized Dostoevsky for not “mastering” the characters of his novels enough,³¹⁸ in his later work, he turns to Dostoevsky’s art as to a new paradigm of the aesthetic relationship between author and hero. On this, latter view, the author (and the critical reader) does not take advantage of the outside position that enables him transgredient knowledge, the kind of excess of seeing and knowing characteristic of his former aesthetic theory.³¹⁹ His hero is developed dialogically, not like an object that is completely encompassed, but as a “Thou” the author engages with.³²⁰

313 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 6.

314 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 40.

315 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 63.

316 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 59.

317 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, pp. 61–2.

318 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, pp. 19–20.

319 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 73.

320 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 63. However, there are figures in the novel *The Brothers Karamazov* who have the kind of authority that early Bakhtin attributed to the author: Staretz Zosima, who arguably authors the other characters and who, as Caryl Emerson argues in “Zosima’s ‘Mysterious Visitor’: Again Bakhtin on Dostoevsky, and Dostoevsky on Heaven and Hell”, is not exactly dialogical (he tells the mysterious visitor quite authoritatively to go and confess his crime).

If we follow the latter Bakhtin in the revision of his earlier thoughts—that art does not “master” people by objectifying them with a final word on them, that novels do not “master life”, what remains to be said about a person, a *subiectum*, as an object of art? It is precisely by not finalizing his characters, by not presenting them as completely understood objects of knowledge that an author-narrator, like for instance in Dostoevsky’s novels, is able to show precisely their *aliveness* in their function as subjects of their world. By not pretending to encompass his heroes by his own consciousness the latter Bakhtin’s *dialogical* authorial consciousness “reflects and re-creates not a world of objects, but precisely those other consciousness’s with their worlds, re-creates them in their authentic *unfinalizability* (which is, after all, their essence)”.³²¹ Such art is able to show the self-activities of others as they are engaged in the aesthetic activity of authoring in their own right.

As Bakhtin writes on Dostoevsky’s novels, making the thinking, feeling, seeing subject the object of art does not mean objectifying her in the sense of rendering a complete outside perspective on her as a particular person. According to the latter Bakhtin,

... the hero interests Dostoevsky as a *particular point of view on the world and on oneself*, as the position enabling a person to interpret and evaluate his own self and his surrounding reality. What is important to Dostoevsky is not how his hero appears in the world but first and foremost how the world appears to his hero, and how the hero appears to himself.³²²

The hero of the Dostoevsky novel is shown, not as any other object in the world, but as a focal point of engagement with all other objects, events, people. The world itself is not represented as a fixed, “objective” reality, but always as seen through the consciousness of the heroes:

At a time when the self-consciousness of a character was usually seen merely as an element of his reality, as merely one of the features of his integrated image, here, on the contrary, all of reality becomes an element of the character’s self-consciousness.³²³

The subject is depicted as mutually co-definable with her world, as the active engagement of interpreting events in the world she shares with others and actively shaping that same world.

321 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 68.

322 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 47.

323 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 48.

The subject is not a finished, defined object we contemplate from the outside. However, she or he still requires the determination “from outside” that early Bakhtin emphasized. Only, the activity of authoring is not reserved for the author-narrator, but each character is in one way or another involved in co-authoring the others and is in turn, to a greater or lesser extent, being authored by the others—even if none of them retain the final word in their judgment of the other. For instance, Bakhtin describes how the Underground man “looks at himself, as it were, in all the mirrors of other people’s consciousnesses”³²⁴ by pre-empting their possible criticism of his life. He argues that *The Brothers Karamazov* lives from the dialogic relation between the worlds of the three brothers.³²⁵ They each interpret their lives and the events they face in their own way and try to shape, i.e. author, the further course of their family history. According to Sarah Young, Dostoevsky’s novels are not plot-driven, but shaped according to rivaling authorships of the characters involved, that is, their competing scripts. Therefore, their activity of asserting their own narrative to exercise influence in the world of the novel has a markedly ethical dimension.³²⁶

The “outsideness” of the aesthetic is prominent in the early Wittgenstein, similarly to the early Bakhtin. For Wittgenstein, aesthetics (and ethics) involve a change of perspective on the part of the subject in his relation to the world, and not changes of facts found in the world. An impossible perspective to the world as a whole is assumed. Like in Bakhtin’s *Towards a Philosophy of the Act*, which criticizes an aesthetics that is not morally responsible to the world as a whole (“my non-alibi”), and does not define the moral “ought” in terms of content, but as “a certain attitude (*ustanovka*) of consciousness” of responsibility towards the contents the self chooses to relate to, Wittgenstein, too assumes a unity of ethics and aesthetics, with the idea that “Ethics and aesthetics are one”, noted parenthetically in *Tractatus* 6.421. Also, like Bakhtin, who calls the world a “task” and in later work praises Dostoevsky’s art for showing the world not *in abstracto*, but how it appears to the “hero”, Wittgenstein, too defines the world in relation to human beings, as “the totality of facts, not things” in 1.1, and furthermore considers the totality of facts to belong to “the task, not the solution” (6.4321, “Die Tatsachen gehören alle nur zur Aufgabe, nicht zur Lösung”). Wittgenstein relies on the sense of vision as a metaphor (like early Bakhtin with his repeated notion of “aesthetic seeing”) for his philosophy, for instance in his references to the visual field to explain the position of the subject as not being

324 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 53.

325 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 73.

326 Sarah Young, *Dostoevsky's The Idiot and the Ethical Foundations of Narrative*, pp. 20–7.

another thing in the world in the *Tractatus*, 5.633 and 5.641. Early Bakhtin's notion of "aesthetic objectification" assumes a "transgression", that is, that is a certain "outsideness" of the objectifying conscience. Wittgenstein, too says, "The picture represents its object from without (its stand point is its form of representation) (German: *Form der Darstellung*)" in 2.173, in reference to his picture theory of language, according to which constructing pictures (as in geometry, but also in drawing) is a metaphor for presenting facts in propositions of language. However, for Wittgenstein, the spatial form of presentation of objects is only one among many. He defines spatial objects as intelligible via the spatial form of presentation in 2.171, but adds in the same breath, that just as a spatial picture presents spatial objects, so does a colored picture present colored objects.

On Wittgenstein's terms, this 'more' that art makes visible "from outside of the totality of facts" is not to be accounted merely to the artist's spatial "transgression", as is early Bakhtin's view. This can best be made out in Wittgenstein's from 1930 remark on publishing texts and presenting something in theater, in which Wittgenstein does proclaim that the viewer sees 'more' than usual by looking at a scene on the stage, but not due to a mere spatial advantage. Rather, it is due to the context, the conventions (such as theater curtains) that formally exclude the viewer and therefore allow her a paradoxical and *artificial* view on somebody as they are when nobody is looking. Furthermore, while Bakhtin in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* treats theater as an "abstraction" from real, experienced life,³²⁷ Wittgenstein by contrast conceives what is seen in theater—the aesthetic object in the general sense of the word—to be the kind of unposed everyday life that is usually too fleeting to be the object of aesthetic contemplation. However, this objectification of a person is not the sort of "deadening" and "secondhand" "reification" the later Bakhtin had rejected in favor of dialogical authorship. Rather, Wittgenstein writes, "We should be seeing life itself." Wittgenstein's notion of a view *sub specie aeternitatis* is furthermore also compatible with later Bakhtin's account—based on his readings of Dostoevsky—of the unfinalizability and unobjectifiability of a literary character. For Wittgenstein considers a work of art, analogously to the good life, to imply a view from the perspective of eternity. This means that an eternity is required to adequately view a work of art, just as it is to grasp the good life—effectively implying unfinalizability.

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* and ordinary language philosophy it inspired introduces a notion of language in close proximity to Bakhtin's notion of *discourse*. For ordinary language philosophy understands language

327 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, p. 18.

as defined by the situation in which it is used, as opposed to the structuralists, who understand it as an abstract system. Similarly, in "Discourse in the Novel", Bakhtin, too understands language in the social context, as to be interpreted from within particular situations of use and as directed towards others. As Toril Moi has argued, "Bakhtin, in short, thinks of language use as an intervention in a complex social space. To me, this is entirely compatible with ordinary language philosophy."³²⁸

It is almost a commonplace in the exegesis of the *Philosophical Investigations* to notice their dialogical form.³²⁹ The dialogues in *Philosophical Investigations* are most commonly read as Wittgenstein's struggle against an opponent, and his method is seen as arguing against an opponent's potential counter-arguments.³³⁰ However, at §156 at the latest, at least three voices emerge. Jonathan Lear understands the *Investigations* as manifesting, as a whole "the active mind" of the human life-form, "that our form of life is not some fixed, frozen entity existing totally independently of us. It is an expression of our routes of interests, perceptions of salience, and so on: it is (our) active mind" and "it is impossible to describe such a consciousness, yet it also seems to be the consciousness we have. Perhaps it is impossible to describe, perhaps it can only make itself manifest: perhaps *Philosophical Investigations* is just such a consciousness making itself manifest."³³¹

In "Hearing Voices: A Dialogical Reading of Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*", David Rudrum compares *Philosophical Investigations* with T. S. Eliot's modernist poem *The Waste Land*. Both are "an intricate entanglement of many different voices, each of which speaks in an idiom replete with allusions, references, paraphrases, and quotations, all taken from the widest array of sources both ancient and modern, Christian and pagan, identifiable and obscure".³³² Rudrum identifies several clearly defined interlocutors in the *Philosophical Investigations*, like Augustine, the self-referential hint at "the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*" in §23 etc., but notes that while Wittgenstein does argue against them, he never sets up a systematic theoretical position by which to provide an alternative. Rather, his philosophy seems to consist in presenting a mul-

328 Toril Moi, *Revolution of the Ordinary*, p. 198.

329 Alois Pichler summarizes the reception history of the *Investigations* as "dialogical" in form in *Wittgensteins Philosophische Untersuchungen*, pp. 144 ff.

330 Cavell calls the dialogue partners in the *Investigations* "the voice of temptation and the voice of correctness" in *This New Yet Unapproachable America. Lectures after Emerson after Wittgenstein*, p. 38.

331 Jonathan Lear, "The Disappearing We", p. 300.

332 Rudrum, "Hearing Voices", p. 204.

titude of voices. Rudrum utilizes Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogicity and quotes him in order to describe the style of the *Philosophical Investigations*:

This text is “as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other; this interaction provides no support for the viewer who would objectify an entire event according to some ordinary monologic category—and this consequently makes the viewer a participant.”³³³

And:

Furthermore, the following characterization of the dialogical text also applies equally to Wittgenstein's philosophical dialogue: “The entire work [is] constructed as a great dialogue, but one where the author acts as organizer and participant in the dialogue without retaining for himself the final word; ... reflected in his work [is] the dialogic nature of human life and human thought itself.”³³⁴

Rather than presenting a theory by means of conventional arguments, Wittgenstein includes bits and pieces of philosophical and ordinary views, for instance on ‘interiority’ common in his day and works them into the tapestry of his “album”. In Bakhtin's sense of using “the word with a sideward glance at someone else's hostile word”,³³⁵ Wittgenstein, according to Rudrum, uses the misleading language that he is seeking to unmask as misleading.

It would be a mistake, however, to characterize Wittgenstein's philosophy as “dialogical” in the relativist sense in which Bakhtin is sometimes read. On this reading, the correctness of a judgment of an ‘interior’ sensation is judged by reference to other subjects, and the public validity of meaning by reference to a supposed intersubjective consensus. Stefan Majetschak argues against such readings and notes that other people's subjectivities cannot be the basis for a criterion of judgment of word meaning for concepts denoting ‘interiority’, since other people's subjectivities are no less prone to lapses of memories as oneself is.³³⁶ By contrast, he argues for native speakers' use of language (e.g. concepts like sensations) as a valid, public criterion for the correctness of a use of a concept.³³⁷ Here it is instructive to think back to, for instance, Wittgenstein's consideration of the use of “red” in the *Philosophical Investigations* §381, according to

333 Rudrum, “Hearing Voices”, p. 211; Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 18.

334 Rudrum, “Hearing Voices”, p. 211; Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, pp. 72–3.

335 Rudrum, “Hearing Voices”, p. 214; Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 196.

336 Majetschak, *Ludwig Wittgensteins Denkweg*, pp. 235–6. Majetschak is arguing against Dirk Birnbacher in *Die Logik der Kriterien*, p. 117.

337 Majetschak, *Ludwig Wittgensteins Denkweg*, pp. 237–9.

which the criterion for recognizing what is red is the native speaker's use of the concept "red". It is clear that the meaning of redness is not intersubjectively negotiated, but that it lies in an inherited and impersonal public understanding of the meaning of this word. Therefore, characterizing later Wittgenstein's overall philosophical (and literary) *style* as dialogical is plausible enough. However, characterizing his philosophical contents as "dialogical" in the relativistic interpersonally constructed sense misses the evidently impersonal and socially contextualized nature of his account of meaning.

To conclude, while Wittgenstein does not refer to Dostoevsky as one of his main philosophical influences, considering the privileged role he ascribes to art and literature, it is instructive to juxtapose his philosophical writings with Dostoevsky's novels. Since he was primarily reading *The Brothers Karamazov* on the Eastern front while writing the notes that will make up the ending of the *Tractatus*, comparing the two works reveals common themes and motifs such as the unity of ethics and aesthetics in *TLP* 6.421 and in the speeches of Staretz Zosima, who stressed both appreciation for beauty in nature and an ethics of active love stemming from the principle that all and everybody is connected. Moreover, it has already been noted that the amulet around Dmitrii's neck had likely inspired the famous example from the private language argument in *Philosophical Investigations* §293, in which pain is compared to a beetle in a box, mocking the Cartesian notion that 'interior' states are literally *in* the body and only introspectively available. However, it should be added that the motif of the relation between 'interior' feelings and intentions and overt expressions along the lines of public codes and conventions is present throughout *The Brothers Karamazov* as a whole, as well as Dostoevsky's other works, such as *Notes from a Dead House*. It is not far-fetched to postulate that Wittgenstein, who admired Staretz Zosima's ability to "look into hearts", was partly inspired by his readings of Dostoevsky when devising the private language argument. Lastly, the stunning similarities between Wittgenstein's thoughts on aesthetics and the writings of one of the most prominent Dostoevsky scholar—Mikhail Bakhtin—deserve more scholarly attention. Wittgenstein's friendship with Nikolai Bakhtin, Mikhail Bakhtin's brother, in the 1930s can only account for the dialogical style of his later writings, but not for his early writings on aesthetics as a view "from outside the world" in the *Tractatus* and his notes from 1916, a decade and a half before he had met Nikolai Bakhtin.

2 Showing Intentions and Seeing Aspects in Fyodor M. Dostoevsky's Novels

In nineteenth-century Russia, literature had an unusually prominent role to play in shaping public opinion. Because of the strong censorship, social and political issues were not discussed openly, but indirectly and in between the lines in literature—in so called “Aesopian” language.¹ This is why authors like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were considered such influential voices in Russia. Dostoevsky, like other writers of his time, saw it as his duty to shape Russian society.² Literature had inherited the role of interpreting the signs of the times and offering orientation for a culture as a whole, the role hitherto reserved for religion. Dostoevsky's Staretz Zosima, whose ability to ‘read’ a person that so fascinated Wittgenstein is in the Russian context usually associated with orthodox saints and it is called *prozorlivost'*.³ Alesha's narrative capacity to extrapolate the character of a person like Snegirev or Dmitrii by ‘reading’ their body language and narrating it in a particularly compelling manner can be understood from the context of a prominent cultural leitmotif in Russia, namely the proximity of aesthetics and religion. According to the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, medieval Rus' was Christianized by a decree from Vladimir, the Prince of Kiev in 988–89, following his audiences with representatives of various religions (Judaism, Islam, Catholicism) and deciding upon Eastern Christianity after hearing reports from his emissaries on the beauty and splendor of the liturgies served at Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.⁴ This emphasis on the aesthetic had the effect that Russian hagiographies were a genre of highly ritualized expressions of the beautiful, inextricably interlinked with the emphasis on saints' social and ethical virtues.⁵ The motif of a unity of ethics and aesthetics in Russian orthodoxy can perhaps be best explained by the deep ties to the Byzantium, and its unbroken ties to antiquity until the fifteenth century (when Constantinople and with it, the Eastern Roman Empire, was sacked by the Ottomans) in which the ancient Greek notion

1 Janko Lavrin, *An Introduction to the Russian Novel*, pp. 56–7.

2 Harriet Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions*, p. 128.

3 R. Pletnev, “Serdtssem mudrye (O ‘startsah’ u Dostoevskogo)”, p. 88.

4 Harriet Murav, *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique*, pp. 17–8. As Likhachev explains, Prince Vladimir certainly had strategic and practical aims in mind that an alliance with Byzantium by means of a shared religion would ensure, but the aesthetic aspect nonetheless dominates Russian popular religious self-understanding. Dmitry S. Likhachev, “Religion: Russian Orthodoxy”, pp. 38–40.

5 Likhachev, “Religion: Russian Orthodoxy”, p. 41.

of the unity of beauty and goodness, or sanctity (*to kalon*)⁶ had retained its relevance. The new translation of Greek patristic works into Russian at the Optina monastery in the early nineteenth century strengthened these historical ties.⁷ (This is the very monastery that Dostoevsky visited to seek consolation after the death of his son Alesha while working on *The Brothers Karamazov*.⁸)

That the religious worldview had lost much of its authority in nineteenth-century Russia is manifest in Dostoevsky's novels. Situations and characters are depicted in such a way as to allow for a multiple of mutually contradictory interpretations—to modify Wittgenstein's term, they are multi-aspective, that is, one and the same material can be read under several aspects, yielding an entirely different 'picture' each time. Depending on the conceptual framework of the reader—for instance that of contemporary medicine or the Slavophil emphasis on *sobornost'* or wholeness and unity of (Russian) society—Alesha Karamazov can be seen under the aspect of hysteria or that of a person “who bears within himself the heart of the whole” and who can act as a catalyst for communal cohesion, as the narrator presents him in the foreword “From the Author”.⁹ And Staretz Zosima's transcendent perspective is symbolized in the spatial configuration in the novel: the monastery is outside the town where most of the plot takes place, in keeping with the notion stemming from early monastic movements that monks ‘leave the world’.¹⁰ The spatial “outsidedness”, to use Bakhtin's term, arguably symbolizes both the aesthetic disinterestedness that might account for Staretz Zosima's ability to ‘read’ and, with his advice, ‘author’ people around him, as well as the transcendence of the monastic way of life, which focuses

6 Dionysius the Areopagite, who was influential to orthodox theology, writes, “God is beauty. This Beauty is the source of all friendship and all mutual understanding. It is this Beauty [...] which moves all living things and preserves them whilst filling them with love and desire for their own particular sort of beauty. [...] Thus true Beauty and Goodness are mixed together because, whatever the force may be that moves living thing, it tends always towards Beauty-and-Goodness, and there is nothing that does not have a share in Beauty-and-Goodness [...] By virtue of Beauty-and-Goodness everything is in communion with everything else, each in its own way; creatures love one another without losing themselves in one another; everything is in harmony, parts fit snugly into the whole.” *On the Divine Names*, IV, 7; quoted in Olivier Clément, *Roots of Christian Mysticism: Texts from the Patristic Era with Commentary*, p. 22.

7 As Georges Florovsky, an Eastern Church historian notes, Greek patristic texts such as *The Ladder* by St. John Climacus, *On Love* by St. Maximus the Confessor, as well as mystical texts by St. Dionysius the Areopagite were translated into Slavic Languages on Mt. Athos and in Bulgaria already in the fourteenth century. Cf. *Ways of Russian Theology*, vol. 1, p. 10.

8 Sergius Chetverikov, *Elder Ambrose of Optina*, pp. 82–4, p. 213. Cf. also Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 385–7.

9 *BK*, p. 3.

10 Cf. Tenny Thomas, “Monasticism”, pp. 391–2.

on “the higher, heavenly” matters above and over the earthly. However, the novel as a whole leaves room for doubt whether Zosima’s point of view is really to be believed; its authority is not taken for granted. The scandal surrounding his death and swift decay, which caused even Alesha to doubt his former idol, are only one, most obvious example. The “outsidedness” symbolized by the monastery is paralleled by the tavern, the source of Dmitrii’s alcohol at the village Mokroe (meaning “wet” in Russian) that, too, is located outside the town. Thus a certain parallel is drawn between religion and alcoholism, and both the monastery and the tavern can represent means to escape worldly troubles. Needless to say, this parallel suggests that Staretz Zosima’s mystical contemplation can be compared to the intoxicating effects of alcohol.

Staretz Zosima figures as a multi-aspective character, a *Gestalt Kippfigur* like the rabbit-duck illustration that Wittgenstein uses. All the information the reader is given about Zosima can be read in contradicting terms, depending on the aspect one focuses on: that of a saint and miracle worker, a swindler or a cunning psychologist. For instance, his seemingly miraculous healing of Lise’s paralysis can be explained in psychological and therefore world-immanent terms. While Madame Khokhlakova rapturously declared her paralyzed daughter as healed by the elder, “by praying over her on Thursday”, there is room for other explanations, too. Even though Lise is still in her wheelchair when we first meet her, her mother is ecstatic, because color has returned to her cheeks, “her legs have grown stronger”¹¹ and she was able to stand unsupported, and was even wagering that she will be dancing in two weeks time. Father Zosima, in turn, humbly attributes the improvement in Lise’s condition either to natural causes, or to God. In fact, there are indications that Lise’s paralysis is of psychosomatic nature—after all, Lise is introduced with even more obviously hysterical characteristics than Alesha—which makes her improvement, or even recovery after a “talking cure” with Father Zosima quite plausible and medically explicable.¹² Father Zosima’s insight into other people is introduced both as *prozorlivost’* in terms of a characteristic of sainthood, and as in terms of everyday psychology,

¹¹ *BK*, p. 53.

¹² Cf. Vladimir Chizh, a doctor of medicine noted: “Had Dostoevskij not indicated that Lise suffered from hysteria, her recovery would be implausible. But here it is quite obvious that Dostoevskij knew the essence of psychic healing; what’s more, he knew in what cases such healing occurs.” *Dostoevsky as a Psychopathologist*, quoted in Sven Linnér, *Staretz Zosima in The Brothers Karamazov: A Study in the Mimesis of Virtue*, p. 51. Linnér argues that Zosima’s character is always on the brink of what is narratable in space and time, whereas his relation to “other worlds” is consistently depicted as a matter of his faith, not an objective fact imposed by the novel (p. 51).

as a result of his vast experience with people.¹³ If his *prozorlivost'* is understood in terms of everyday psychology, Zosima's ability corresponds to Wittgenstein's account of people-knowledge (*Menschenkenntnis*) based on experience.¹⁴

The contrast between a mystical perspective *sub specie aeternitatis* and a more everyday, realist perspective can be conceptualized aesthetically as the contrast between the total perspective in ancient sacred art, as in the orthodox icons, and the linear perspective popularized in the more secularized Western art of the time. Pavel Florensky, a Russian orthodox priest and theologian contrasted the pre-modern Russian visual tradition, based on Byzantine iconography, and Western illusionistic painting and theater in a 1919 essay called "Reverse Perspective". He emphasizes the total perspective of the orthodox icon, "which often shows parts and surfaces which cannot be seen simultaneously",¹⁵ such as surfaces of both the profile and the frontal face view of *Christ Pantocrator* from the sixteenth century kept at the State Museum of the Lavra of Sergiev Posad,¹⁶ and the lack of linear perspective, that is of parallel lines drawn as if they would converge on the horizon. It is this latter point that yields the title of his essay, for he argues that some orthodox icons present parallel lines as actually diverging on the horizon, and as if they would converge somewhere *in front* of the icon, where the beholder would be standing—as if the icons were looking at the beholder, as opposed to converging on the depicted horizon and creating the illusion of three dimensional depth.¹⁷ Florensky presents this *polycenterdness* of icons as an artistic achievement that articulates movement and a plurality of viewpoints and compares it favorably to linear perspective, which presents only one, static, point of view.

He challenges the usual narrative, according to which ancient art, such as Egyptian, Babylonian and early Christian icons were made in their particular seemingly two-dimensional style due of a *lack* of knowledge and technique for creating linear perspective. He points out that Egyptians clearly knew about and used projective geometry in their architecture, and that ancient Greeks used the technique of linear perspective for creating theater scenography.¹⁸ Flor-

13 *BK*, p. 29.

14 *PI*, II, pp. 574–5.

15 Pavel Florensky, "Reverse Perspective", p. 201.

16 Florensky, "Reverse Perspective", p. 205.

17 Florensky, "Reverse Perspective", p. 204.

18 Florensky, "Reverse Perspective", pp. 208–9. Florensky refers to Vitruvius Pollio's *De architectura libri decem.*, vii, praefatio, 11, who noted that Aeschylus's plays were staged in Athens around 470 BC with consideration the means of creating linear perspective for the stage set. The discussion was noted by Agatharcos in *Commentarius* and later referred to by Vitruvius.

ensky's point is that ancient art lacked linear perspective not because the ancients did not know about it—they obviously utilized it in *applied* arts—rather, because they *did not want to* employ it for their sacred art. Since theater was viewed antagonistically in traditional Russian culture—it was even forbidden in old Russia¹⁹—Florensky's reference to applied arts is clearly pejorative. Florensky justifies the polycentric representation in ancient sacred art—i. e. the presentation of both the frontal view of the shoulders and the profile of the head in ancient Egyptian reliefs of gods or the multiple points of view depicted in early Christian icons—with the striving for “*objectivity and suprapersonal metaphysics*” (original italics), by contrast to representing a “single point of view, and moreover with a single point of view precisely at this specific moment” (original underlining).²⁰ He derides illusionistic theater for seeking to replace reality.²¹ Florensky equates illusionism with modern “subjectivism” and understands orthodox iconography as rooted in ancient sacred art, striving to present a total view: “Illusionism is characteristic of the subjectivism of modern man, whereas nothing could be further from the intentions and thoughts of medieval man, with his roots in antiquity, than the creation of simulacra and a life spent among simulacra.”²²

Florensky's negative views on theater can be read as a reaction to the highly anti-ecclesial tendencies in Russian theater history. Theater was popularized by Tsar Peter I and was strategically employed as an instrument of propaganda for a “new Russia”, a progressive and secularized society after Western models.²³ In theater plays instituted by Peter I, and later Catherine II, the Russian Orthodox Church was regularly treated in a derogatory manner, and the authorities employed theater as a “civilizing” force, acting against the “barbarisms” of old Rus-

Florensky paraphrases Vitruvius, “The question which they posed was how lines might be traced on a plane such that, given a centre in a definite place, the visual rays conducted towards them corresponded to the rays conducted from the eye [of someone standing] in the same place to the corresponding points of an actual building—so that the image of the original object on the retina, to put it in modern terms, would coincide completely with the same image representing this object on the decoration.” (p. 209)

¹⁹ Cf. Joachim Klein, *Russische Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert*, p. 23.

²⁰ Florensky, “Reverse Perspective”, p. 208.

²¹ He writes, for instance that meaning “is offered to the artist's contemplative eye in *living contact* with reality, by growing accustomed to and empathizing with reality, whereas theater decoration wants as much as possible to replace reality with its outward appearance. [...] Stage design is a *deception*, albeit a seductive one; while pure painting is, or at least wants to be, above all *true to life* [...]” Florensky, “Reverse Perspective”, p. 209.

²² Florensky, “Reverse Perspective”, p. 217.

²³ Klein, *Russische Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert*, p. 24.

sia.²⁴ Dostoevsky does not take Florensky's radical anti-theater view, even though he was not in the least bit a friend of doing away with Russian heritage. He certainly read Diderot (whom Empress Catherine II invited to Russia for the sake of the enlightenment of the nation)—the paradigmatic representative of Western illusionistic theater. Indeed, Dostoevsky reports to his friend Nikolai Strakhov to have spent the entire winter of 1868/69 reading Diderot's and Voltaire's works with "benefit and pleasure".²⁵ Diderot approached his playwriting from the perspective of a "hidden spectator", sitting where the audience would be sitting, and viewing the play. He counsels dramatists to visualize each scene, like a "simulacrum" including the movements and the gestures of the characters.²⁶ Thus the perspective on the events is not objective and neutral, but precisely the kind of finite, embodied perspective the audience would have, and he actively strove to mimic the linear perspective from the spatial position of the audience.

It is also well known that Dostoevsky greatly admired Western art, and spent many hours at art galleries in Dresden. He especially loved Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*,²⁷ which, interestingly, Florensky describes as a hybrid form that incorporates both the sacred, polycentric total perspective, and the illusionistic linear perspective—a hybrid form arguably typical of Dostoevsky's art, as well. Florensky attributes to Raphael "the balance of the two principles, the perspectival and the non-perspectival" as corresponding to "the calm co-existence of two worlds, two spaces", the earthly and the transcendent, heavenly. There are several points of possible convergence of lines, not just one as in the linear perspective, and because of this the Madonna appears ethereal.²⁸ (It can be added to Florensky's account that the clouds in the background of the painting upon closer inspection are in fact faces looking onto Maria and Jesus from various different angles. They can be interpreted as angels looking on from the point of view of eternity, which transcends any individual's point of view and ordinary space-time coordinates.)

24 Klein, *Russische Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert*, pp. 7 and 30.

25 6 April 1869. Cf. Kenneth Lantz's *The Dostoevsky Encyclopedia*, "Diderot, Denis", pp. 94–5.

26 Quoted in Romira M. Worvill, "Seeing" *Speech: Illusion and the Transformation of Dramatic Writing in Diderot and Lessing*, pp. 108–9.

27 Konstantin Barsht, "Defining the Face: Observations on Dostoevskii's Creative Process", p. 35. Dostoevsky's wife Anna Grigor'evna Dostoevskaya reports that he visited the gallery in Dresden every day for a month in 1867 "and spent many hours standing in front of Raphael's 'Sistine Madonna'" *ibid.*

28 Florensky, "Reverse Perspective", p. 233. Florensky contrasts Raphael's style with Tintoretto's painting, whose consistent use of linear perspective backfires: "the heavenly vision [of Mark in *The Apostle Mark Liberating a Slave from a Martyr's Death*] seems to be a bodily mass that might fall any minute onto the heads of those witnessing the miracle".

Florensky also draws attention to the curtains framing the *Sistine Madonna*, evoking theater. He justifies this illusionistic element as revealing not an illusion of this world, but the genuine alterity of the other space.²⁹ However, it is possible to interpret the curtains in Raphael's painting as drawing attention to precisely the *paradox* of an artistic and *artificial* representation of the Madonna and the religious striving for a perspective transcending one's own subjective field of vision. It is just this paradox that is also present in Dostoevsky's novels, for instance in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Just like Raphael frames the vision of the *Sistine Madonna* with a theater curtain, suggesting the audience's embodied and individual view of the scene, the transcendent perspective of Staretz Zosima is framed by a markedly *artificial* context of a novel, told by a fictional, particular, concretely situated narrator/author with a finite perspective, who cannot, by definition, grant the kind of total, transcendent perspective the novel seems to suggest. The not wholly negative use of the motif of theatricality in Dostoevsky's works shows that he is not nearly as anti-Western in his aesthetics as Florensky, and that he freely uses both the traditional Russian orthodox and Western illusionistic motifs in his art.

It is in the light of the contiguity of the everyday and the eternally present—*chronos* and *kairos*—in Dostoevsky's art, that Wittgenstein's question in his diary entry on Dostoevsky acquires a new relevance: is it possible to live in eternity as opposed to in chronological time?³⁰ Wittgenstein's own aesthetics takes seriously the total perspective *sub specie aeternitatis*, but is at the same time sensitive to the historicity and specificity of art in relation to the time in which it is produced. This is evident in a question he poses in *PI*, II, p. 230, "Compare a concept with a style of painting. For is even our style of painting arbitrary? Can we choose one at pleasure? (The Egyptian, for instance.)"³¹ Wittgenstein's notion that representation has an ethics and can gesture towards absolute value is salient within Dostoevsky's novels, as well. The unfinalizability (*neopredelennost'*) of a person within these novels is not taken for granted, but it is indeed fragile and constantly endangered by the characters' attempts to impose an image or a narrative on the other and so gain the upper hand. References to literature or visual art are often portrayed as stemming from aggressive and sadistic impulses. Indeed, one of the central oppositions in Dostoevsky's aesthetics is that of *obraz* (shape, form, the face, the icon), as already mention in Bakhtin's characteriza-

²⁹ Florensky, "Reverse Perspective", p. 233.

³⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, pp. 73e-74e.

³¹ "Vergleiche einen Begriff mit einer Malweise: [...] Können wir nach Belieben eine wählen? (z. B. die der Ägypter?)" *PU*, II, p. 578.

tion of the prominence of the motif of *blago-obrazie* (beauty-goodness)³² in Dostoevsky's art, but also of *bezobrazie* (ugliness, sadistic cruelty, bestiality).³³ To list just a few examples: In *Notes from a Dead House*, floggings are described as an art form. For instance, at the prison, Lieutenant Smekalov's delight in orchestrating his administration of punishment is described as "literary vanity" (*iz literaturnogo samoliubii*).³⁴ Furthermore, in the discourse on executioners, the narrator describes how they commonly develop a sadistic taste: "The deftness of the stroke, the knowledge of his profession, the desire to show off before his comrades and the public, tickle his vanity. He does it for the sake of art."³⁵

In *The Brothers Karamazov*, far from coolly arguing against a theistic position, Ivan floods Alesha with images of suffering children, seeking to provoke a theodicy from his little brother. Ivan describes Ottoman soldiers spearing Bulgarian infants on their bayonets, while stressing the sweetness (*sladost'*) he imagines them to be feeling, and perversely reminds of "Turkish sweet tooth". It is this sweetness that he wants to viscerally provoke (*draznit'*) in Alesha, whom he keeps referring to with his patronymic (Fyodorovich) and family name (Karamazov) to remind him of his family resemblance to his father (to use Wittgenstein's term³⁶), that he too is one of the "cruel people—passionate, carnivorous, Karamazovian".³⁷ He comments on Ottoman torture methods, "Artistic, isn't it?"³⁸ (*Hudozhestvenno, ne pravda li?*), while at the same time using his own literary talent to tantalize and provoke his pious little brother into finally proclaiming "Shoot him!" after asking him to "picture!" (*predstav!*) the scene of a particularly outrageous punishment of a serf-boy, who was ordered by a landowner to be torn apart by hunting dogs for throwing a stone at one of them.³⁹ He selects images that are bound to make an impression on his hearers ("here's a little image (*kartinka*) that fascinated me"⁴⁰), while at the same time playing fast and loose with his source material ("I even forgot where I read this"⁴¹). All the while Ivan is claiming that he is merely a "collector of facts"

32 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 186; cf. also fn. 204.

33 Robert Louis Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form: A Study of his Philosophy of Art*, pp. 59–60.

34 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, pp. 192–3.

35 Dostoevsky, *Notes from a Dead House*, p. 198.

36 *PI*, §§ 66–7.

37 *BK*, p. 238.

38 *BK*, p. 239.

39 *BK*, pp. 242–3.

40 *BK*, p. 238.

41 *BK*, p. 242.

and putting on an air of innocence by using the diminutives “*faktiki*” and “*anek-dotiki*”.⁴²

Ivan Karamazov is a journalist but his talents are clearly also artistic: his “little articles” were “always so curiously and quaintly written that they were soon in great demand”, and he is imbued the epithet “the author”⁴³; his writing style is described as manifesting a certain sensual “piquancy”.⁴⁴ Ivan directs Alesha’s visual imagination and in using graphic language *shows* his nihilistic point of view to his brother by making him imagine it and viscerally feel it rather than argue his point.⁴⁵ This strategy continues with his *poema* “The Grand Inquisitor”, a fictional work meant to illustrate his rejection of the Catholic Church. Though Ivan is clearly too complex to be simply characterized as a villain, and voices many of Dostoevsky’s own views, in this instance he is clearly using his artistic powers of authorship to flirt with the tantalizing “sweetness” of sadism, and to provoke a certain effect in Alesha.

The motif of art as sadistic corresponds to Bakhtin’s negatively connoted “reification” (*oveshchestvlenie*) countered with the notion of “unfinalizability” (*neopredelennost’*) of a person, as discussed in his later work, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. However, in the same book, Bakhtin also leaves scope for a positive view of the objectifying function of art. He writes that the “correct understanding of Dostoevsky’s ‘psychologism’, [is] as a mode for visualizing, objectively and realistically, a contradictory collective of other people’s psyches”.⁴⁶ Here, “reification” is substituted for objectivity and Dostoevsky is praised for creating realistic and objective representations of the contradictions and tensions present in Russian society, on the level of individual vying psyches. The conflict of internal desires and external roles, private intentions and social codes has been defining for nineteenth-century Russian literature.⁴⁷ Dostoevsky’s art, in his pursuit of addressing these issues, can be examined along Wittgenstein’s later developed philosophical framework dealing with precisely these questions,

42 Here I was inspired by Denis Zhernokleyev’s presentation “The Lust of the Eyes: The Philosophical Significance of the Feuilleton for Dostoevsky” at the University of Princeton on 17 October 2015.

43 BK, p. 242.

44 BK, p. 16. As Martinsen also notes, Pevear and Volokhonsky translate the original adverb “*pi-kantno*” with “quaintly” (cf. her fn. 12 in her first chapter).

45 Cf. Susan McReynolds’s “You Can Buy the Whole World: The Problem of Redemption in *The Brothers Karamazov*”, p. 104, who also argues that Ivan does not use rational methods of argument to prove his point, but rather fights with aesthetic methods, such as images.

46 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 37.

47 B.C. Meilakh (ed.), *Russkaia povest’ XIX veka: Istorii i problematika zhanra* (1973), pp. 169–99; quoted in Henry W. Pickford, *Thinking with Tolstoy and Wittgenstein*, p. 34.

with the guiding question how a novelist can make intention or 'interiority' in general publically communicable.

That art itself is treated in contradictory terms in Dostoevsky's works—as both destructive and constructive—should not be surprising. After all, paradox is one of Dostoevsky's main leitmotifs, as Morson has argued in "Paradoxical Dostoevsky". The following remarks will seek to avoid the one-sided attention to either the purely malicious semantics of art in Dostoevsky's novels or solely its redemptive qualities in a view *sub specie aeternitatis*, and to investigate its disjunctive and paradoxical potentialities, that is, its encompassing of mutually exclusive possibilities. The observation that art, for Dostoevsky, is neither good nor evil *per se* (in his novels, art itself is encoded in various shades of moral meaning) does not render ethics, i.e. a reflection on established moral codes and meanings, irrelevant. Rather than simply asking who or what is good or evil in Dostoevsky's novels (and it should hopefully be clear by now that this is not at all a relevant question considering the complexity and realism of his characters), I ask in the following sections *how* the portrayal of people and their intentions is represented in Dostoevsky's novels. The multi-aspersive views on Dostoevsky's characters are namely almost always framed by contemporary conflicts that posed urgent questions of *value* to Russian society in the nineteenth century: the doubt cast on the ancient notion of beauty-goodness embodied in orthodox icons and hagiographies by the encounter with Western art and literature; the introduction of the literary field and so the notion of a monetary value of art; breakthroughs in science, medicine and technology rendering ancient magical and religious interpretations of people's behavior and the world obsolete; the introduction of the modern Western system of trial by jury posing ethical questions about lawyers' often highly literary narratives; the revolutionary impulses aimed against Russian absolute monarchy as manifested in literary and visual representations of the medieval notion of kingship; the relation between interior intentions and desires and social codes and conventions in a rapidly modernizing world. Here, Wittgenstein's notion of the ethics of language will be a useful analytic tool to demonstrate how conflicts of value are *shown* in Dostoevsky's novels. Wittgenstein's notion that tautologies and contradictions delimit the sayable,⁴⁸ and show the ethical, or as he writes in *Tractatus* 6.42, "the Higher", which cannot be expressed in truth functional empirical propositions, complements Dostoevsky's paradoxicalism in which his novels contain nothing but contradictions on the level of content, but nonetheless point towards intense ethical reflections on the transformations of entire value systems

⁴⁸ Cf. *TLP* 4.46 ff and 6.12ff.

in nineteenth-century Russia. Furthermore, Wittgenstein's account of aspect seeing or "seeing as", epitomized in the *Gestalt* drawing of a rabbit-duck will be fruitful in analyzing the contradictions in Dostoevsky's works in terms of vision and aesthetics, that is, *aisthesis*, as instances of seeing multiple and contradictory aspects in the same material.

The Idiot on Beauty: On Writing and Objectifying

Redemptive beauty is one of the central motifs of Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. In a letter to his niece Sophia Ivanova, written on 1 (13) January 1868, Dostoevsky brings up this novel, which he was writing at the time:

The main idea of the novel is to portray a positively good man (*izobrazit' polozhitel'no prekrasnogo cheloveka*). There is nothing more difficult in the world, and this is especially true today. All writers—not only ours but Europeans as well—who have all attempted to portray the *positively* good have always given up. Because the problem is a boundless one. The perfect is an ideal, and this ideal, whether it is ours or that of civilized Europe, is still far from having been worked out. There is only one positively good figure (*litso*) in the world—Christ—so that the phenomenon of that boundlessly, infinitely good figure is already in itself an infinite miracle. [...] I shall mention only that, of the good figures in Christian literature, the most complete is that of Don Quixote. But he is only good because at the same time he is ridiculous.⁴⁹

The term used to describe Prince Myshkin, *prekrasnyi* can literally mean "beautiful", but also "good", just like the ancient Greek adjective *kalos*. In the novel itself, Myshkin is not introduced as an especially physically attractive character, but as:

a young man of about twenty-six or twenty-seven, slightly above medium height, with very thick, fair hair, hollow cheeks, and a thin, pointed and almost white little beard. His eyes were large, blue and piercing, and there was something gentle but heavy in their look, something of that strange expression which makes people realize at the first glance that they are dealing with an epileptic. The young man's face, however, was pleasant, sensitive, and lean, though colorless and, at this particular moment, blue with cold.⁵⁰

Myshkin's physical qualities are apparently not as relevant for the epithet of a "positively good/beautiful man" as are his implied moral qualities of gentleness and sensitivity, which come to the fore throughout the novel in his empathetic

49 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Selected Letters*, pp. 269–70; *Pis'ma*, p. 251.

50 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 2.

treatment of other characters. That he is frequently called “an idiot” by other characters places him in the semantic proximity of a specific category of orthodox saints, namely holy fools (*iurodivyi*), who, despite their eccentric and apparently foolish behavior help people in unforeseen ways, such as St. Xenia of Petersburg.⁵¹ Because of the strong Byzantine legacy in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, there is a pronounced proximity to ancient Greek thought. Myshkin is an embodiment of the pre-modern Greek notion of beauty-goodness (*to kalon*), a beauty that signifies moral excellence and has been attributed to orthodox saints. That this has become a highly contested notion in nineteenth-century Russia is signaled by the continuation of Dostoevsky's letter mentioned above, in which he compares Myshkin to Don Quixote, a champion of lost causes and a fervent follower of bygone ideals. This ambivalence is incorporated in the fabric of the novel's narrative as well, for the Prince's famous proclamation that beauty will save the world is introduced in a highly oblique manner: a minor character dying of tuberculosis, Ippolit, asks Myshkin,

Is it true, Prince, that you once said that the world would be saved by “beauty”? Gentlemen,' he shouted in a loud voice to all the company, 'the prince says that the world will be saved by beauty! [...]'⁵²

In response, “The prince looked attentively at him and made no answer.”⁵³ Myshkin neither defends nor denies his supposed claim.

The experience of beauty is associated with Prince Myshkin's epileptic fits, which seem to allow him a glimpse of the Absolute. His attacks are described as preceded by experiences of joy, harmony and understanding:

His mind and heart were flooded by a dazzling light. All his agitation, all his doubts and worries, seemed composed in a twinkling, culminating in a great calm, full of serene and harmonious joy and hope, full of understanding and the knowledge of the final cause.⁵⁴

The actual fit inverts the experience: it is “unendurable”.⁵⁵ This experience of beauty is apparently a product of his illness—it is unreal and therefore in close

51 Cf. Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, especially pp. 71–98.

52 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 366.

53 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 367.

54 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 217. Dostoevsky, too, suffered of epilepsy. According to his own notes, he had epileptic seizures approximately every three weeks since he was twenty-six. Cf. James L. Rice, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art*, p. xiv.

55 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 217.

proximity to artificiality of art—yet the prince refuses to give up on its significance. He “arrived at a paradoxical conclusion:”

“What does it matter that it is an abnormal tension, if the result, if the moment of sensation, remembered and analysed in the state of health, turns out to be harmony and beauty brought to their highest point of perfection, and gives a feeling, undivided and undreamt of until then, of completeness, proportion, reconciliation, and an ecstatic and prayerful fusion in the highest synthesis of life?” [...] “At that moment,” he told Rogozhin in Moscow during their meetings there, “at that moment the extraordinary saying that *there shall be time no longer* becomes, somehow, comprehensible to me. I suppose,” he added, smiling, “this is the very second in which there was not time enough for the water from the pitcher of the epileptic Mahomet to spill, while he had plenty of time in that very second to behold all the dwellings of Allah.”⁵⁶

The experience of beauty and clarity is described in mystical terms, *sub specie aeternitatis* and in reference to both the Apocalypse (*Revelations* 10:6) and Prophet Mohammed’s visions⁵⁷ and in classical Greek beauty ideals of completeness and proportion. While Alexei Karamazov’s oscillation between hysteria and mysticism is subtler in the later work *The Brothers Karamazov* (as discussed in the previous chapter), *The Idiot* emphatically portrays a multi-aspersive character (in Wittgenstein’s sense) who can clearly be viewed as a very sick man or as a visionary. Since contemporary science included “pathological religiosity” as one of the typical symptoms of epilepsy,⁵⁸ Myshkin’s whole character can easily be seen under the aspect of the pathological. And indeed, Dostoevsky’s nineteenth-century Russia allowed for both interpretations, since medical science challenged the authority of religious interpretation by incarcerating and medically treating people traditionally understood as holy fools.⁵⁹ The term “idiot” is associated with a gesture of humility in sacred texts (as a self-attribution),⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, pp. 217–8.

⁵⁷ Dostoevsky glorified his own epilepsy and compared it with Mohammed’s divine visions. Cf. James L. Rice, “The Covert Design of ‘The Brothers Karamazov’”, p. 356.

⁵⁸ Cf. Vladimir Chizh, *Dostoevsky as a Psychopathologist*, quoted in Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 78. A doctor contemporary to Dostoevsky diagnosed Mohammed, Joan of Arc and Ignatius of Loyola as epileptics because of their reports of mystical visions. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁵⁹ Cf. the case of Ivan Iakovlevich Koreisha, whom many considered a holy fool and a “prophet”, who was incarcerated in Moscow, and whose case study Dostoevsky was familiar with. The character of Semen Iakovlevich in *Demons* is based on Koreisha. Cf. Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, pp. 45–9.

⁶⁰ Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East*, p. 94; cf. also Paul’s reference to himself as an idiot (*idiotes*) in 2. Corinthians 11,6, quoted in Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 89.

and is related to the saint type of the holy fool. However, it was *also* considered an illness associated with epilepsy in nineteenth-century Russia.⁶¹ In the most prominent nineteenth-century dictionary of Russian by Vladimir Dal, an “idiot” is defined both as “weak-minded” and as a holy fool (*iurodivyi*); in a secondary meaning it signifies a monster, also in a moral sense.⁶² With the breakthrough in medical science, identifying epilepsy (and “idiocy”) as a disease of the brain, the more mystical understanding of the condition lost in currency, including also the more sinister ones that understood epilepsy in terms of demonic possession.⁶³ And in fact, Myshkin is aware of the multiplicity of interpretations of his experiences, as Harriet Murav argues, invoking Bakhtin, for he uses both the medical term “abnormal tension” and the mystical notion of “the highest synthesis of life”.⁶⁴ One might speak of the Prince’s self-aware multi-aspectivity: he knows that he can be seen as a pathological case and as a mystic.

The most literal manner in which the prince *creates* beauty is by means of calligraphy—from *kalos-graphein*, which in Greek literally means “beautiful/good-writing”. It is because of his excellent penmanship which is not only clearly legible but strikingly beautiful that Myshkin gets employed by General Epanchin, and so becomes a part of the family Epanchin’s social universe. The first writing sample Myshkin shows to Epanchin is a signature of the fourteenth-century Russian orthodox abbot Pafnuty, in medieval Russian characters. The next is a hybrid: the form of letters is taken from eighteenth-century French manuscripts and adapted to Russian Cyrillic letters.⁶⁵ Myshkin embodies both the pre-modern ideal of *to kalon*, or beauty-goodness, by imitating the orthodox abbot Pafnuty and his medieval script (and, as already explained Russian medieval culture understood itself as deriving its roots from Greek, i.e. Eastern Christianity), as well as the eighteenth-century French aesthetic tastes from the age of Diderot. Myshkin praises the first, “They used to sign their names beautifully, all those old abbots and bishops of ours, and sometimes with what taste and with what care!” and briefly characterizes the second as “the writing of the market-place, the writing of the public scribes [...]. You will admit that it is not without its good points.”⁶⁶ The beauty/goodness-writer Myshkin reflects the novelist Dostoevsky,

61 Rice, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art*, p. 120.

62 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 90.

63 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 76, p. 148.

64 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, pp. 82–3.

65 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, pp. 30–1.

66 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, pp. 30–1.

who is at the same time deeply rooted in Russia's traditions and culture⁶⁷ and seeking to succeed within the new game rules of the literary market place imported from the West.

Myshkin's enactment of a Christly, *all*-encompassing love leads to tragedy due to his inability to decide on one woman between the two rivals Aglaia and Nastas'ia, implying that his lofty ideals are unlivable in the 'real' world, where love relationships jealously demand partiality. The motif of an aesthetic object pervades the novel in regard to its female characters: both Nastas'ia Filippovna and Aglaia (whose name in Greek means beauty and splendor) are admired for their beauty and gazed upon like works of art.⁶⁸ The novel arguably enacts the tensions of modernity, in which the pre-modern ideal of beauty-goodness is exposed to forces of commodification and demands of the market, and art is challenged by new technologies such as photography. As Jens Herlth argues in Bourdieu's terms, the advent of the literary field in nineteenth-century Russia, that is, the possibility to sell one's novels and art, created dilemmas for the self-image of authors. Namely, Russian novelists like Gogol, Dostoevsky and Tolstoy understood their role as addressing the moral issues of their society. Dostoevsky viewed his inevitable participation in the logic of the market (for he did not inherit a large fortune and depended on his writing for his income) in a rather conflicted manner, as contradicting the role of moral edification.⁶⁹ Beauty, traditionally understood as imbued with intrinsic value, became the object of bargaining on the newly established art and literature market. In order to be an author at all in his circumstances and in the rapidly changing Russian society, Dostoevsky had to learn to write with the aim of offering both moral orientation to Russian society *and* of playing by the rules of market demand, by writing novels that will sell. Like Myshkin, he needed to be able to write both beautifully-good, like Abbot Pafnuty, *and* in the "writing of the market-place", as he terms the handwriting copied from eighteenth-century French manuscripts.

General Epanchin calls Prince Myshkin an "artist" for his calligraphy skills,⁷⁰ and he is considered a "philosopher" by one of his daughters, Adelaida.⁷¹ Upon their first meeting, Epanchin's daughters characterize Myshkin as someone who

67 He grew up reading the *Lives of Saints* and visiting the monastery of St. Serge outside of Moscow. Cf. Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Seeds of Revolt*, pp. 23–37.

68 Cf. Robert Bird, *Fyodor Dostoevsky*, p. 132.

69 Cf. Jens Herlth's "'An upheaval was so necessary': Authorial Conversion and the Literary Public in Nineteenth-Century Russia (Gogol, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky)", pp. 71, 82, 88.

70 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 31.

71 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 56.

is able to perceive particularly well. After the Prince's admission that he does not know whether he is able to come up with a subject for Adelaida's next painting, nor whether he has "learnt to look at things" abroad, but that he was happy in a pastoral Swiss village, they ask, "Happy? [...] Do you know how to be happy? In that case how can you say you didn't learn how to look at things? I daresay you could teach us."⁷² Recalling Zosima's *prozorlivost'* (the ability to read people and situations) in the later novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, the prince's ability to "look at things", and find suitable objects for paintings, is somehow linked with his ability to be happy. Zosima's philosophy of living life as if it were already paradise, even in most modest conditions, and his appreciation of natural beauty, is present in Myshkin's claim, that after having witnessed the natural beauty of Switzerland, he "could not help feeling that one might find an immense life in prison too".⁷³ Furthermore, the Epanchins note his story-telling abilities.⁷⁴ For instance, he tells them about an execution he had witnessed in France with great empathy for the condemned man, and recommends the condemned man's face just before he is taken to the guillotine as an apt subject for Adelaida's next painting.

Faces in general seem to fascinate Myshkin. He seems to 'read' the ladies before him: Adelaida is described as having a "sympathetic face", Alexandra as having the "kindest heart" and Mrs. Epanchin as being "a perfect child in everything", which, given Myshkin's high esteem for children, is supposed to be a compliment.⁷⁵ He only demurs from interpreting Aglaia's face, because of its extraordinary beauty, and he innocently blunders by comparing her face to the portrait of Nastas'ia Filippovna, causing a commotion.⁷⁶ His frame of reference for interpreting reality are existing art works: he compares the face of the prisoner condemned to death with "a painting [he] saw in Basel",⁷⁷ and Alexandra Epanchina's face to that of "Holbein's Madonna in Dresden".⁷⁸ Upon seeing a replica of Holbein's painting of dead Christ (*Der Leichnam Christi im Grabe*), which violates the Eastern Christian understanding of a unity of sanctity, or goodness and

72 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 55.

73 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 56. He also of course recalls Dostoevsky's own imprisonment, as well as his mock execution, for he tells of an acquaintance sentenced to death and given amnesty at the last moment, replacing the death sentence with another punishment.

74 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 63.

75 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 73.

76 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 74.

77 This painting is presumably Hans Fries's "The Beheading of John the Baptist" (1514). Cf. Sarah Young, *Dostoevsky's The Idiot and Ethical Foundations of Narrative*, p. 87.

78 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 73.

beauty (*to kalon*), depicting Christ in a state of decomposition, Myshkin cries out, “Why, some people may lose their faith by looking at that picture!”⁷⁹ Myshkin furthermore is able to convey what he sees to others in a manner that they, too, start seeing as he sees. This is a quality Dostoevsky attributed to artists. He writes towards the beginning of “Mr. –bov and the Question of Art”, a polemical article criticizing both utilitarian aesthetics of the radicals and the attitude of *l’art pour l’art*:

[...] one may know a fact, see it oneself a hundred times, and still not get the impression one would if somebody else, a particular person, stands beside you and points out to you that very fact, but of course in his own way, explains it to you in his own words, compels you to look at that fact with his own glance. A real talent is recognized by just this influence.⁸⁰

According to Dostoevsky, the artist should be able to provide a new perspective to the readers and have an influence on current affairs, and Myshkin, too, attempts to steer the course of the events in the novel by attempting to evoke compassion in other characters, which famously ends in disaster.

As Sarah Young argues in *Dostoevsky’s The Idiot and the Ethical Foundations of Narrative: Reading, Narrating, Scripting*, the plot of the novel is very much dependent on the interacting narrating capacities of the characters involved, that is, their ability to impose their image of ‘reality’ on the others. She notes, in Bakhtin’s terms,

The fundamental impulse in relation to the self is to free it from the control of others’ images, while in relation to the other, the main impulse exhibited by the characters is to impose their own images of the other on them and thus gain control over them and how they are perceived. Therefore, control involves the tendency to finalize the other (in Bakhtinian terms, to utter what claims to be the final word about the other) and to objectify them (to deny the other’s sense of their own subjectivity) [...] ⁸¹

She is alluding to Bakhtin’s well-known characterization of Dostoevsky’s characters, who are resisting finalizing reification: “a human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process”⁸² and in Dostoevsky’s works, his characters “all do furious battle with such definitions of their personality in the mouths of other people. They all acutely sense

⁷⁹ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 210.

⁸⁰ Fyodor Dostoevsky, “Mr. –bov and the Question of Art”, p. 118.

⁸¹ Young, *Dostoevsky’s The Idiot and Ethical Foundations of Narrative*, p. 12.

⁸² Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, p. 58.

their own inner unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow, as it were, from within and to render *untrue* any externalizing and finalizing definition of them.”⁸³

In *The Idiot*, visual art competes with literary art, for characters also draw on other literary works, such as *Madame Bovary*, Pushkin's “Poor Knight”, Alexandre Dumas's *La dame aux camélias* etc. to impose their ‘image’ on the other. However, the use of fantasy to construct others and perceive them “more deeply”, often misfires and leads to what may be called a rather phantasmatic loss of reality. While in Part I of the novel, Prince Myshkin's sympathetic perception of others is reliable—Mrs. Epanchin enthusiastically confirms Prince Myshkin's ‘reading’ of her as a “perfect child”⁸⁴; he compassionately perceives Nastas'ia and allows her freedom of choice—in Part II this perception, coupled with his capacity to narrate his own life, starts to decline. The reasons for the decline are not explicit, as there is a six-month gap between the plot in Part I and Part II, but it is possible to ascribe it to Myshkin's worsening health, or his entanglement in money affairs due to his sudden inheritance, or his repeated failures in getting his saintly script across to the other characters in the novel. As Young points out, when the Epanchins stage a party to introduce the prince to “the society” and announce his engagement to Aglaia in Part II, “Myshkin's ability to read faces was emphasized in the first scenes of the novel [...] but now he is easily fooled by dissembling appearances: ‘all this society the prince took at face value’”.⁸⁵ He becomes an easy target for other people's overwriting of his ‘script’—as when Nastas'ia Filippovna more or less orders him to marry Aglaia, thus directing him towards the engagement with a seemingly more manageable bride. He becomes a “powerless bystander with neither a role to play nor a choice to make”⁸⁶ in his own life.

The prince's perception of reality via the mediation of art is most salient in his triangle relationship with Nastas'ia Filippovna and Aglaia Epanchin. He first sees Nastas'ia's portrait, a large photograph (*fotograficheskii portret bol'shogo formata*),⁸⁷ which he admires on several occasions, before he sees her. He even furtively kisses it when nobody is looking.⁸⁸ At the beginning of the novel, before Nastas'ia appears on the scene in person, her portrait is passed around from Gania to General Epanchin, to Prince Myshkin, to Mrs. Epanchin

83 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 59.

84 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 73.

85 Young, *Dostoevsky's The Idiot and Ethical Foundations of Narrative*, p. 128.

86 Young, *Dostoevsky's The Idiot and Ethical Foundations of Narrative*, p. 132.

87 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 26.

88 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 77.

and the Epanchin sisters, and back to Gania.⁸⁹ Mrs. Epanchin “examined Nastasya Filippovna’s portrait [...] slightly scornfully, holding it at arm’s length in a way that was calculated to make an effect” before “throwing down the portrait on the table with a haughty gesture”.⁹⁰ Aglaia, in turn, “cast only a cursory glance at the portrait, screwed up her eyes, pushed out her lower lip, walked away, and sat down a little distance away with folded arms”.⁹¹ The circulation of the physical object, the photograph, parallels Nastas’ia’s fate of being treated as an object of bargain, for several of the main male characters are willing to pay large sums of money for her hand in marriage. Even the prince, who pays the portrait sustained, sympathetic attention, and as opposed to others tries to discern the personality of the woman portrayed, later on joins the degrading bidding process by revealing his large inheritance. When Nastas’ia finally appears on scene—the Prince happens to open the door for her—he is dumbfounded and as unresponsive and absorbed as if he were in fact looking at a work of art. He “stared at her speechlessly”,⁹² even after she had entered the house and caused quite a commotion with her sudden appearance, the prince “has not yet recovered from his stupor at the sight of Nastas’ia Filippovna”; he “stood like a post”,⁹³ implying a Diderotian absorption and *oubliance de soi* in face of art. Later on in the course of the novel, as the Prince’s condition deteriorates and while getting ever deeper entrenched in the rivalry between Aglaia and Nastas’ia, he is described as looking at Aglaia, “attentively [...] without taking his eyes off her for five minutes at a time [...]: he seemed to be looking at her as though she were a mile away or as though it were her portrait and not herself he was looking at.”⁹⁴ Aglaia, too, is reified into a painting-like object, but Myshkin here precisely fails to see her, and his aesthetic perception only has the function of distancing him from people around him, so that he sees her “as though she were a mile away”.

But there is another—far more salient—aesthetic objectification of Nastas’ia Filippovna of a more brutally physical and criminal sort. Totskii, a fifty-five-year-old wealthy man known for his “extraordinary artistic tastes” and as an “exceedingly fine judge of female beauty”,⁹⁵ who calls himself an “inveterate sensual-

⁸⁹ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, pp. 26, 76, 77, 79.

⁹⁰ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 77.

⁹¹ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 77.

⁹² Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 98.

⁹³ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 100.

⁹⁴ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 332.

⁹⁵ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 36.

ist”,⁹⁶ looked after the upbringing and education of Nastas’ia from the age of seven, having judged that the impoverished orphan will develop into a beautiful woman. While he stylizes himself as her rescuer in elevated circles, hinting at Alexander Dumas’s, *fil*s, novel *La Dame aux camélias*—and therefore implying that Nastas’ia is a high society prostitute like the main character therein—it is clear that he had sexually abused Nastas’ia from a young age. In addition, Rogozhin’s murder of Nastas’ia Filippovna at the end of the novel is aestheticism driven *ad absurdum*: she is presented as a beautifully arranged corpse, like a figure of a sleeping woman in a painting. Rogozhin takes Prince Myshkin to her, with a quiet theatricality drawing the curtains of the bed where her body laid arranged. She lay under the covers, as if she were sleeping, and, “protruding from under the sheet, the tip of a bare foot could be made out: it seemed as though it were carved out of marble”.⁹⁷ A single fly “after flying over the bed, settled at the head of it”,⁹⁸ thus marring the aesthetically impeccable murder scene, and subverting the euphemistic aestheticist suggestion that would harmlessly render her a painting, or a marble sculpture, or a theater corpse, and indicating ‘real’ flesh that is rotting.

In this closing scene of the novel, Rogozhin speaks in first person plural to the Prince, “So we won’t confess and won’t let them take her away”,⁹⁹ and the Prince does not seem to resist being implied in the murder in this way, even though he was physically absent when Rogozhin committed it. As both men grow increasingly incoherent and trembling, the Prince,

as though in utter exhaustion and despair [...] pressed his face against Rogozhin’s pale and motionless face; tears flowed from his eyes on Rogozhin’s cheeks, but perhaps he no longer noticed his own tears and knew nothing about them...¹⁰⁰

As Myshkin and Rogozhin embrace cheek to cheek, their tears intermingling, their four eyes looking at Nastas’ia’s corpse as if they belonged to a single monstrous creature, it is suggested that their united fields of vision signify that in the end, both Myshkin’s benevolent admiration of Nastas’ia and his mission to save her, and Rogozhin’s lustful possessiveness converge in the same result, the same sight—in the deadening objectification of the woman they wanted to love.

⁹⁶ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 43.

⁹⁷ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 583.

⁹⁸ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 583.

⁹⁹ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 584.

¹⁰⁰ Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 587.

Resisting Commodification in Image and Word

Already Bakhtin had referred to Nastas'ia Filippovna as a prime example of a Dostoevskian character who struggles “to destroy that framework of *other people's* words”. He writes, “Sometimes this struggle becomes an important tragic motif in the character's life (as, for example, with Nastasya Filippovna).”¹⁰¹ Sarah Young proposes to focus on Nastas'ia Filippovna and her struggle against reification as the central plot motor of the novel.¹⁰² It is also worth pointing out that, while prince Myshkin is described as an “artist” in the broad sense of the capacity for empathic perception of others, a capacity which, as already mentioned, apparently degenerates in the course of the novel, Nastas'ia is described like a work of art. The first glimpse we receive of her is of her portrait, a large photograph that gets passed around the novel's personage more or less carelessly, with the exception of Myshkin, who is the only one that takes several closer looks and who perceives the suffering in her face. Totskii, who takes charge of her life at an early age and sexually abuses her for years, creates a beautiful pastoral environment for her to live in, a country house where she is surrounded by “musical instruments, an exquisite library of novels for young ladies, pictures, prints, pencils, paints and brushes, a wonderful Italian greyhound”,¹⁰³ as if she were a young lady in a genre painting, as Olga Matich has pointed out.¹⁰⁴ And, in Nastas'ia's own words, “[Totskii] used to stay for two months a year, dishonor, insult, excite and deprave me, and then make his exit”¹⁰⁵—in perverse contrast to the pastoral scenography of his own design. Furthermore, her death scene, as described above, is framed by allusions to various art-forms: she is behind a curtain (of the bed), she looks like a beautiful sleeping “figure”, with only her toe showing, and her toe is like that of a marble statue.

She is doubly objectified: both as the perfect representation of a nineteenth-century cultivated gentleman's object of desire as depicted in paintings and sculpture—and literally, by being murdered and turned into a dead thing for Rogozhin and Myshkin to tearfully watch over, forever incapacitated to escape their gaze. This imagery runs parallel to the other characters' continual attempts at her finalization (in late Bakhtin's sense) and thus objectification: in their judg-

101 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 59.

102 “The Disappearing Heroine”, in Young, *Dostoevsky's The Idiot and the Ethical Foundations of Narrative*, pp. 28–72.

103 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 38.

104 Olga Matich, “What's to Be Done about Poor Nastasja: Nastas'ja Filippovna's Literary Prototypes”, p. 50.

105 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 166.

ment of her as “a fallen woman”, even though she was unquestionably Totskii’s victim, and in their dealings with her like with a commodity, as when Totskii promises a large sum of money to Gania if he marries Nastas’ia, and when Rogozhin appears with an even larger sum that he throws at her feet as his marriage proposal. Even though she had appeared to accept Totskii and Gania’s ‘reasonable’ proposal, she has reserved the right to back out of this business transaction, even on the wedding day itself.¹⁰⁶ As Young notes,

In the face of these objectifying assumptions, which undermine her sense of selfhood and turn her into a commodity, [...] [the heroine] signals her clear perception of her position and the beginning of her fight to free herself from the control of Totskii’s script, and her determination to retain the right to make her own choice and say the final word about herself, and rejection of the finalizing judgments of others.¹⁰⁷

As Young goes on to argue, this fight is also within the means of narrating, or scripting, that is, an aesthetic presentation of herself. While the objectifying activities of Totskii and Rogozhin more than justify the sentiment against the aestheticization of life on terms of the privileged, over and against the powerless, her fight against them is not in an extra-aesthetic realm. Rather, she resists them with their own means.

For one, it is Nastas’ia herself who gives her portrait to Gania, confusing him thoroughly about her intentions.¹⁰⁸ By this act, she seemingly affirms her assent to the marriage while all the while firmly maintaining her loophole that she may renegade on the wedding at any time. What is judged as capriciousness and proneness to drama and scandal by the other characters is part of her fight against objectification and others’ finalizing judgments. While her behavior is of course ultimately masochistic and self-destructive, what motivates it is an emancipatory impulse. She does not wish to be pinned down to a rigid interpretation and she counteracts their objectifying intents by giving them an ‘authorized’ counter-image, a portrait of herself that only Myshkin studies with sufficient attention. Gania’s theory why Nastas’ia gave him her portrait demonstrates his entanglement in mercenary logic of exchange: “I don’t know if it wasn’t meant as a hint at my going to see her empty-handed, without a present, on such a day.”¹⁰⁹ She breaks it off with Gania when Rogozhin appears at her birthday party with a higher bid, seemingly confirming others’ image of her

106 Young points out that Nastas’ia had granted Gania the same right to renegade on the deal, as well. Cf. *Dostoevsky’s The Idiot and Ethical Foundations of Narrative*, p. 35.

107 Young, *Dostoevsky’s The Idiot and Ethical Foundations of Narrative*, p. 35.

108 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 26. Young mentions this on p. 35.

109 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 26.

as a prostitute, but she immediately burns Rogozhin's money in front of her outraged guests. Then she runs off with Rogozhin on her own terms, leaving his money in the fire. The birthday party, having started as a parlor game in which every character had ample opportunity to lie and aesthetically present themselves in favorable light, becomes a means for Nastas'ia Filippovna to theatrically turn the tables and entirely change the rules of the game from that of a predictable transaction of money for a commodity (a complacent young lady from a painting) to an open-ended arsenal of possible moves and counter-moves in a new type of a game unintelligible to the other characters. This development is manifest in the novel's form, as well, which loses its straightforward realist character after Part I and Nastas'ia and Rogozhin's dramatic exit.

The Idiot starts as a fairly paradigmatic nineteenth-century Russian realist novel, namely with the arrival of a train: "At about nine o'clock in the morning at the end of November, during a thaw, the Warsaw train was approaching Petersburg at full speed."¹¹⁰ Beside clear-cut place and time references ("about nine o'clock in the morning", "at the end of November", "the Warsaw train", "Petersburg"), the narrator utilizes an omniscient mode by informing the reader of two passengers in this train, sitting opposite of each other, remarking, "Had they known what was so extraordinary about them at this moment, they would no doubt have been surprised that chance should have so strangely placed them opposite each other in a third-class compartment of the Warsaw-Petersburg train."¹¹¹ The novel starts out with the narrator in the know about the characters he introduces, marking from the very beginning the significance of Myshkin and Rogozhin's encounter, whose rivalry over Nastas'ia Filippovna becomes one of the main motors of the novel's plot. However, after the parlor game at Nastas'ia Filippovna's birthday party at the end of Part One, in which she turns the tables on the mercenary logic of bartering for her hand in marriage—and so, in Wittgenstein's terms, makes up new rules as she goes along in her refusal to politely adhere to market logic—the narrator becomes visibly more insecure at the beginning of Part Two:

Two days after his strange adventure at Nastasya Filippovna's party, with which we concluded the first part of our story, Prince Myshkin hastened to leave for Moscow to settle the business of his unexpected inheritance. [...] [A]bout the prince's adventures in Moscow and during his absence from Petersburg, we are able to give little information. The prince was away for exactly six months, and even those who had reason to be interested in his fate could find out very little about him during all that time. It is true that certain rumors did

110 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 1.

111 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 1.

reach some of them, though rather infrequently, but they were mostly strange and almost always contradictory.¹¹²

Far from being omniscient, the narrator openly admits not knowing what happened during those six months that Myshkin spent in Moscow, and seemed just as dependent on “infrequent”, “strange” and “contradictory” rumors about him as the other intradiegetic characters.¹¹³ He is demoted from the divine perspective of someone capable to see ‘into’ everyone’s hearts to a concretely situated perspective, and is just as dependent on his own five senses for access to information as the other characters are. His perspective oscillates between these two modes throughout the novel, creating an effect of epistemic uncertainty uncharacteristic for nineteenth-century realist novels. *The Idiot* suddenly shifts to an entirely unpredictable and open-ended collection of impressionistic encounters, conversations, and frenzied phantasmagoric chases, approximating the experiential perspective of intradiegetic characters. It therefore foreshadows, though not with the same consistency, the kind of limited narrator perspective characteristic of Dostoevsky’s later works like *Demons* and *The Brothers Karamazov*.

In *The Idiot*, Nastas’ia oscillates between the binary set she is unable to overcome: her hope of love and acceptance as symbolized by Myshkin, and her despair and self-destructive drive, as symbolized by Rogozhin. In the end, the latter prevails, and Young suggests that it is in fact Nastas’ia Filippovna who ‘authors’ her own murder by Rogozhin, in the final struggle to have the final word about herself. She writes letters to a third party (Aglaia) and *presents* them to Rogozhin to read before posting them. In them she mentions a murder scene that troubles her that she had read about in the paper. She writes,

I am sure that [Rogozhin] has a razor wrapped around with silk thread hidden in a drawer, like that murderer in Moscow; that man, too, lived in the same house as his mother, and he, too, had wrapped silk thread round his razor to cut a throat with. [...] I would kill him from fear, but he will kill me first... He laughed just now and said that I was raving; he knows I am writing to you.¹¹⁴

112 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 171.

113 Sarah Young mentions the sudden lapse in information given to the reader after Part I of the novel: “[...] the six-month gap before Prince Myshkin returns to St Petersburg at the beginning of Part Two further distances the reader, already faced with a mass of unreliable and contradictory information”, *Dostoevsky’s The Idiot and Ethical Foundations of Narrative*, p. 47.

114 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 437.

While the letter is, to all appearances, addressed to Aglaia, the intended audience is in fact Rogozhin. In the end, as Young points out, Rogozhin's murder of Nastas'ia perfectly re-enacts that scene from the paper described in her letter.¹¹⁵ In addition to Young's analysis, it can be added that the silk thread evokes the seemingly harmless and pleasurable feel of aesthetic luxury that merely coats the surface of the razor blade that objectifies, literally, by murdering.¹¹⁶ This detail can be read to symbolize the potentially deadly effect of seductive narratives and pictures.

The question that remains is how and in what relationship does the novel *The Idiot* as a whole stand to its motifs of various forms of aesthetic objectification. It clearly *does not affirm* the outcome of Nastas'ia Filippovna's death, the objectified image of her corpse at the end, for Rogozhin is sentenced to fifteen years of hard labor in Siberia, and Myshkin loses his mind, and spends the remainder of his days at a Swiss clinic. Furthermore, both of their states are described as removed from reality: Rogozhin listened to his sentence in trial "grimly, silently and 'dreamily'",¹¹⁷ whereas the prince suffered a "complete breakdown"¹¹⁸—the states of dreaming and insanity evoking unreality and therefore proximity with fiction and the artifice of aesthetic presentation. Even Mrs. Epanchina, who comes to visit the prince with her family cries, in the closing line of the novel, "And all this, all this life abroad, and all this Europe of yours is just a delusion, and all of us abroad are a delusion"¹¹⁹—voicing partly Dostoevsky's anti-Western leanings, but also, on another level, ending the novel on the self-referential note of a fictional character aware of being part of a "delusion", a work of fiction. This would seem to imply that even the novel as a whole is not innocent of the machinations of aesthetic objectifications it exposes and that art and aesthetics in general are to be distrusted—a self-defeating conclusion for a novel.

115 Sarah Young discusses Nastas'ia Filippovna's letters in detail from the point of view of availability of information to the involved parties (including Myshkin, who upon arrival at the murder scene realizes it is "like in Moscow") and Nastas'ia Filippovna's deliberate orchestration of the availability of information (cf. pp. 65–70).

116 It is striking that in *Demons*, Stavrogin, too, hangs himself on a "strong silk cord", possibly symbolizing the life-time of self-aestheticizing which lead to his suicide (p. 678).

117 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 589. The term "dreamily", which is used in inverted commas in the original may refer to the *terminus technicus* in nineteenth-century medicine, namely the so-called "dreamy state" that directly precedes an epileptic seizure, as introduced by the psychiatrist Hughlings Jackson. Cf. Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 76.

118 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 76.

119 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 591.

Rather than being a generalized and self-contradicting expression of suspicion at aesthetic presentation *per se*, *The Idiot* as a whole is a critique of commodification of art. As discussed, Nastas'ia Filippovna is introduced through her portrait, and we are invited to dwell on this portrait for many pages before she even appears on the scene. Even though the picture is mostly referred to as the "portrait" (*portret*), it is arguably not an accident that it is a photograph as opposed to a painting. Photography had first appeared in Russia in 1839 and was, as elsewhere, popularly understood to be superior to painting in its capacity of mimesis.¹²⁰ However, as Francois Brunet noted, photography in 1840 was "largely concurrent with the emergence of literature as a commodity and a cultural language of modernity".¹²¹ Just as in the advent of the literary field, the advent of easily reproducible images raised questions on the relations between art and monetary value, that is, the commodification of art. In "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility", Walter Benjamin asserts that despite their reproducibility, photographic portraits retain a certain remnant of the "aura", a sense of uniqueness and untouchable irreplaceability, of the original,¹²² and this was a common understanding in the late nineteenth-century Russia, as well.¹²³ As already discussed, by giving a photograph of herself to Gania, Nastas'ia Filippovna was introducing an 'authorized' 'image' of herself into circulation, to replace the negative impression of herself as a high-class prostitute that was lodged into most people's minds. Assuming that the "aura" of the original person was still understood to be present in photographic portraits, her action can be interpreted as based on a hope to communicate something of her 'true' self, namely her suffering. In nineteenth-century Russian, the term "photography" was russified and commonly called *svetopis'*, i. e. light-writ-

120 Katherine Hill Reischl, "Photography and the Crisis of Authorship: Tolstoy and the Popular Photographic Press", p. 533.

121 "Photography and Literature", p. 115, quoted in Hill Reischl, "Photography and the Crisis of Authorship: Tolstoy and the Popular Photographic Press", p. 537.

122 "In the fleeting expression of a human face, the aura beckons from early photographs for the last time." Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility", p. 27. Benjamin defines the aura as "a unique apparation of a distance", p. 23; "Im flüchtigen Ausdruck eines Menschengesichts winkt aus den frühen Photographien die Aura zum letzten Mal." Cf. *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, p. 23; "einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie sein mag" (ibid., p. 16).

123 Hill Reischl discusses the phenomenon of the role of photographs in the celebrity cult of authors like Tolstoy in nineteenth-century Russia. These photographs were thought to contain the "aura" of the author. For instance, photographs of Tolstoy were in high demand on the market place. "Photography and the Crisis of Authorship: Tolstoy and the Popular Photographic Press", p. 542.

ing,¹²⁴ the literal translation of the Greek term. By making explicit the “writing” aspect contained in the Greek *photo graphein*, in the Russian popular awareness, photographic images retained the semantic proximity to the realm of the written word. Even though Dostoevsky does not employ the term *svetopis'* directly in the novel, its use was common enough to allow for this associative interpretation. This etymology allows Nastas'ia's photograph to work like a narrated description of her, which can be ‘read’ like Myshkin does.

However, Nastas'ia's gesture of bestowing a photographic portrait of herself to Gania suggests a hint of futility from the very beginning. The technology of reproduction of photographs strips them of the kind of value that is still imbued in paintings, since each photographic print is a copy, and there is no sense to speak of an original.¹²⁵ This devaluation is visible in other characters' careless treatment of the portrait. It would have been difficult to imagine Madame Epanchina haughtily throwing down a painting, or Gania negligently brushing it aside. Unable to appreciate the aura of her portrait, meant to reveal her ‘real’ self, their outward behavior parallel their incomprehension of Nastas'ia Filippovna's ‘true’ motives.

Furthermore, the novel introduces a parallel between the commodification of art and the commodification of people and can therefore be analyzed along new aestheticists' reading of Theodor Adorno. As Simon Malpas has pointed out in Adorno's terms, the commodification of aesthetic appreciation degenerates to viewing art as a leisure activity, a reified “thing among things” that has a monetary value measured in subjective and psychological terms of enjoyment.¹²⁶ In *The Idiot*, Totskii is a perverse caricature of a privileged aesthete who is without any real appreciation and love for the aesthetic object he ‘owns’—namely Nastas'ia Filippovna. He views her simply as the source of his enjoyment for the “two months a year” he would visit her in his times of leisure, as a welcome relief from work. Nastas'ia Filippovna is a personified work of art that rebels against such treatment—like a young lady from a genre painting who throws away all the paraphernalia of that seemingly idyllic scene, and resists any kind of instrumentalization and finalization. At the same time, she is a work of art, literally, as a heroine in Dostoevsky's novel.

124 Hill Reischl, “Photography and the Crisis of Authorship: Tolstoy and the Popular Photographic Press”, p. 535.

125 Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility”, p. 20; *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, p. 11.

126 Simon Malpas, “Form, Reflection, Disclosure: Literary Aesthetics and Contemporary Criticism”, pp. 233–4.

Even though Ludwig Wittgenstein seems to be an unlikely candidate for thoughts on resisting the commodification of art, some of his remarks on aesthetics can be fruitfully reviewed in this context. He writes in one of his private notes from 1929, "The human gaze has a power of conferring value on things; but it makes them cost more too."¹²⁷ However, this does not simply imply a reduction to monetary value of otherwise meaningless and valueless things. Rather, the circumstance that the work of art then costs more is expressed as a regrettable side effect of its newly manifest intrinsic value. Wittgenstein was a close friend of the architect Adolf Loos, who battled against what he considered the insultingly ornamental style of art deco (*Jugendstil*). In addition, Wittgenstein was a passionate opponent of his father's approach to art—Karl Wittgenstein was a wealthy industrial magnate who supported and financed Secession artists in Vienna as if collecting pretty status symbols.¹²⁸ Ludwig Wittgenstein insists on a more specific value of art, apart from the monetary. The anti-ornamentalist attitude is manifest in Wittgenstein's lectures on aesthetics where he disparages the kind of aesthetic judgment focused solely on beauty, and on the ascetic aesthetics of the house he designed for his sister. However, he considers his own design, which he calls the product of a "sensitive ear" (*entschiedene Feinhörigkeit*) to his sister's needs,¹²⁹ as lacking "*primordial* life, wild life striving to erupt into the open".¹³⁰ Therefore, he considers artworks as challenging, an element his own architectural design was lacking.

The distinction between an autonomous work of art and "a thing among things" (to use Malpas's expression) is present in Wittgenstein's thought, as well. For instance, in a diary entry of 8 October 1916, he contemplates an oven. He muses that, if otherwise "as a thing among things, each thing is equally insignificant"—"as a world each [is] equally significant". It is the quality of attention that transforms an everyday object, like an oven, as Wittgenstein puts it into "my world".¹³¹ This remark follows the entry made on 7 October 1916, which defines the work of art as an object seen *sub specie aeternitatis* and ethics as the

127 CV, p. 1e; "Der menschliche Blick hat es an sich, daß er die Dinge kostbar machen kann, allerdings werden sie dann auch teurer." VB, p. 1.

128 David Macarthur, "Art", p. 258.

129 CV, p. 38e; VB, p. 38. Margarethe Wittgenstein, his sister, was very involved in the entire process of the design and the construction of the house, as Macarthur notices in "Working on Oneself in Philosophy and Architecture", p. 37.

130 CV, p. 38e; "das *ursprüngliche* Leben, das *wilde* Leben, welches sich austoben möchte", VB, p. 38.

131 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 83e; *Tagebücher*, pp. 178–9.

world seen *sub specie aeternitatis*.¹³² Therefore, his—perhaps parodic—contemplation of the oven is a continuation of his considerations on art and ethics from the day before. This means that his musings on the oven can be read as a further elaboration of what it is to see something through art, “sub species aeternitatis”, namely to see it *not* as a thing among other things (“als Ding unter Dingen ist jedes Ding gleich unbedeutend”), but as a “world”. A work of art possesses a kind of value that mere things do not have—they are meaningless or valueless (*unbedeutend*). It possesses the intrinsic value of a “world” as opposed to the instrumental use of things, and it is therefore analogous to the ethical value of a person. Because “world” and “subject” are reciprocally defined in the *Tractatus*—for the subject is defined as the “limit of the world” (*TLP* 5.632), art works can be compared to people in their intrinsic value, but also in their distinction from mere things.¹³³

According to Wittgenstein, the artwork is not a kind of thing that *causes* certain effects *in* the beholder. This can be glimpsed from his criticism of Tolstoy,

There is a lot to be learned from Tolstoy’s bad theorizing about how a work of art conveys ‘a feeling’. [...] You might say: the work of art does not aim to convey *something else*, just itself. Just as, when I pay someone a visit, I don’t just want to make him have feelings of such and such a sort; what I mainly want is to visit him, though of course I should like to be well received too.

And it does start to get quite absurd if you say that an artist wants the feelings he had when writing to be experienced by someone else who reads his work. Presumably I can think I understand a poem (e.g.), understand it as its author would wish me to—but what *he* may have felt in writing it doesn’t concern me *at all*.¹³⁴

132 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 83e; *Tagebücher*, p. 178.

133 In “Art”, David Macarthur discusses Wittgenstein’s characterization of the artwork as “world” in terms of the artwork’s autonomy as a “world” (pp. 2–5).

134 *CV*, p. 58e. This is presumably referring to Leo Tolstoy’s *What is Art?* (1896). “Aus Tolstoj’s schlechtem Theorisieren, das Kunstwerk übertrage ‘ein Gefühl’, könnte man *viel* lernen. [...] Man könnte sagen: Das Kunstwerk will nicht *etwas anderes* übertragen, sondern sich selbst, wie, wenn ich Einen besuche, ich nicht bloß die und die Gefühle in ihm zu erzeugen wünsche, sondern vor allem ihn besuchen, und freilich gut aufgenommen werden will. Und schon erst recht unsinnig ist es, zu sagen, der Künstler wünsche, das, was er beim Schreiben, der Andere beim Lesen fühlen solle. Ich kann wohl glauben, ein Gedicht (z. B.) zu verstehen, es so zu verstehen, wie sein Erzeuger es sich wünschen würde,—aber was *er* beim Schreiben gefühlt haben mag, das kümmert mich *gar* nicht.” *VB*, p. 58. Cf. Henry W. Pickford’s discussion of this passage as a criticism of Tolstoy’s notion of “infection” (*zarazhenie*) via art, in *Thinking with Tolstoy and Wittgenstein*, pp. 66–70.

Wittgenstein compares an artwork to a person, to somebody who pays one a visit and wishes to be well received (the German “gut aufgenommen werden” conveys both literal hospitality toward people and reception of art works or intellectual ideas). Rather than mere subjective feeling, Wittgenstein emphasizes the role of *thinking* in art, as when he draws attention to “the *strength of the thoughts* in Brahm’s music” (“die musikalische *Gedankenstärke* bei Brahms”).¹³⁵ This casts the recipient of art (the listener, beholder, or reader) not in the passive role of merely feeling the sort of feelings the work of art was supposedly meant to mechanically cause, but as indeed *intellectually* challenged to “receive well”.

Nastas’ia Filipovna wishes to be received well, and she gives her portrait to Gania for this reason only—he thoroughly misunderstands her when he implies that she must have expected a gift in exchange, seeing the photograph thus only in terms of its exchange value.¹³⁶ Nastas’ia’s conflicted impulses, oscillating between a deep yearning for acceptance and defiance, are evident in the very first scene of her appearance in person: on the day of her birthday party, she barges into Gania’s family’s house and it is Myshkin who opens the door, “She walked quickly into the hall, pushing him out of the way with her shoulder”.¹³⁷ Taking him for a servant, she scolds him, calling him an idiot, like a spoiled young lady she is acting the part of. The play-acting continues when Nastas’ia is introduced to Gania’s sister Varia; she “laughed and concealed her feelings by her assumed gaiety; but Varia had no wish to conceal her feelings and looked at her with grim intensity; not even the ghost of a smile, which was after all demanded by ordinary courtesy, appeared on her face.”¹³⁸ All the while, Nastas’ia kept up her act of a “frivolous and silly woman”,¹³⁹ “laughed as though she were in hysterics”, whereas Gania’s “eyes blazed with deadly hatred”.¹⁴⁰ By projecting a false image of herself, she is protecting herself from the expected coldness of Gania’s family. As Dostoevsky’s contrivance, she is designed to act as an allegory of an artwork in her theatrical and artificial ways.

So, when Rogozhin bursts on the scene then and flings eighteen thousand rubles before her so as to not marry Gania, she coolly laughs and sneers at the sum, confirming everyone’s (but Myshkin) assumptions around her that she is indeed a high-class prostitute. Rogozhin keeps increasing his bid, as if he were at an auction for a painting and she teases him on to prolong the spec-

135 CV, p. 23e; VB, p. 23 (original emphasis).

136 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 26.

137 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 97.

138 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 99.

139 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 104.

140 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 107.

tacle in front of Gania's family.¹⁴¹ He stares at her "as though she were some deity"¹⁴² with the kind of reverence often reserved for art. The scene escalates, Varia insults Nastas'ia, and Gania "aimed a blow at his sister with all his strength"—when Myshkin catches his hand and stands between him and Varia. This action deeply impresses Nastas'ia, who struggles to keep up her sarcastic façade, and when Myshkin cries at her that she is not who she pretends she is, she is surprised and slips out of the room. But then she returns, goes up to Gania's mother (who had quietly witnessed the whole scene), and kisses her hand, whispering, "He was right, I'm not really like that."¹⁴³ The small gesture of warmth and asking for forgiveness is presumably meant to show what she would like to be seen as *really* like, by contrast to her formerly assumed role. She really only wishes to be forgiven (out of her warped sense of guilt for the abuse she suffered, characteristic for rape victims) and perceived charitably.¹⁴⁴

Even though she clearly *knows* that she is not to blame for Totskii' abuse (as she clearly says early on in the novel in reference to Gania's family, she "did not intend to ask anyone's forgiveness for anything"¹⁴⁵), during her time in Totskii's horrid pastoral summer house she kept dreaming of someone like Myshkin who would tell her, "It's not your fault, Nastasya Filippovna, and I adore you!"¹⁴⁶ Like the personified work of art Wittgenstein discusses above, she does not wish to merely cause this or that feeling in somebody—in fact, Totskii treated her as if she were there *for* causing this or that pleasurable feeling, and it is this that she is rebelling against. Rather, when she pays her visit to Gania's family, she does not have any narrowly defined end in mind, other than to visit them in the faint hope of being received well. It is only because of the degrading circumstances of being treated like a commodity that this hope is expressed in arrogant haughtiness. Being received well means, for Wittgenstein's considerations of the art work, being understood, and the same can be said of Nastas'ia Filippovna's motives. It is Myshkin who is her ideal host—he takes the fur coat she flings at him as she marches into Gania's house and he announces her name to the family like a footman¹⁴⁷—and who understands her complex and conflicted behavior. He de-reifies her—she cannot keep up the clichéd pose of the "frivolous and

141 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, pp. 110–1.

142 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 109.

143 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 113.

144 Two pages later, Gania kisses Myshkin's hand as a sign of asking for forgiveness, so Nastas'ia's gesture can be interpreted along similar lines. Cf. p. 115.

145 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 45.

146 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 166.

147 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 97.

silly woman” when faced with him. He seems to confer value on her that has nothing to do with net worth, just like the prince she had dreamed of during her captivity at Totskii’s cultured estate, a prince who would “adore” her. That other characters could only see monetary value in her is only a regrettable side effect of their limited perception.

As Wittgenstein noted in his lectures on aesthetics,

When we make an aesthetic judgment about a thing, we do not just gape at it and say: “Oh! How marvelous!” We distinguish between a person who knows what he is talking about and a person who doesn’t. He must react in a consistent way over a long period. Must know all sorts of things.¹⁴⁸

An aesthete in Wittgenstein’s sense would not merely gape at beauty, but would get intellectually involved in the situation he or she is in. Despite the promising beginning, this is what “the idiot” Prince ultimately fails to do, resulting in Nastas’ia Filippovna’s tragic death at the end of the novel. The novel can be read as Dostoevsky’s plaidoyer for the intrinsic value of art in the face of his own inner conflicts for having to sell his novels in order to make a living. He may not only have had epilepsy in common with his character the Prince, but he may have considered himself an “idiot” for playing this game in the first place.

Visions of Utopia in *Demons*: “The Golden Age” and the Age of the Press

In the previous section I had argued that Dostoevsky’s *The Idiot* presented the contiguity and simultaneity of antiquity and modernity with the conflict between the newly establishing literary field in nineteenth-century Russia and the traditional orthodox manner of thinking, rooted in old Greek patristics. While the modern notion of the literary field translates the value of literature into economical categories, the old Greek concept of *kalos* (in Russian *prekrasnyi*) signifies a unity of beauty and goodness (or in Wittgenstein’s terms, aesthetics and ethics) and conceives of art as highly moral. I will argue that in the later novel *Demons* Dostoevsky presents an analogous contiguity between the modern and the pre-modern, but this time in relation to representations of society. In the novel, both the Platonic notion of *Kallipolis* (literally the city-state of beauty and goodness)

148 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures on Aesthetics*, p. 6. The *Lectures* consist of students’ notes and were never published by Wittgenstein himself. The last two sentences are only noted by James Taylor. Cf. fn. 4.

can be discerned, in which each citizen understands himself as an organic part of the whole, as well as the modern notion of society as an aggregate of individuals with differing opinions and perspectives. The latter model was made all the more plausible by the advent of the press and the multiplicity of journals with various ideological orientation that made visible the multiplicity of differing perspectives in Russian society, and rendered a sense of belonging to a larger, coherent whole all the more difficult to maintain.

The glimpses of a pre-modern “Golden Age” throughout Dostoevsky’s works are described remarkably consistently. They involve a harmonious unity of man and nature, and of kinship of people among themselves. In *The Brothers Karamazov* Staretz Zosima’s vision that “life is already paradise”, if only people actively loved each other and understood themselves as belonging to a larger whole, already discussed in the previous chapter, is coupled with an almost religious contemplation of natural beauty. In *Demons* and *The Adolescent*, Stavrogin and Versilov recall a dream in which Claude Lorrain’s painting *Acis and Galatea* had come to life and they describe it in almost identical terms as an incarnation of a “Golden Age”, an idyllic and harmonious world of natural beauty and unperturbed human love. The painting depicts a nature scene on the coast of a sea, with a young couple looking into each other’s eyes in embrace, under the flimsy protection of a makeshift tent. In front of them, a child is playing, and next to them are trees on the right and cliffs on the left. Both Stavrogin and Versilov situate the scene in a “Greek” setting, even though the myth is from Ovid, that is, from Latin sources and the scene of the painting is in Sicily.¹⁴⁹ This vision of utopia suspiciously resembles a Rousseauian cliché of an idyllic “State of Nature”, and it is not an accident that Stavrogin and Versilov are both highly westernized characters. However, Dostoevsky’s appropriation of the utopian vision to the Greeks is telling, since it also evokes the formative significance that the Grecophone Eastern Roman Empire has had on Russia’s pre-modern past, for much of its culture and self-understanding is organized after the Byzantine model.¹⁵⁰ The Greek patristic notion of a unity of beauty and goodness (*to kalon*) is incarnated in these visions of “The Golden Age”, for the distinctive features of this utopia are both the harmonious social order stemming from love between people (a kind of a natural virtue, extending kindred love to all people) and an appreciation for natural beauty. This idyllic condition is reproduced in Dostoevsky’s 1877 short story “The Dream of a Ridiculous Man”, in which a man dreams of space travel to another world, in which people live in active

149 Richard Peace, “Dostoevsky and ‘The Golden Age’”, p. 68.

150 Cf. pp. 119–120 of this text.

love for each other and in harmony with nature, and, as Richard Peace notes, in *The Idiot*, in which Prince Myshkin's pre-epileptic mystical rapture at the beauty of nature and the beauty of loving eyes are a perfect ekphrasis of the scene described in Lorrain's painting, from Acis's perspective (resembling Denis Diderot's method of embodied ekphrasis of a painting from the point of view of someone *in the painting*):¹⁵¹

'Oh, it's only that I'm not able to put it into words, but—think how many beautiful things there are at every step, things even the most wretched man cannot but find beautiful! Look at a child, look at God's sunset, look at the grass, how it grows, look at the eyes that gaze at you and love you...'

He had been standing talking for some time. The little old man was looking at him in alarm. Mrs Yepanchin cried out, 'Oh, my God!' having before anyone else guessed what was amiss, and threw up her hands in dismay. Aglaya ran up to him quickly, and was just in time to catch him in her arms, and with horror and a face distorted with pain heard the wild shriek of 'the spirit that stunned and cast down' the unhappy man.¹⁵²

In all cases, the idyllic setting is fragile and is almost immediately negated: Star-etz Zosima dies and decays, seemingly disproving the equation of goodness and beauty; Stavrogin loses the idyllic vision by a remembrance of personal guilt; Versilov sees his dream negated by the current events in the Franco-Prussian war; "The ridiculous man" "infects" the inhabitants of the perfect new world with his selfish ways, turning it into a near-twin of Earth; Prince Myshkin's rapture is interrupted by an epileptic fit, his vision of the "highest synthesis of life" brutally reduced to a physiological disorder; and as Richard Peace notes, even in the myth of Acis and Galatea, the idyllic scene is brutally brought to an end by the jealous Cyclops Polypheme's hurling of a rock, murdering Acis on the spot (the Cyclops is actually depicted in the painting, on a cliff-side and poised to throw the rock).¹⁵³

The fragility of Dostoevsky's vision of utopia can be contextualized in the rapid modernization of nineteenth-century Russia, which on the one hand endangered the natural world—for instance by the building of railroads¹⁵⁴—and

151 Peace, "Dostoevsky and 'The Golden Age'", p. 70. Dostoevsky, too, reportedly experienced a combination of sexual sensations and religious ecstasy in his epileptic seizures, common in cases of temporal lobe epilepsy. Cf. Rice, *Dostoevsky and the Healing Art*, p. 120.

152 Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*, p. 531.

153 Peace, "Dostoevsky and 'The Golden Age'", p. 68.

154 As Anne Lounsbury explains in "Dostoevskii's Geography: Centers, Peripheries, and Networks in *Demons*", the advent of the railroad has sinister, even apocalyptic overtones in the se-

on the other introduced an explosion of information into the Russian society by the rapid growth of the press media. In focusing on the latter, I will examine Dostoevsky’s own journalistic ethos in relation to his novels (for he very much participated in this development by publishing his novels serially in journals) and its family resemblance to Wittgenstein’s notion of an ethics of language.

As Konstantine Klioutchkine argues in “The Rise of *Crime and Punishment* from the Air of the Media”, Dostoevsky was profoundly affected by the striking rise of the print media on the brink of 1860s, catalyzed by Tsar Alexander II’s liberal reforms. Klioutchkine cites official statistics showing that there were ten times more periodicals between 1856 and 1864 than in the preceding decade.¹⁵⁵ Most intellectuals, including Dostoevsky, welcomed the development for the opportunity to practice professional writing and finance themselves with their art, and considered the press a new and powerful tool to influence and shape social reality. However, more often than not, debates on current issues the journals succumbed to “journalistic bickering”, attacking each other’s ideologically tinted perspectives on the events and introducing an element of disorientation as to what the actual facts of the matter were and a phantasmal aspect of epistemological uncertainty.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, in order to sell, newspapers were competing with the publication of entertaining and scandalizing feuilletons, which “thrived on parody, deliberate confusion, and ridicule”, as well as “semi fictional matter”. The feuilletonist presented himself as a “man of the street”, constructing a supposedly direct and personal perspective on Russian everyday life.¹⁵⁷ Like Raskolnikov, Ivan, too belongs to the then new type of a young writer seeking to live off his profession by contributing to journals and periodicals. Ivan is introduced in terms strikingly reminiscent to that of a feuilleton writer, the most popular genre in the 1860s. (As the narrator of *The Brothers Karamazov* explains, the plot of the novel “took place thirteen years ago”¹⁵⁸—therefore in 1866, the same year as *Crime and Punishment* was published.) Ivan sup-

mantics of Dostoevsky’s works (especially *The Idiot* and *Demons*), signifying a pernicious modernity. Cf. especially pp. 223–4.

155 Konstantine Klioutchkine, “The Rise of *Crime and Punishment* from the Air of the Media”, p. 88.

156 Klioutchkine, “The Rise of *Crime and Punishment* from the Air of the Media” p. 94.

157 Klioutchkine, “The Rise of *Crime and Punishment* from the Air of the Media” pp. 92–3. Klioutchkine analyzes Raskolnikov’s character in *Crime and Punishment*, which appeared serially in 1866 in the *Russian Herald* (*Russkii vestnik*), and draws several striking parallels between current events, such as murder cases and trials that the avid newspaper reader Dostoevsky would have read about in the 1860s, and Raskolnikov’s observations from the streets of Petersburg, as well as the murders he commits.

158 *BK*, p. 3.

ported himself by “running around to newspaper publishers, plying them ten-line articles on street incidents, signed ‘Eyewitness.’ (Russian: *ochevidets*)”.¹⁵⁹ The ubiquity of the press introduced a multiplicity of possible perspectives into Russian society, depending on the ideological slant of the newspaper. Furthermore, the ideological bickering between the journals ensured that most of the published material was in one way or another self-referential—referring to other published stories, as opposed to factual events. *The Contemporary* (*Sovremennik*), an influential revolutionary democratic journal, called the newly evolving system of the press a “system of deceptions entangling our reality”.¹⁶⁰

Perhaps the shocking effect of the introduction of ideological perspectives into the Russian public by means of new press media can be compared with the Cyclops Polypheme’s hurtled rock that abruptly ends Acis and Galatea’s primordial idyll. That the Cyclops is, per definition, one-eyed, evokes linear perspective, for, to correctly draw a scene using linear perspective one must close one eye (binocularity would disturb linear vision). Pavel Florensky discusses several complex Renaissance contraptions involving screens with just one hole for the draughtsman to peep through in order to draw more precisely,¹⁶¹ rendering the Renaissance artist a kind of an early modern Cyclops. He draws moralistic inferences comparing the moderns’ linear perspective to subjectivism and describes the modern man as one “who considers only his own desires, and of necessity, the most immediate means of realizing and satisfying them”,¹⁶² just like the Cyclops Polypheme only considers his own desire for Galatea and the most immediate means of realizing and satisfying them—by eliminating Acis. Florensky, too, uses the metaphor of the Cyclops to describe the modern man, who by insisting on the linear perspective and one’s own point of view, actually insists on a worldview as seen through only one eye:

‘from his own point of view’ this tsar and lawgiver of nature is imagined as being monocular like the Cyclops, for the second eye, competing with the first, destroys the oneness, and consequently the absoluteness, of the point of view and therefore exposes the fraudulent nature of a perspectival picture. Essentially, the whole world is related not even to the observing artist, but only to his right eye, conceived, what’s more as a single point, its optical center.¹⁶³

159 *BK*, p. 16.

160 Quoted in Klioutchkine, “The Rise of *Crime and Punishment* from the Air of Media”, p. 95.

161 Florensky, “Reverse Perspective”, pp. 247–9.

162 Florensky, “Reverse Perspective”, pp. 217–8.

163 Florensky, “Reverse Perspective”, p. 262.

Modern epistemology is understood as assertion of the self, not only by Florensky, but also by Rousseau, who epitomized it in the fencing off of pieces of land and declaring them “mine”.¹⁶⁴

This vision of the modern clash of individual, “cyclopic” perspectives, by contrast to a supposedly blissful and inclusive pre-modern past, is also revealed in Dostoevsky’s novels, especially *The Adolescent* and *Demons*, which explicitly mention the painting *Acis and Galatea*. In *Demons*, Stavrogin recounts his dream in written form, in a text he hands over to Father Tikhon by way of a confession:

I had a dream which for me was totally unexpected, because I had never before had one like it. In Dresden, in the gallery, there exists a painting by Claude Lorrain—“Acis and Galatea,” I think, according to the catalogue, but I always called it “The Golden Age,” I do not know why myself. [...] It was this painting that I saw in my dream, though not as a painting, but as if it were some kind of verity.

A corner of the Greek archipelago; blue, caressing waves, islands and rocks, a luxuriant coastline, a magic panorama in the distance, an inviting sunset—words cannot express it. Here European mankind remembered its cradle, here were the first scenes from mythology, its earthly paradise... Here beautiful people lived! They rose and lay down to sleep happy and innocent; the groves were filled with their merry songs, the great abundance of their untapped forces went into love, into simple hearted joy. The sun poured down its rays upon these islands and this sea, rejoicing over its beautiful children. A wondrous dream, a lofty delusion! [...]¹⁶⁵

The dream bursts with the memory of Matresha, a ten-year-old he had raped and whose suicide he omitted to stop. Full of remorse, Stavrogin seeks to turn himself in and confess his crime publicly with the text he had given Tikhon to read first, (in a chapter that was originally omitted from the serial print¹⁶⁶). He concludes his note:

So it is that I have decided to print these pages and bring them to Russia in three hundred copies. When the time comes, I will send them to the police and the local authorities; simultaneously, I will send them to the editorial offices of all the newspapers, requesting that they be made public, and to my numerous acquaintances in Petersburg and in Russia. They will equally appear in translation abroad.¹⁶⁷

164 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men”, p. 64.

165 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Demons*, pp. 702–3.

166 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, “Introduction”, p. xxiv.

167 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, pp. 704–5.

What had seemed like a private act of confession turns out to be Stavrogin's highly ambitious and exhibitionist public project that exploits the machinations of the press and, perversely, seeks the widest possible readership for his worst deeds. Father Tikhon notices the aesthetic ambition in Stavrogin's text, which very much evokes feuilletonists' striving to scandalize and entertain the reader: "Certain places in your account are stylistically accentuated; as if you admire your own psychology and seize upon every little detail just to astonish the reader with an unfeelingness that is not in you."¹⁶⁸ Tikhon predicts that Stavrogin's text, like a feuilleton, will cause more amusement and laughter than sincere horror, and that instead of aspiring to fame, he should set his personal pride aside and seek obscurity in a hermitage. After several comments, in which Tikhon predicts Stavrogin's further development, the latter is fed up and leaves in anger, yelling, "Cursed psychologist!"¹⁶⁹

The theme of printing texts recurs throughout the novel: Shatov had been entrusted with a printing press, which draws Liza Nikolaevna to approach him with a publication idea, and Petr Verkhovenskii to insist on taking possession of the means of reproducing texts. Under Petr Verkhovenskii's lead, a radical cell forms in the small provincial town in the novel and there is talk of a creation of precisely those primordial paradisiacal conditions by means of mass propaganda and a violent revolution. One of the men present at the secret meeting Petr Verkhovenskii presides over notices,

Now it is being suggested to us, through various strewn-about leaflets of foreign manufacture, that we close ranks and start groups with the sole purpose of universal destruction, under the pretext that however you try to cure the world, you are not going to cure it, but by radically lopping off a hundred million heads [...] And since under the most favorable circumstances it would take fifty, or, say, thirty years to finish such a slaughter, because they're not sheep, they may not just let themselves be slaughtered—isn't it better to pack bag and baggage and move somewhere beyond the peaceful seas to some peaceful islands and there serenely close your eyes? Believe me, sir [...] you'll only provoke emigration with such propaganda, and nothing else, sir!¹⁷⁰

The suggestion of an emigration to "some peaceful islands" where one could "serenely" close one's eyes conjures the image of Claude Lorrain's painting *Acis and Galatea*, which Stavrogin describes as depicting a "Greek archipelago; blue, caressing waves, islands and rocks". This impression is all the more confirmed when Verkhovenskii retorts, "Go ahead and emigrate! And, you know, I'd advise

168 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 706.

169 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, pp. 709–14.

170 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, pp. 405–6.

you to go to Dresden, not to any peaceful islands”¹⁷¹—Dresden is, of course, the precise location of the said Lorrain painting. Verkhovenskii suggests that emigration is escapism, like allegedly art, and insists that action is needed as opposed to pleasantries. He asks them to choose between the “slow way that consists in the writing of social novels” and the “quick solution” that would involve chopping off “a hundred million heads” now to save “five hundred million heads” that would have been swallowed by despotism.¹⁷² When most agree to the latter solution, he comments, “Gentlemen, I see that almost all decide in the spirit of the tracts”,¹⁷³ again referring to the political pamphlets printed as to change the world order via a violent revolution.

The novel as a whole rejects the violent means of social influence and depicts the town as sinking into a bloody mess with various victims as collateral damage. Dostoevsky rejected any violent means of bringing about social change and truly believed that art and novels would be enough to change people’s minds and to reunite Russia’s alienated classes and ideological currents.¹⁷⁴ As Kate Holland formulates it, Dostoevsky sought to

represent on a formal level the sense of disintegration and atomization that is fundamental to the experience of modernity. [He] assumes that the world is radically contingent and seeks to replace this contingency with as open and unfinished a structure as possible. [...] This fragmentation impulse is countered by an opposing impulse toward formal unity. [Dostoevsky’s] approach seeks to reintegrate the fragments of a world shattered by modernity [...] and strives toward narrative totality.¹⁷⁵

Furthermore, Dostoevsky called *Demons* a “pamphlet” novel¹⁷⁶; it was serially printed in the *Russian Herald*, therefore participating in the machinations of the press and the ambition to change the world by means of the printed word. Arguably the novel reflects on the process of writing and printing texts and distinguishes between destructive and constructive narratives, therefore introducing a kind of ethics of literary narrative. While it is of course very well possible to

171 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 407.

172 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 408.

173 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 408.

174 This is emphasized throughout Dostoevsky’s critical text “Mr. –bov and the Question of Art”. Furthermore, there are striking and much discussed resemblances between a real case of a revolutionary cell that committed murder of one of its less pliant former members and the plot of *Demons*. Dostoevsky was obviously incorporating real current affairs in his literature. Cf. D.C. Offord, “*The Devils* in the Context of Contemporary Russian Thought and Politics”, pp. 68 ff.

175 Kate Holland, *The Novel in the Age of Disintegration*, p. 5.

176 Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 23.

cast doubt onto Dostoevsky's personal ethical reflection as an author, as for instance his portrayal of Jews in his novels, and especially journalism, had stirred criticism even in his day,¹⁷⁷ it is instructive to analyze the process of narration as an *intradiegetic motif* in the novel *Demons*. As I will show, the novel contains philosophical reflection on the ethical dimension of the act of narration.

The fictional narrator of *Demons*, anonymized as "G—v", remarks on his own finitude of knowledge and inability to express himself perfectly,¹⁷⁸ and draws attention to the fact that readers only ever receive his perspective on the events in the novel, and that his chronicle is a result of a laborious drawing together of diverse sources, including town gossip, private letters, remembered conversations and reconstructions of dialogues behind closed doors. It is precisely this last ability to narrate events he could not have possibly have witnessed, or private thoughts of characters—that renders him suspicious in the eyes of some commentators.

For instance, in comparing G—v's inventive narrative techniques with those of Petr Verkhovenskiï—the demagogue that distorts facts and thus coerces the narrative course of events towards a violent end, instigating a murder—Adam Weiner concludes that G—v "emerges as one of the devils of [the] novel's title" and claims, "I believe that the narrator of *The Devils*, Anton Lavrent'evich G—v ... is infected by Peter Verkhovenskiï's devils."¹⁷⁹ Not only that, but Weiner asserts that G—v is even one of "the novel's chief devils", who "intentionally deceives and beguiles readers" and "G—v is the God of his creation."¹⁸⁰ He is implying that the narrator was more involved than he lets on, and that he even orchestrated the novel's tragic events—that by the act of narrating, he "created" them. By calling Petr Verkhovenskiï a "narrator" (*rasskazchik*) himself and increasingly revealing Petr's deceitful intents, G—v draws attention to his own activity of narrating the story and to possible parallels to the lying plotter.

By contrast, David Stromberg embarks on a defense of G—v against Weiner's view. In "The Enigmatic G—v: A Defense of the Narrator-Chronicler in Dostoevsky's *Demons*", he points out that the act of narrative reconstruction of events one did not witness oneself did not have a negative connotation for Dostoevsky. His use of the verb *sochiniat*, which Weiner translates as "to compose"—in the sense of "mixing truth and lies",¹⁸¹ can also mean "to artistically elaborate" in

177 Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet*, pp. 301–19.

178 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 7.

179 Adam Weiner, *By Authors Possessed*, pp. 108 and 117.

180 Weiner, *By Authors Possessed*, p. 121.

181 Weiner, *By Authors Possessed*, p. 119

the sense of narrating events in such verisimilitude as to create the illusion of reality.¹⁸² For Dostoevsky, such artistic elaboration need not imply deceit. As he had once jotted down in one of his notebooks, “Altogether, when I describe conversations, even *tete-à-tete* conversations between two people—don’t worry: either I have hard facts, or perhaps I am inventing (*sochiniaiu*) them myself—but in any case rest assured that everything is true (*verno*).”¹⁸³ Stromberg draws attention to the use of the word true—*verno*—which means faithful, and not true in a factual sense—which would have been *pravda*. Therefore, the invented, reconstructed character of some narratives can, according to Dostoevsky, be considered truthful *despite their fictionality*. The difference between the kind of invention, as exercised by the character Verkhovenskiï that Weiner calls “demonic composing” and the invention exercised by Dostoevsky and, as Stromberg argues also by the narrator-chronicler whom he calls “redemptive chronicler” is a difference in the objective of the narrative: “Rather than asking whether G–v is ‘inventing’—the textual irregularities make no other choice possible—the question should rather be: to what end?”¹⁸⁴ While Verkhovenskiï’s narrative seek to destroy the bonds of society in the fictional provincial town, G–v’s narrative as a whole—the novel itself—seeks to understand the events that took place and so to restore destroyed trust. Rather than demonizing G–v, Stromberg argues, more convincingly than Weiner, that the chronicler seeks to inspire “narrative faith” in his readers.¹⁸⁵

Dostoevsky had a broad view of literary creation and artistic talent, one that applies even in the ability to notice relevant facts in real life—a key capacity for a chronicler or, for that matter a journalist like Dostoevsky himself. In a late article, “Two Suicides”, written for the October 1876 edition of *A Writer’s Diary*, Dostoevsky writes,

In truth, if you examine some fact of real life—even one which at first glance is not very vivid—you will find in it, if you have the capacity and the vision, a depth you won’t find even in Shakespeare. But here, you see, is the real point: *whose vision and whose capacity?* Not only to create and write a work of literature, but merely even to pick out the fact requires something of the artist.¹⁸⁶

182 David Stromberg, “The Enigmatic G–v: A Defense of the Narrator-Chronicler in Dostoevsky’s *Demons*”, p. 463.

183 Stromberg, “The Enigmatic G–v”, p. 463.

184 Stromberg, “The Enigmatic G–v”, p. 464.

185 Stromberg, “The Enigmatic G–v”, p. 481.

186 Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer’s Diary*, p. 226.

While the public opinion, for instance on the character and intentions of Nikolai Stavrogin, were easily swayed and influenced by gossip, G—v seems to be the only person to have done the work of investigating, reconstructing, and in the end understanding the events leading to chaos in the town. G—v, like Petr, mentions having “studied” Stavrogin,¹⁸⁷ one of the central figures in the havoc that ensues. Even though G—v is described as a chronicler, and not an author of the events he narrates, his ability to pick out and synopsise relevant facts fit Dostoevsky's above cited description of the artist's finely tuned perception.

The proximity of literature and journalism is reflected in the novel itself. Liza Nikolaevna proposes a “literary undertaking”¹⁸⁸ (*literaturnoe predpriatie*) to Shatov—she had asked G—v bring Shatov to her for this purpose because he is a polyglot who “can do literary work (*literaturnuiu rabotu*)”¹⁸⁹. When G—v, who earlier admits to have been in love with Liza¹⁹⁰—does bring Shatov to her home, he is surprised that she indeed discusses literary “business”¹⁹¹ (*delo*). She discusses her “literary undertaking” with Shatov in private, but they talk loud enough that our narrator is able to eavesdrop. The idea is this: she proposes to collect “all the facts for a whole year [...] brought together in one book” and so to present and preserve “the personal moral life of the people, the personality of the Russian people at a given moment”.¹⁹² The book “should be interesting, even as light reading” and the facts themselves, assembled in such a way would be “a picture of the spiritual, moral, inner life of Russia over an entire year”.¹⁹³ She had previously admitted that even such a collection of facts requires selection and that “the main thing was the plan and the way facts were presented”,¹⁹⁴ that is, a narrative structure rather than a mere heaping of newspaper articles, which is why she requires Shatov, who “can do literary work”. Shatov, slowly realizing the potential of such a mass publication for reaching and actively shaping the Russian public—for Liza ambitiously proclaims “everyone should want to buy it, the book should become a household item”—notices that there would of course be “a tendency” (*napravlenie*), “a selection of facts” with a specific purpose. Liza naively denies any political tendency: “Not at all, there's no need to select with a tendency, there's no need for any tendency. Just impartiality—

187 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, for Petr: p. 419; G—v: p. 204.

188 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 128.

189 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 111.

190 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 109.

191 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 127.

192 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 128.

193 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 129.

194 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 128.

that’s the only tendency.” But she does not resist Shatov’s insistence, that “there’s nothing wrong with a tendency”, and is delighted that he appreciates her idea.¹⁹⁵ However, nothing comes of the collaboration, for as soon as Shatov hears that Petr Verkhovenskii and Nikolai Stavrogin are involved, he leaves the premises without an explanation (for reasons the narrator reveals only at a later point in diegetic time).

It can be argued that the narrator of *Demons*, G–v, made use of Liza’s idea for his very chronicle of the events in the small town. After all, he was in love with Liza as he himself admits, and was likely jealous of her attention to Shatov at the moment she was expounding her publication idea. Furthermore, she was one of the victims in the death toll of the chaos that ensued, which would make G–v’s text, among other things, an attempt to expose the agents and events leading to her needless death, as well. Admittedly, G–v’s chronicle covers the events in the fictional town not just over one year, but provides background information on most characters from the past. He humbly justifies this backtracking by his alleged absence of literary skill in the very first sentence of the novel:

In setting out to describe the recent and very strange events that took place in our town, hitherto not remarkable for anything, I am forced, for want of skill, to begin somewhat far back—namely, with some biographical details concerning the talented and much esteemed Stepan Trofimovich Verkhovenskii.¹⁹⁶

As modest and unobtrusive as G–v is, he limits his book to his small provincial town, as opposed to the whole of Russia—however the town metonymically stands for Russia as a whole being swept up in radical revolutionary ideas. Liza had declared on her publication idea: “everyone should want to buy it”—and G–v too seems to be writing his chronicle not just for his own peace of mind, but to reach public opinion, which had become more possible to achieve than ever before in mid-nineteenth century, with rapid increase of print media and their readership. And *Demons* as a whole, which Dostoevsky called his “pamphlet-novel” that criticizes and parodies emerging revolutionary movements, certainly has a political tendency.

Furthermore, just as Liza proposes to select facts with the notion that these facts themselves will be a “picture of the spiritual, moral, inner life of Russia”, so, too is G–v’s narrative full of conjectures on the ‘inner’ life of other characters. For instance, in the opening of the novel he wonders “what was in [Varvara

¹⁹⁵ Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 129.

¹⁹⁶ Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 7.

Stavrogin's] heart", and he does not have a definitive answer.¹⁹⁷ However, statements such as these are countered with remarks on private thoughts ascribed to other characters—for instance what is going on in Gaganov's head during his duel with Stavrogin, which will be discussed in further detail below. Apparently, his observations do not entirely preclude narrating interior monologues he could not have witnessed, the "inner life" of characters and communities that he artistically elaborated on. Just as Liza had hoped that their selection of facts collected all over Russia will be "a presentation of spiritual, moral, inner life", so does G–v's book reveal to the reader the kind of hidden, destructive dynamics at work in the small town, stemming from the secretive plotting agency of Petr's inner circle.

It seems that Liza's journalistic project idea and, to some extent, G–v's chronicle operate on the pre-modern assumption of an analogy between a *psyche* and a *polis*. Just as Plato describes a just soul by analogy to a well-functioning city-state in which justice reigns,¹⁹⁸ and St. Paul describes the Church as a human body in which members play the part of hands, feet, etc.,¹⁹⁹ so does Liza assume it is possible to represent Russia's "spiritual, moral, inner life" as if it were one unified person-like entity—whereas the reality of the media landscape in mid-nineteenth-century Russia reflected myriads of possible views and political orientations. However, G–v precisely does not take up an abstract, total view on his *polis* and the people in it, but is writing *from inside* his community, from a markedly limited and partially unreliable point of view of somebody who is not above and outside the events described, but is just as involved as the other characters. However, he still believes in the possibility of reconstructing the events that lead to disaster and of offering a faithful account of them as a whole. His narrating strategy reflects the hybridity of Dostoevsky's art, which—like Raphael's *Sistine Madonna*—includes both a linear, finite perspective and a total, polycentric one characteristic of pre-modern art.

Narrating Duels: A Study in Aspect Seeing

The theme of the relation between the individual and society can be made out on a micro-level with a study of the manner in which duels are described in Dostoevsky's novels. Namely, duels represent a perfect case of thoroughly convention-

¹⁹⁷ Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 67.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Book II of *The Republic*, 368c–369a.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. Romans 12:3–8.

alized actions and can be studied to explore the characters' thoughts and feelings in relation to the social codes necessarily structuring their behavior, as in the case of a duel. As I have argued in the previous chapter, Wittgenstein suggested a post-Cartesian view of the soul, according to which it is not a thing-like entity (*res cogitans*), but which dissolves a rigid dichotomy between interiority and the exterior body, between the individual and the social. I have suggested that Wittgenstein might have been inspired by his readings of Dostoevsky and I have argued that Dostoevsky's novels do represent 'interiority' in a fluid manner very different from the Cartesian picture. To demonstrate this, I will focus on the attributions of interior sensations and thoughts in *Demons* and *The Brothers Karamazov* using the example of a duel scene that is externally identical in both novels, but in which there is a marked discrepancy in the description of the characters' 'interiority'. Like Wittgenstein's use of the *Gestalt* picture of the rabbit-duck, in which the same material drawing can be seen as either a rabbit or a duck, the duel scenes offer the same material of overt behavior, but they can be seen under very different aspects. Here I follow Bax's suggestion that, for Wittgenstein, interpreting 'interiority' in other people is not about discerning supposedly discrete mental states 'in' others, but a matter of seeing different aspects as legible from their very bodies.²⁰⁰ These aspects are framed either conceptually (by applying the concept "duck" or "rabbit" to the *Gestalt* drawing), or narratively, like in the following examples from Dostoevsky's novels.

G—v in *Demons* and Alesha in *The Brothers Karamazov* narrate the said duel scenes. Both are characters in the novel as well as authors; Alesha is the main "hero" of the novel, but also the declared author of Book VI, 2–3, "From the Life of the Hieromonk and Elder Zosima, Departed in God, Composed from his Own Words by Alexei Fyodorovich Karamazov". Like G—v, who collected the information for his chronicle from various sources and over a long period of time, but narrated it as one whole (however messily, thus evoking precisely the kind of verisimilitude to the kind of chronicle of a real provincial town), so it is also said of Alesha that his manuscript is "composed", or rather compiled (*sostavleno*) from the words of the Staretz himself was taken from various conversations with the Staretz, and was not a direct transcription of one long speech. The narrator comments on this intradiegetic authorship:

in these notes the whole speech of the elder goes on continuously, as it were, as if he were recounting his life in the form of a narrative, addressing his friends, whereas undoubtedly, according to later reports, it in fact went somewhat differently, for the conversation that

200 Chantal Bax, *Subjectivity after Wittgenstein: The Post-Cartesian Subject and the Death of Man*, pp. 67–73.

evening was general, and though the visitors rarely interrupted their host, still they did speak for themselves [...], besides there could hardly have been such continuity in the narration [...]²⁰¹

And:

Here ends the manuscript of Alexei Fyodorovich Karamazov. I repeat: it is incomplete and fragmentary. The biographical information, for example, embraces only the elder's early youth. From his homilies and opinions, much that had already been said at different times and for various reasons is brought together, as if into a single whole.²⁰²

Furthermore, just as G—v in Stromberg's words calls for "narrative faith", recalling Dostoevsky's own self-understanding as writing faithfully (*verno*) if he does not know the factual truth (*pravda*), so is Alesha also described as having written his manuscript faithfully, that it is "composed from [the elder's] own words". Even though Alesha was, of course, not present at the time of Zinovii's duel, and G—v's fictional "chronicle" is an eye-witness account, what is of interest here is not the obvious difference between first and second-hand knowledge, but the manner in which the narratives present others' actions, and especially the 'interiority' such as feelings and intentions implied in these actions.

Alesha's manuscript and G—v's chronicle describe an externally almost identical situation: a duel in which their protagonist apologized and refused to shoot at his opponent, bending the rules of the practice of dueling, was himself barely grazed by the bullet of the opponent—Zinovii (that is Father Zosima's pre-monastic civil name) on the cheek and Stavrogin on the finger—and was subsequently celebrated and praised by the public in their town. Both initiators of a duel, Zinovii and Stavrogin, go through the motions of nineteenth-century Russian duel conventions. However, their actions are narrated in a way that reveals vastly different intentions.

Alesha narrates the episode in Staretz Zosima's hagiography first personally from the perspective of Zinovii, in the rapturous sentimental style of the nineteenth century (the hagiography overall is otherwise written in the Russian, but with Church Slavonicisms common to Russian *zhitie* or Lives of Saints):

They set us twelve paces apart, the first shot was his—I stood cheerfully before him, face to face, without batting an eye, looking at him lovingly, because I knew what I was going to do. He fired. The shot just grazed my cheek a little, and nicked my ear. "Thank God," I

²⁰¹ *BK*, p. 286.

²⁰² *BK*, p. 232.

shouted, “you didn’t kill a man!” And I seized my pistol, turned around, and sent it hurtling up into the trees.²⁰³

He apologizes to his opponent—the amorous rival who was in fact already engaged to the girl Zinovii was irresolutely courting—who is at first angry with Zinovii for backing out from his own challenge to a duel. Zinovii repeatedly entreats him and then embarks on a speech that is to encapsulate his newly found life’s philosophy:

“Gentlemen”, I cried suddenly from the bottom of my heart, “look at the divine gifts around us: the clear sky, the fresh air, the tender grass, the birds, nature is beautiful and sinless, and we, we alone, are godless and foolish, and do not understand that life is paradise, for we need only wish to understand, and it will come at once in all its beauty, and we shall embrace each other and weep ...”²⁰⁴

It is when he announces his decision to enter a monastery and therefore to symbolically leave ‘the world’ of social relations and behavior rules that the others, who had been scolding him for cowardice until then, first burst out laughing. It is later that they changed their view of the future monk. Then his alleged cowardice is reinterpreted as virtue: “he is brave, he stood up to the shot, and he could have fired his own pistol”, “at the society”, after his former object of infatuation publicly and solemnly thanked him for not shooting her fiancé, “suddenly everyone drifted towards me and all but kissed me”,²⁰⁵ for a short time fulfilling his vision of brotherly love as paradise on earth. Furthermore, “They had paid no particular attention to me before, though they received me cordially, but now they suddenly found out and began vying with each other to invite me”.²⁰⁶ Unassuming before, Zinovii became somewhat of a local celebrity.

Nikolai Stavrogin is one of the central characters in *Demons*, also in an etymological sense, for his last name, Stavrogin, derives from *rog* or horn typical of demonic iconography (his name also contains the root *stauros*, meaning the cross, but here bent into the shape of a horn). G–v narrates his duel. Just as Zinovii repeatedly apologizes to his opponent, Stavrogin, too profusely apologizes to his opponent, colonel Gaganov. The action sequence is almost identical, though obviously narrated in more sober tones—matching perhaps the gray

203 BK, p. 299.

204 BK, p. 300.

205 BK, p. 300.

206 BK, p. 300.

weather of that “melancholy” morning²⁰⁷—by contrast to the almost pastoral scene at the duel above, and in the third person perspective:

At the word *three*, the adversaries began walking towards each other. Gaganov raised his pistol at once and fired at the fifth or sixth step. He stopped for a second and, ascertaining that he had missed, walked quickly to the barrier. Nikolai Vsevolodovich [Stavrogin] walked up, too, raised the pistol, but somehow very high, and fired almost without aiming. Then he took out his handkerchief and wrapped it around the little finger of his right hand. Only now did they see that Artemy Pavlovich had not quite missed, but the bullet had only grazed the fleshy part of the finger without touching the bone; the scratch was insignificant.²⁰⁸

Like Zinovii, whose cheek is slightly grazed by the bullet, Stavrogin's finger was slightly scratched by Gaganov's shot. Stavrogin only infuriates his opponent more by refusing to shoot at him and firing into empty space at each of his turns. The narrator describes his off-handed manner of not even looking where he is shooting, which suggests that Gaganov is not worthy of the effort of a duel.

Like Zinovii after the duel, Stavrogin is first proclaimed cowardly, before public opinion enthusiastically turns to his favor. In “All in Expectation”, his refusal to shoot at the duel was compared to his unresponsiveness after being struck in the face by the lowly former student and serf Shatov (the expected etiquette in nineteenth-century Russia would have been to challenge the offender to a duel) in town in his absence. But then the provincial governor's wife offers a theory that is quickly accepted for its brilliant simplicity: Stavrogin had been too principled to challenge a former *serf* of his household to a duel.²⁰⁹ The discrepancy in power would have presumably prevented Shatov from shooting at his former master in a duel, thus making him vulnerable to Stavrogin's own shots. Suddenly, Stavrogin, whose bizarre behavior had previously been interpreted as “a deliberate and in the highest degree impudent affront to our entire society” by “everyone”,²¹⁰ was now seen under a different aspect: “They drew attention to Nikolai Vsevolodovich's deference to his mother, sought out various virtues in him, spoke benevolently of his learning [...]” And when Stavrogin finally arrives

207 The scene is described as follows, “Yesterday's rain had stopped entirely, but it was wet, damp, and windy. Low, dull, broken clouds raced quickly across the cold sky; the trees rustled densely and rollingly at their tops, and creaked on their roots; the morning was very melancholy.” Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 283.

208 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, pp. 286–7.

209 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 297.

210 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 46. This is referring to the episode in which he pulled Gaganov's father by the nose.

on the scene, “everyone met him with the most naïve earnestness”.²¹¹ Now he had definitely acquired respect, for “in all eyes fastened upon him could be read eager anticipation.” Like Zinovii, he is accepted back into the community. He responds with dramatic, dignified silence: “Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch at once withdrew into the most strict silence, which certainly satisfied everyone far more than if he had talked a whole cartload.” The narrator concludes, “In a word, he succeeded in everything, he was in fashion.”²¹² Just like Zinovii in *The Brothers Karamazov*, Stavrogin, too, turns into a popular local celebrity within the course of a few days, for his alleged “virtue”.

The externally almost identical mini-plot of the two duels arguably only highlights the important differences between them. By contrast to Zinovii’s cheerful sincerity, Stavrogin takes an impatient tone with Gaganov after the first shot was fired, “‘I give you my word that I had no wish to insult you,’ cried Nikolay Vsyevolodovitch with impatience.”²¹³ After his opponent missed for the third time, Nikolai is admonished to fire his shot. He responds aloofly, to say the least: “Stavrogin gave a start, looked at Gaganov, turned away and this time without any delicacy, fired off into the woods.”²¹⁴ Gaganov is in turn portrayed as a distinguished colonel, who almost became a general (and would have made a good general, G–v somehow knows), if he had not left the services. The “conscious” reason for his early retirement, according to G–v, is the shame he felt at Stavrogin’s public ridicule of his father—for which Stavrogin never offered an explanation, despite his repeated apologies—the feeling that he was somehow “contaminating” his regiment, though none of his comrades knew of the events in the provincial town. However, G–v knows even the “unconscious” reason for Gaganov’s early retirement, namely his feeling of personal insult at the governmental emancipation of the serfs in 1861.²¹⁵ This would mean that the wealthy landowner Gaganov shifted the burden of his entire dissatisfaction with his country (G–v mentions his further issues with Russia in general), along with the end of his personal career and passion, onto the personage of Stavrogin, who, in his taciturn ways, is apparently the empty canvas of projection for everybody’s demons in the novel. And Stavrogin’s failure to ascribe even a fraction of importance to Gaganov that the latter ascribes to the former, along with his dismissive treatment of Gaganov, drove the latter to a mouth-foaming rage.

211 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 299.

212 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 299.

213 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 287.

214 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 288.

215 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 285.

In *Demons*, Stavrogin apologizes, thus outwardly fulfilling formal behavioral etiquette, but in a condescending tone as to further insult his opponent; Gaganov outwardly challenges Stavrogin to a duel for having publicly shamed his father but is unconsciously struggling with much more diffuse and general issues in his life. By contrast, in the duel scene in *The Brothers Karamazov*, this duplicity of meaning, or discrepancy between outer behavior and inner thoughts and feelings is absent. Throughout the scene, Zinovii is described as “cheerful”. Whereas Stavrogin is not forthcoming about his own motives, Zinovii hardly stops talking and “confessing” his own guilt and foolishness. He calls himself a fool for having challenged his rival to a duel, for having set out “to kill a kind, intelligent, noble man, who was not at fault”.²¹⁶ He gives his speech on the beauty of the world and brotherly love “from the bottom of [his] heart” and then breaks off, with the retrospective explanation, “I wanted to go on but I could not, so much sweetness, so much youngness even took my breath away, and in my heart there was such happiness as I had never felt before in all my life”²¹⁷ indicating the sincerity of his words. His opponent, characterized by Zinovii as a “kind, intelligent, noble man”, lives up to his appearances. He says, “I will give you my hand, if you wish, for it seems you are indeed a sincere man.”²¹⁸ He even joins his fiancée in publicly thanking Zinovii for not having shot him,²¹⁹ showing that he was indeed intelligent and noble enough to put aside the macho code of the duel, which prohibits showing weakness, or let alone having a woman defend one before one’s opponents. G—v not only sees the exteriors of the dueling opponents that he describes, but even Gaganov’s unconscious motives. It is unlikely that G—v would have had empirical knowledge of the latter; it is even unlikely that he might have deduced them from listening to the man’s unguarded conversations, for Gaganov is described as “withdrawn, closed up in himself”²²⁰ and it is difficult to imagine him giving verbal vent to his frustrations after having had a few drinks at the local gentlemen’s club.

The two duels can be read as a study in aspect seeing in Wittgenstein’s sense. Like in the *Gestalt* drawing of the rabbit-duck, the material—like the physical lines on the paper of the drawing—that is, the physical movement of bodies of dueling parties—is almost identical in both scenes. The person A (Zinovii; Stavrogin) shoots first, deliberately missing the person B (Zinovii’s rival; Gaganov). The person B fires, only grazing the person A. The person A flings his pistol

216 BK, p. 298.

217 BK, p. 299.

218 BK, p. 300.

219 BK, p. 301.

220 *Demons*, p. 285.

away, ending the duel. The person A is at first declared cowardly, but then public opinion abruptly changes to his favor, celebrating him. However, it is easy to miss this almost identical plot because of the rich descriptions implying the psychological states of the parties involved, like Zinovii's loving cheerfulness versus Stavrogin's irritability, and the complex and largely unconscious motives plaguing Stavrogin's dueling partner, Gaganov. This shows to what degree the 'inner' and 'outer' are fluidly intertwined in Dostoevsky's novels, and how the 'inner' life is a function of the narrative framework, which allows the reader to see externally almost identical physical material under very different aspects.

The Ethics of Aesthetic Presentation in *The Brothers Karamazov*. 'Writing' Icons and Writing Novels

The Brothers Karamazov is a novel that arguably most clearly manifests the contiguity of ancient holistic thought and the modern emphasis on individual perspective in modernity in Dostoevsky's works. I will argue that this contiguity is expressed in the multi-aspective aesthetics of the novel, which embodies both the ancient genre of hagiography in its emphasis on the unity of beauty and goodness (*to kalon*), and those of the modern novel, with its emphasis on individual perspective. In the Eastern Christian context, hagiography is the textual equivalent of an orthodox icon. As Krueger explains in *Writing and Holiness, The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East*, the Greek verb *graphein* means both "to write" and "to draw", and so the 'writing' of icons and the writing of hagiographic texts were considered closely related activities meant to provide tangible examples of sanctity. The notion of *obraz*, meaning form, but also the face and an iconographic image as a "visible symbol of the beauty of God" is a prominent motif throughout Dostoevsky's work.²²¹

There are few overt references to actual icons in *The Brothers Karamazov*: Alesha's earliest, most cherished memory is of

a quiet summer evening, an open window, the slanting rays of the setting sun [...], an icon in the corner of the room, a lighted oil lamp in front of it, and before the icon, on her knees, his mother, sobbing as if in hysterics, with shrieks and cries, seizing him in her arms, hugging him so tightly that it hurt, and pleading for him to the Mother of God, holding him out from her embrace with both arms towards the icon, as if under the protection of the Mother of God.²²²

²²¹ Jackson, *Dostoevsky's Quest for Form*, pp. 47–8.

²²² *BK*, pp. 18–9.

His relation to the Mother of God, after his own mother's death, mediated through the icon, is an example of Staretz Zosima's teaching that a "living bond with other worlds" is the hidden impetus behind all the growth and joy on Earth.²²³ By contrast, his father Fyodor Karamazov lights little lamps in front of icons, as is orthodox custom, however "not so much out of veneration, as to keep the room lit through the night"²²⁴ signaling his irreverence. The fanatical Father Ferapont's abode is described as harboring "such a quantity of donative icons with donative icon lamps eternally burning before them",²²⁵ accenting his eagerness for exterior appearance of great zeal. Zinovii's young brother, Mar- kel used to scold his old nanny for lighting the icon lamp in his room, but after his conversion on the brink of death of a grave illness, he allowed her, shortly thereafter uttering the words that "life is paradise", which later inspired his brother Zinovii to become a monk and Father Zosima.²²⁶ Even though icons only make brief appearances, the kind of total and polycentric perspective that Florensky ascribes to them is nonetheless an important motif in the novel.

The hagiographers, like the iconographers, considered themselves as participating in the divine activity of creation. God was understood as a painter—for in the doctrine of human beings being created as an *image of God*, the genitive was understood both in the sense that God was the original model, of whom human beings were images of, and in the sense that human beings were the artistic product of divine creative activity.²²⁷ Also, God was commonly described as a writer, such as in Corinthians 3,3 according to which his addressees were compared with "a letter from Christ [...] written not with ink but the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on the tablets of fleshly hearts".²²⁸ Therefore, the act of writing an icon or a hagiography involved the appropriation of the divine perspective and its application to earthly life.

223 *BK*, p. 320. The memory image of the mother shifts between Alesha's frenzied mother in real time and the serene image of Mother Mary on the icon—playing on the multi-aspectivity of the particular group of hysterics Alesha's mother belonged to, labeled as *klikushi*, which were considered demonically possessed, prophetic, or ill (either hysterical or epileptic). Cf. Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, pp. 157–8. Therefore, the Prince is yielding a similar example of multi-aspectivity as Alesha's character does. As discussed in the previous chapter, Alesha has his own "hysterical" episode, repeating that of his mother, just as his father is making fun of his mother. *BK*, p. 137.

224 *BK*, p. 122.

225 *BK*, p. 166.

226 *BK*, p. 288.

227 Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, pp. 6 and 31–2.

228 Quoted in Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, p. 8.

The reference to hagiography is overt in the text of the novel, in which Alesha's manuscript on the life of Zosima is called *zhitie*, meaning hagiography. Furthermore, the novel mentions popular saints such as St. Mary of Egypt²²⁹ (whose hagiography is narrated by Staretz Zosima's namesake, St. Zosima of Palestine²³⁰) and Alesha's namesake, St. Alexei "man of God".²³¹ The various hagiographic motifs in the novel have been noted in numerous scholarly works, such as the emblematic nature of Staretz Zosima's bow to Dmitrii, recalling the saint type of *iurodivi* or the holy fool noticed by Margaret Ziolkowski in *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature*.²³² In *Holy Foolishness: Dostoevsky's Novels and the Poetics of Cultural Critique* Harriet Murav has also noted the paradoxical qualities in Alesha and has compared him to the saint type of a holy fool, who is at the same time highly eccentric in behavior but also represents the realization of the image of God and serves as an example to the community.²³³ Valentina Vetlovskaya has noted the parallels between Alesha's life and typical patterns in hagiographic narratives, such as that the saint was pensive and quiet as a child, that he is humble, and completely uninterested in worldly goods such as money.²³⁴ This kind of pre-modern total perspective is integral to Dostoevsky's hybrid, proto-modernist approach to authorship epitomized by both the orthodox icon (as Florensky has characterized it in terms of a polycentric perspective typical of sacred art) and hagiography—in interaction with the modern assertion of the individual, subjective perspective of Dostoevskian limited narrators.

When Dostoevsky visited the Optina monastery after his son Alesha's death, and during his work on *The Brothers Karamazov*, he spoke to Father Ambrose, considered a Staretz, who was said to have possessed the ability of reading people (*prozorlivost'*) much like Father Zosima in Dostoevsky's novel.²³⁵ According to eyewitnesses, Dostoevsky behaved intrusively and domineeringly during his visit, like his character and namesake Fyodor Karamazov when visiting Zosima in "The Old Buffoon".²³⁶ At the monastery, Dostoevsky remarked to his friend Vladimir Solov'ev that "the Church as a positive social ideal must show itself

229 She is described by Zosima as "the greatest of the great, the joyful sufferer, God-seer, and Christ-bearer, our mother Mary of Egypt", *BK*, p. 294.

230 Cf. J.D.W. Crowther, "Narrative Technique in the Legend of Saint Mary of Egypt", p. 76.

231 *BK*, p. 294.

232 Margaret Ziolkowski, *Hagiography and Modern Russian Literature*, p. 163.

233 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 21. She notes later on: "It is not that the eccentric is alienated from society, but, rather, that society is alienated from him. The eccentric holds the key to the meaning of an historical moment." (p. 128)

234 Valentina Vetlovskaya, "Alyosha Karamazov and the Hagiographic Hero", p. 679.

235 Cf. Chetverikov, *Elder Ambrose of Optina*, p. 11, p. 213.

236 Cf. Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 385.

to be the central idea of his new novel or new series of novels, of which only the first has been written—*The Brothers Karamazov*.²³⁷ It is very likely that he would have heard lives of saints read out during meals, according to the ancient monastic custom—it is in any case documented that he possessed a twelve-volume edition of *Lives of Saints* in his personal library.²³⁸ Even though he was obviously inspired by the hagiographic genre, Dostoevsky of course wrote in entirely different historical and socio-cultural circumstances than the monks writing in late antiquity. Then, texts were reproduced by hand, with resulting low numbers of copies and costliness of manuscripts. They were written for the devout and initiated. Dostoevsky's novels, by contrast, were printed serially in journals distributed throughout Russia and the printed texts were able to reach an unprecedented number of readers, who were likely to be by far more diverse in ideological outlook than the Christian hagiography readership of late antiquity.

The hagiography as a genre, by contrast to the novel, operates on a limited number of narrative possibilities. As Holland points out:

Within a novel's complex structure every description, every event is subject to multiple possible interpretations, whereas in hagiography every event corresponds to a single stable interpretation. [...] each event in hagiographic discourse is subject to a particular law of hagiographic representation and plays a stable and predictable role in the artistic and ideological structure of the whole.²³⁹

The multiplicity of possible audiences for the novel thus finds its counterpart on the formal level of the novel, in which each character and each event can be interpreted from a vast array of perspectives. By contrast, the hagiography operates on the assumption of a shared teleological orientation of both the writer, the saint written about, and the readership—namely the pursuit of sainthood—resulting in stable interpretative links.

Whereas the later Bakhtin criticized “hagiographical discourse” (*zhitiynoe slovo*) within *The Brothers Karamazov* as too finalizing for the novelistic genre it is embedded in,²⁴⁰ in his earlier work, he describes the total perspective of sacred art in affirmative terms,

237 Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 387.

238 The edition in question is: *Izabrannye zhitiia sviatykh, kratko izlozhennye po rukovodstvu Chetikh-Minei* (Moscow, 1860–61). Cf. Leonid Grossman, *Biblioteka Dostoevskogo*, work number 185 of Grossman's inventory. Quoted in Holland, *The Novel in the Age of Disintegration*, p. 172.

239 Holland, *The Novel in the Age of Disintegration*, pp. 174–5.

240 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, p. 248.

Hagiography, just like icon painting, avoids any transgredient moments which delimit a human being and render him overtly concrete, because they invariably diminish authoritativeness. What must be excluded is anything typical for a given epoch, for a given nationality [...] that is anything that reinforces a given person's *determinateness in being* [...] (the life of a saint proceeds from the very outset in eternity, as it were).²⁴¹

Bakhtin's understanding of the genre of hagiography as proceeding "from the very outset in eternity" closely resembles Wittgenstein's view of the unity of ethics and aesthetics, as noted in his personal journal, according to which both are a perspective *sub specie aeternitatis*. It also evokes Wittgenstein's question in his journal entry on Dostoevsky, namely whether it is possible to be "living in eternity and not in time?"²⁴² At the end of his life, Bakhtin would introduce the contrast of "small time", that is chronological earthly time, and "great time", a time in which the meaning of earthly events will become definite, because they will be viewed from the perspective of eternity,²⁴³ therefore, like in his early writing, allowing for a contiguity of *chronos* and *kairos*, or, to put it in literary terms, the novelistic and the hagiographical genre. As Graham Pechey has interpreted this cryptic note by Bakhtin in "Eternity and Modernity—Bakhtin and the Epistemological Sublime",

Great time is not an objective state of things; it is a level of understanding in which the remotest of contexts meet and make mutual sense. It is nothing less than 'outsideness' launched into history. It is the temporal dimension of 'I-for-another' and 'the-other-for-me', while 'small time' is the equivalent of 'I-for-myself', the easily memorable past and the merely 'imaginable' future of fear and hope.²⁴⁴

Earlier on in the same text, Pechey analyses Bakhtin's re-valorization of pre-modern forms of thought that focus on *kairos* in their understanding of temporality that seeks to "confront a self-satisfied modernity with the revelation of the old".²⁴⁵ He points out that Bakhtin does not simply reject modernity for the timelessness of myth (and that indeed fascism can be interpreted as an example of attempting a project along these lines) but that he seeks to place modernity into dialogue with the knowledge of other epochs. This, of course, neatly dove-

241 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", pp. 185–6.

242 Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, pp. 73e-74e; "Daß man im Ewigen *lebt* und nicht in der Zeit?" *Tagebücher*, p. 168.

243 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences", pp. 167, 169, 170. Cited in Caryl Emerson's "Zosima's 'Mysterious Visitor'", p. 170.

244 Graham Pechey, "Eternity and Modernity—Bakhtin and the Epistemological Sublime", p. 83. Caryl Emerson also cites this passage in "Zosima's 'Mysterious Visitor'", pp. 170–1.

245 Pechey, "Eternity and Modernity", p. 73.

tails into the thesis proposed in the present study—that Dostoevsky, too, presents a contiguity of modern and pre-modern understanding of time.

Harriet Murav explains the positive value of the impersonal and conventionalized patterns in the hagiographies: “The saint has given up his own life—in the lower case—for the sake of a *Life*, which is to say, a life that others can repeat.”²⁴⁶ This contrast of life and *Life*, in Russian *zhizn'* and *zhitie*, parallels the contrast of *litso* and *lik* in Russian: the former means face and the latter is a face, seen under the aspect of an image of God (as a face is depicted on icons).²⁴⁷ Like beholding an icon, reading a hagiography is aimed at the spectator, the reader; its function is that it “awakens” her to the imitation of the saint depicted, that is, described.²⁴⁸

One thing is clear: the character of Alesha represents a complex generic interplay between the hagiographic and the novelistic. For one, Alesha, or Alexei Karamazov, is put into the context of the hagiography of his namesake, the fifth-century saint of the type of the holy fool, St. Alexius “man of God”, to whom he is compared.²⁴⁹ In “The Life and Lifestyle of the Man of God, Alexius”, and on the conventional story line common to most holy fools²⁵⁰ Alexius became a beggar in order to serve the poor and left his native Rome to Edessa. He returned to Rome and sat at the steps of his own former family mansion, without being recognized. After his death, he was recognized by his family as their long lost son, his relics were found to miraculously heal the sick, his body was incorruptible, pleasantly smelling of myrrh, implying sainthood.²⁵¹ The moral of the story, suggesting that any poor person can turn out to be a saint and is therefore to be treated with utmost respect, or that even a rich person can voluntarily choose to give up wealth, very well matches Dostoevsky's concerns in ending the oppression of the Russian poor peasants by the upper classes, and his, as it turned out in the early twentieth century, rather naïve view that this can be achieved not by means of a bloody revolution, but, by contrast to Petr Verkhovenski's view, by means of art—of writing and circulating “social novels”.²⁵² Because of the simplicity of the *Life* of St. Alexius, the story can be applied to any place or

246 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 29.

247 Victor Terras, *A Karamazov Companion*, p. 247.

248 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 133.

249 *BK*, p. 355 (by Rakitin, ironically) and p. 588 (by Dmitrii).

250 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 127.

251 Cf. Robert Doran (transl.) *Stewards of the Poor: The Man of God, Rabbula, and Hiba in Fifth-Century Edessa*, pp. 27–35.

252 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 408.

time, including nineteenth-century Russia, without losing its relevance.²⁵³ In Bakhtin's words "the life of a saint proceeds from the very outset in eternity" and so it inhabits the aesthetics of a perspective *sub specie aeternitatis*. Like the icon, it collapses linear time and shows the events of the saint's earthly life as seen from the perspective of eternity.²⁵⁴

There is no indication in the first and only volume of the novel *The Brothers Karamazov* of this turn of events for Alesha—that he might become a beggar. However, a possible beggar career is hinted in his characterization at the very beginning of the novel, where he is compared to Ivan, who is too proud to be supported by other people. Of Alesha the narrator writes, by contrast, "Alexei must be one of those youths, like holy fools (*iurodivye*), as it were, who, if they were to chance upon even a large fortune, would have no trouble giving it away for a good deed to the first asker [...] he seemed not to know the value of money at all [...]."²⁵⁵ Furthermore, his uncle describes Alesha as follows:

Here, perhaps, is the only man in the world who, were you to leave him alone and without money on the square of some unknown city with a population of a million, would not perish, would not die of cold and hunger, for he would immediately be fed and immediately take care of himself, and it would cost him no effort, and no humiliation, and he would be no burden to those who took care of him, who perhaps, on the contrary, would consider it a pleasure.²⁵⁶

Here, an image is evoked of Alesha, alone in a large city, living off of other people's alms, a story line not unlike that of St. Alexios of Rome, or St. Xenia of Petersburg.

The last we see of Alesha in the first and only volume of the novel is in the Epilogue at Iliusha's funeral, giving a speech to young boys and charismatically impressing upon them to always remember Iliusha and each other, that holding on to this memory will prevent them from becoming wicked. If Alesha were to live up to his namesake, the transformation into a beggar would take place in

253 Vetlovskaya notes the reference to Fyodor Karamazov's "Roman nose", evocative of St. Alexius's Roman origins. Cf. "Alyosha and the Hagiographic Hero", p. 682. She also notes that St. Alexius's potential bride's name is, in several versions of the story, Lizaveta—of which Liza, the name of *Alesha's* potential bride, is a more modern variant. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 683. Throughout the novel, Liza's name is sometimes spelled in Cyrillic and sometimes in Latin letters. This suggests her multi-aspectivity as both traditionally Russian and a westernized character.

254 Murav, *Holy Foolishness*, p. 132.

255 *BK*, p. 21.

256 *BK*, p. 21.

the projected but unrealized second volume of the novel. It is this open-endedness of his development that places the character of Alesha in the novelistic genre. And indeed, as Vetlovskaya has noted, Alesha's indeterminacy (he is described in the Foreword as an "indefinite hero") lacks the rigidity and schematism of the hagiographic genre.²⁵⁷ Holland has argued that though the hagiographic and the novelistic genres are juxtaposed in the narrative of Alesha's life—in the coexistence of *kairos* (understood as a moment of congruity with the divine mind in an eternal present) and *chronos* in its temporality—the novelistic genre prevails. Alesha and Grushen'ka are mutually converted and morally resurrected in an unpredictable moment narrated within chronological, novelistic time—not in the *kairos* of hagiography.²⁵⁸ I would, by contrast, point out the contiguity of both genres throughout Alesha's story. For straight after his "novelistic" encounter with Grushen'ka, Alesha has a rapturous mystic experience in the fields, and under the starry skies, in which he experiences a *kairotic* unity with the whole world and all people.²⁵⁹ The contiguity of the hagiographic and the novelistic, the mystical, total perspective and the limited, embodied perspective in Alesha's story make him a similarly multi-aspective *Kippfigur* as Staretz Zosima: like the rabbit-duck drawing, Alesha can be seen as both a hagiographic and a novelistic hero.²⁶⁰

There is a distinct, and sometimes comic overlap between hagiographic motifs and character types, independently of whether or not the novels' characters follow the conventions codified in such texts. For instance, the hagiographic *topos* of spiritual insight (*prozorlivost'*) is ascribed to Zosima in the novel, but also to Smerdiakov, who is described as "contemplator".²⁶¹ Alesha is called a holy fool (*iurodivyi*), as already mentioned, and so is Zosima,²⁶² but Fyodor Karamazov also calls himself that in the scene at the monastery, "I am a natural-born buffoon, I am, reverend father, just like a holy fool (*iurodivyi*)"²⁶³ and is act-

257 Vetlovskaya, "Alyosha Karamazov and the Hagiographic Hero", p. 680.

258 Holland, *The Novel in the Age of Disintegration*, pp. 175–7.

259 *BK*, pp. 362.

260 Indeed, the *kairotic* aspect of Alesha's life is parodied in the subchapter "An Opportune Moment" (*Takaia minutka*), which is another possible translation of *kairos*. Here the opportune moment is not derived from the perspective of eternity, or God's point of view, as it is in hagiographical texts and in the Gospels, but from Rakitin's calculation that after the smelly scandal surrounding Staretz Zosima's death, Alesha will be especially vulnerable to his schemes.

261 *BK*, pp. 126–7.

262 *BK*, p. 301.

263 *BK*, p. 41.

ing out with a kind of theatricality common to both types.²⁶⁴ He is described as “fond of play-acting, of suddenly taking up some unexpected role right in front of you, often when there was no need for it [...]”,²⁶⁵ and so he evokes the kind of buffoon Diderot memorably portrays in *Rameau’s Nephew*, as well as a stock character from plays of the *Commedia dell’Arte* genre—Miusov calls him “Pierrot”,²⁶⁶ a character famously associated with this theater genre—a detail which to my knowledge is not discussed in Dostoevsky scholarship. Apart from allusions to art via theater, Fyodor Karamazov is associated with literature. Even though he too is not an author in the strict sense, he steals the stage at the monastery with his little stories. Furthermore, he is called “Aesop” multiple times throughout the novel,²⁶⁷ evoking the ancient fabulist, a Roman slave, and a term used to describe the Russian authors’ necessity to veil their political tendencies and social criticism in indirect “Aesopian language”,²⁶⁸ that is to hide the potentially subversive contents behind seemingly harmless story lines.

In the following section, I will focus on Dostoevsky’s interplay between the total and polycentric perspective of sacred art and the linear, illusionistic perspective in theater—which is a prominent, though surprisingly underexplored motif in *The Brothers Karamazov*. I argue that the theater is a metaphor for artistically addressing and attempting to shape and influence public opinion, as well as presenting and scrutinizing the interiority of characters.

Theatricality and Constructions of the Private and the Public

As already mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the theater stage was one of the first contexts in which linear perspective was used to create the illusion of individual perspective. Florensky goes as far as to describe the illusionistic theater as “ensnaring” the spectator, “as if he were separated from the stage by a glass barrier and there were just one immobile eye”.²⁶⁹ This understanding

264 As Harriet Murav points out, summarizing A. M. Panchenko, “holy foolishness is a form of theatricality—a kind of medieval street theater that plays itself out against two opposing backgrounds: the rigid hierarchical pageantry of the official world, composed of the state and the church, and the ‘laughter culture’ of the folk world.” *Holy Foolishness*, p. 23.

265 *BK*, p. 11.

266 E.g. *BK*, p. 84.

267 *BK*, p. 84. Miusov characterizes Fyodor as “that Aesop, that buffoon, that Pierrot”. Cf. also p. 140 (where he is called Aesop twice), p. 143, and p. 666.

268 Cf. p. 119 of this text.

269 Florensky, “Reverse Perspective”, p. 210.

of the theater describes—in negative terms—Denis Diderot's illusionistic drama theory almost perfectly: namely the view that actors should imagine an invisible “fourth wall” separating them from the audience, and thus act as if the audience were not there in order to provide the illusion of everyday reality to their actions, and that a theater play is written and performed with the visual point of view of the audience in mind. Unlike Florensky, Dostoevsky would not have strictly opposed Diderot's approach to theater. Indeed, as already mentioned, he reportedly read Diderot's works with pleasure.²⁷⁰ Even though Dostoevsky is not a playwright, he had planned to write a theater play based on *The Brothers Karamazov* shortly before his death,²⁷¹ and, as I will show in the following, this novel includes myriads of references to theater.

In the scene of the family reunion at the monastery, Fyodor Karamazov's little pastiches of religious themes and Western cultural motifs doubly provoke both his monastic and his secular audience, represented by Zosima and Miusov, the westernized landowner, respectively. Fyodor commences his performance by aping Miusov's worldly bow to Zosima, poking fun both at Miusov's mimicry of Western culture and at monastic customs of asking for blessing. He dominates the conversation with an absurd wordplay, and after calling himself “a natural-born buffoon”, he compares himself with a “holy fool”, and then, seemingly out of the blue, with “the philosopher Diderot”. Arguably, the mention of Denis Diderot, the French Enlightenment philosopher, art critic and playwright famous for his illusionistic theory of art, is not entirely random, but alludes to the latter's philosophy of aesthetics and provides a means for reflecting on the role of art in society within the novel.

In the said scene at the monastery, Fyodor Karamazov proceeds to narrate an absurd vignette about how Diderot, during his stay in Russia at the invitation of Empress Catherine the Great, visited the Metropolitan Platon. According to Fyodor, Diderot

walks in and says right off: ‘There is no God,’ To which the great hierarch raises his finger and answers: ‘The fool hath said in his heart, “There is no God.”’ Right then and there our man fell at his feet: ‘I believe,’ he cries, ‘I will accept baptism!’ And so they baptized him at once. Princess Dashkova was his godmother, and his godfather was Potiomkin.²⁷²

Ekaterina Romanovna Dashkova was a literary writer and was involved in the conspiracy that placed Catherine on the throne, and Grigory Alexandrovich Po-

²⁷⁰ Lantz, *The Dostoevsky Encyclopedia*, “Diderot, Denis”, pp. 94–5.

²⁷¹ Cf. Frank's *Dostoevsky: The Mantle of the Prophet*, p. 737.

²⁷² *BK*, p. 41.

temkin, Catherine's lover, was the creator of mythical Potemkin villages, that is, facades created to invoke the impression of Catherine's enlightened ideal of the Russian empire for foreign visitors—as Deborah Martinsen comments, “a form of architectural lying”.²⁷³ Fyodor is himself accused of clowning and lying by the exasperated Miusov and he concedes, “All my life I had a feeling that it wasn't true! [...] No, let me tell you the whole truth gentlemen, [...] that last part, about Diderot's baptism, I invented myself [...] I made it up for its piquancy.”²⁷⁴ As Martinsen, too, notes, Fyodor's choice of the word “piquancy” (*pikantnost'*) associates him to Ivan's “piquant” journalistic writings.²⁷⁵ A sensual pleasure in authorship and storytelling is evoked, for Fyodor in shocking his audience, for Ivan, as argued above, a kind of (notably: sadistic) pleasure or even sweet-tooth (the Russian *sladost'* has a gustatory connotation) for shocking his readers and his audience Alesha with the suffering of others. In terms of ‘piquancy’, the allusion to Diderot is fitting as well, whose first, anonymously published text (*Les bijoux indiscrets*, 1748) is about talkative female genital organs. In Fyodor's case, his narrative skill is portrayed as deceptive, both in his burlesque treatment of Diderot's visit to Plato, and in the mention of the conspiratory Dashkova, Potemkin, the alleged architect of fake building facades, and Diderot, famous for the illusionistic theory of aesthetics.

And indeed, to Fyodor's theatrical admittance to lying for the sake of “piquancy”, Miusov's reaction is described as a parody of Diderot's aesthetically desired effect of *oubliance de soi* (“self-forgetfulness”): “Miusov rose, not only losing patience, but even somehow forgetting himself.”²⁷⁶ However, in Fyodor's case, his spectator is not self-forgetful out of absorption in a successful work of art, but out of anger. Fyodor's antics, such as suddenly falling on his knees before the elder and crying, “Teacher! [...] what should I do to inherit eternal life?” and so mimicking the rich young man asking the same question of Christ (Luke 10:25, Mark 10:17, Matthew 19:16), recalls Rameau's nephew in Diderot's dialogue of the same name, in which he would demonstrate his talent for deception with sudden outbursts of theatrical behavior. Like Rameau's nephew, Fyodor, too, is characterized by a lack of moral scrupulousness and by the desire for sponging off of other people. Fyodor theatrically admits to his aesthetic pleasure at provoking offense and to his constant lying and “false posturing”,

273 Cf. Deborah A. Martinsen's *Surprised by Shame: Dostoevsky's Liars and Narrative Exposure*, pp. 8–9.

274 BK, p. 42.

275 Martinsen, *Surprised by Shame*, p. 16; cf. also p. 127 of this text.

276 BK, p. 42.

all my life I've been getting offended for the pleasure of it, for the aesthetics (*dliia estetiki*) of it [...] And I've lied, I've lied decidedly all my life, every day and every hour. Verily, I am a lie and the father of a lie! And maybe not the father of a lie, I always get my texts mixed up; let's say the son of a lie, that will do just as well!²⁷⁷

In this pastiche of Biblical expressions (“verily” (*voistinu*) and “the father of a lie” referring to the devil in John 8:44), Fyodor manages to insert a theatrical reference, namely “I always get my texts mixed up”, indicating that even his admittance to lying is part of his unending performance. And in the very next breath, he invokes Diderot again, “Only ... my angel ... sometimes Diderot is alright!”²⁷⁸

He then proceeds to his next narrative by way of a question,

[...] is it true, great father, that somewhere in the Lives of Saints there is a story about some holy wonderworker who was martyred for his faith, and when they finally cut his head off, he got up, took his head, ‘kissed it lovingly’, and walked on for a long time carrying it in his hands and ‘kissing it lovingly’?²⁷⁹

When the monks deny the existence of such a story, Fyodor claims that Miusov told it to him, which the latter vehemently denies. Fyodor insists that Miusov told it to him, and that he had “shook his faith” with this story. He cries to Miusov, “Yes, Pyotr Alexandrovich, you were the cause of a great fall! Diderot nothing, sir!” He was “flushed with pathos” and “by now it was quite clear to everyone that he was acting again.”²⁸⁰ His pathos, his reference to Diderot, as well as the general opinion that “he was acting again” bring out the motif of theater.

Miusov painfully admits having told the story, but not directly to Fyodor. He mutters,

[...] I heard it in Paris, from a Frenchman. It is supposedly read from the Lives of Saints in our liturgy. He was a very learned man, he made a special study of statistics about Russia ... lived in Russia for a long time... I myself have not read the Lives of the Saints ... and do not intend to read them... It was just table talk...! We were having dinner then...²⁸¹

He thus reveals the Western source of the narrative he had circulated, and inadvertently, that the Frenchman, whom he considers “very learned” and who has “made a special study of statistics about Russia”, wrongly situates the French

277 BK, p. 44.

278 BK, p. 44.

279 BK, p. 45.

280 BK, p. 45.

281 BK, p. 45.

saint St. Denis in the orthodox liturgy. Furthermore, the little narrative is another oblique reference to Denis Diderot, who had argued that Christ's words "this is my body" are as absurd as the story of St. Denis kissing his own decapitated head.²⁸² (According to a legend, Diderot's namesake, St. Denis of Paris kissed his own head upon decapitation.)

However, Dostoevsky situates the circumstances of Miusov's circulation of this misrepresentation of the legend of St. Denis at the dinner table—as hagiographies are in fact read aloud during meals in orthodox monasteries. It was common of various hagiographic texts to compare themselves both to embodiment of the saints they narrate after their death, as well as spiritual food—modeled on the idea of the Eucharist, but also Ezekiel's consumption of scrolls preceding his prophetic ability in the Old Testament, and Christ's saying that "man lives not by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God", as well as his self-characterization as bread.²⁸³ The juxtaposition of physical and spiritual food implies that texts, too, were conceived of as something to be metabolized and that they had a vital role in the monastic community's very existence. By placing Miusov's secular retelling of a story of a decapitated French saint somehow kissing his own head in the same context of communal dining, as "table talk", it is arguably suggested that in secular contexts, narratives also enter the metabolism of a collective consciousness like psychic food, recalling Dostoevsky's proclamation that "art is as necessary as eating and drinking".²⁸⁴

The motif of decapitation has clearly political overtones: the king is commonly symbolically represented as both the father and the *head* of a nation, and that the image of decapitation can symbolize both parricide—the overt theme of the novel in which father Karamazov is allegedly murdered by his son Dmitrii—as well as regicide, which can be seen as the covert theme of the novel that could not be dealt with directly at the time for reasons of censorship in light of the very real death threats the Tsar was facing in Dostoevsky's time. In 1866, the year in which *The Brothers Karamazov* is set,²⁸⁵ there was an attempted assassination on Tsar Alexander II by Dmitrii Vladimirovich Karakozov—for Dostoevsky's contemporaries the name of the accused parricide Dmitrii Karamazov

282 Martinsen, *Surprised by Shame*, p. 140.

283 Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, pp. 77, 96 and 111.

284 Dostoevsky, "Mr. —bov and the Question of Art", p. 124.

285 As the narrator of *The Brothers Karamazov* explains, the plot of the novel "took place thirteen years ago" (p. 3)—and since the novel was first published in 1879, therefore the events in the novel take place in 1866.

would have clearly resonated in association with this event.²⁸⁶ As Martinsen argues, Fyodor Karamazov deserves the epitaph of “Aesop”, for his character is a comic device by which Fyodor Dostoevsky—in “Aesopian” language—deals with very real and very explosive subject matter of possible assassination on the Tsar, which many radicals at the time viewed as a viable option for ending the oppression of Russian peasants.²⁸⁷ In the novel, the unlovable father Karamazov represents the unlovable “father” of the nation, the Tsar. If we read decapitation as a metaphor for regicide—wherein the Tsar represented the head of the nation—then the church is here portrayed as pleading for a merciful, paternal treatment of the criminal, in this case the dysfunctional Tsar, just as in the legend of St. Denis the saint kisses his severed head (Dostoevsky adds the adverb “belovingly” (*liubezno*)), whereas the French State, represented by the Russian “Parisian” (as Fyodor calls him) Miusov,²⁸⁸ after the revolution had “mechanically” cut off the king’s head, by means of a guillotine.²⁸⁹ While this reading matches Dostoevsky’s conviction that Russia would succeed in resolving the tension between its upper and lower peasant classes without violence,²⁹⁰ what is of interest here is especially how the above discussed relates to Dostoevsky’s *aesthetic* convictions.

The hagiographic and theater-related motifs are interwoven in the novel because both involve a presentation of the self. Fyodor Karamazov, in his theatricality, also seeks to achieve a certain effect in his audience, though in his own buffoonish and hardly subtle ways:

[...] when I walk into a room [it seems to me] that I’m lower than anyone else, and that everyone takes me for a buffoon, so ‘Why not, indeed, play the buffoon, I’m not afraid of your opinions, because you’re all, to a man, lower than me!’ That’s why I’m a buffoon, I’m a buffoon out of shame, great elder, out of shame. I act up just because I’m insecure. If only I were sure, when I came in, that everyone would take me at once for the most pleasant and intelligent of men—oh Lord! what a good man I’d be!²⁹¹

286 Paul Fung notices the similarity of the names Karakozov/Karamazov, and links it to the contemporary case of Karakozov’s attempted assassination of the Tsar. However, he leaves out Karakozov’s first name (Dmitrii) and argues that it is a hint of *Alesha’s* future development as a revolutionary. Cf. *Dostoevsky and the Epileptic Mode of Being*, p. 111.

287 Martinsen, *Surprised by Shame*, pp. 175 ff. Also, between 1879 and 1881 there were four attempts at the tsar’s life. The fifth one, in March 1881, shortly after Dostoevsky’s death, was successful. Cf. Murav’s *Holy Foolishness*, p. 128.

288 *BK*, p. 38.

289 Martinsen, *Surprised by Shame*, pp. 138 ff.

290 Cf. Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation*, p. 35.

291 *BK*, pp. 43–4.

In his own plays and stage direction, Diderot reflected how plays could create the illusion of reality, by allowing absorption of the spectators. For instance, he encouraged simple actions, because complex ones would remind him that he was sitting in the audience, that the people on stage are actors and that the story presented is fictional—in other words, complex action would disturb the absorption of the audience and the illusion of reality.²⁹² Art is not to attract attention to itself as art, and most of the stage directions in Diderot's plays are unmotivated picking up and setting down of objects, pacing back and forth without a visible purpose, just like motions in everyday life, but also the sudden throwing oneself at someone's feet (like Fyodor Karamazov throwing himself at Staretz Zosima's feet). They are, to use Worvill's term "natural theatrical signs" which do not draw attention to themselves as signs²⁹³ and create the illusion of reality, allowing the less sophisticated audiences to forget the artistic medium and be absorbed in the represented action.

Theater was indeed one of the central means of shaping public opinion in revolutionary France, both in the *ancien régime*, shortly before the revolution, and during the reign of *terreur* after. The absorptive effect of theater was used to manipulate the masses into thinking and feeling along the lines of the regime. Also, the 'dangers' of theater and its possible uses towards the subversion and overthrow of the current establishment were recognized. Pre-revolution, enormous funds were flowing into state theaters, especially the Parisian *Opéra* and it was understood as a device for cultivating taste and demonstrating the glory of France. French opera, which had its roots in court spectacle, was not only a source of entertainment but also a manifestation and a staging of the king's power. After 1789, despite the obvious post-revolutionary structural changes both in the state and in theater management, the symbolic potential of the theater was still recognized and it was harnessed towards political ends.²⁹⁴ Even though Dostoevsky was critical of the employment of executions as terrifying spectacles, and the implied complete lack of sympathy with the condemned criminal as portrayed in *The Idiot* and in Ivan's and Zosima's stance against capital punishment in *The Brothers Karamazov*, it is worthwhile to examine the actual use of theatrical art to shape public opinion.

On a theater reform that allowed private theaters, the monopoly on theater productions was removed from the three main former royal theaters (*Opéra*, *Comédie Française*, *Comédie Italienne*) and virtually anyone was allowed to produce

²⁹² Cf. Worvill, 'Seeing' Speech, p. 91.

²⁹³ Worvill, 'Seeing' Speech, p. 103.

²⁹⁴ Cf. Mark Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*, esp. pp. 3–20.

and stage theater in all its spectrum of genres—which lead to over 35 new theaters and the initial abolishment of censorship.²⁹⁵ The initial freedom was not enduring, for censorship was re-introduced in 1794 and the theaters were under surveillance of the “*Commission d’instruction publique*”, i.e. Jacobin control. Theaters became a direct means of shaping public opinion in political matters. Plays that in any form represented moderate or aristocratic leanings were forbidden, theaters that were accused of corrupting the public were closed and its directors arrested. Furthermore, selected theaters in Paris were prescribed to perform plays that showed “the glories of the revolution”, for instance Voltaire’s *Brutus*.²⁹⁶ There are recommendations of the Jacobin *Commission d’instruction publique* from 1793 to open theaters in every town with over 4000 inhabitants, in empty church buildings, but only showing plays that were in accordance with the values of the revolution.²⁹⁷ In Paris, theater buildings were reconstructed to allow seating space for the lower classes, in recognition of the danger of a stampeding mob if they were left to stand in the parterre—and the blueprint for the new theater seating arrangement was considered as a model for the new parliament hall.²⁹⁸ There was even a police force of over sixty men overseeing theater performances.²⁹⁹ The new role of the “theater for and by the people” clearly becomes an arena for the exercise and vicarious participation in new ways of behaving, thinking (e.g. recognizing “the enemy”), feeling etc. in the new post-revolution context.³⁰⁰

The plays of Voltaire and Diderot were instrumental for the later revolutionary theater, and they were employed to spread the ideals of Enlightenment and to educate the public by immersing them in desirable civic virtues. Because of the lack of mass culture, they cannot be called propaganda, however the intention of shaping the French public was clearly present.³⁰¹ Furthermore, it is clear that there was a tension in French post-revolutionary theater between providing freedom of expression in the people’s cultural life (after the slogan of *liberté*) and the rivaling bids to power, which strove to regulate and control the theater.³⁰²

Though an admirer of the French Revolution in his pre-Siberian years, Dostoevsky changed his mind considerably from regarding revolutionaries as “mar-

295 Annete Graczyk, “Das Theater der Französischen Revolution”, pp. 12–14.

296 Graczyk, “Das Theater der Französischen Revolution”, p. 15.

297 Graczyk, “Das Theater der Französischen Revolution”, p. 23.

298 Graczyk, “Das Theater der Französischen Revolution”, p. 27.

299 Graczyk, “Das Theater der Französischen Revolution”, p. 29.

300 Graczyk, “Das Theater der Französischen Revolution”, p. 40.

301 Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*, pp. 29 ff.

302 Darlow, *Staging the French Revolution*, pp. 31–2.

tyrs” sacrificing themselves for a just cause, to thinking of revolutions as “spasms” of history, causing nothing but bloodshed and chaos.³⁰³ It would *prima facie* seem that Dostoevsky’s theater references in general were predominantly negatively tinged. It is the decadent Karamazov father who plays the buffoon and who heavy-handedly throws around references to Schiller and Diderot. Stepan Verkhovenskii, who is indirectly responsible for the turmoil in *Demons*, is introduced as a “stage actor”.³⁰⁴ Elder Zosima preaches to Madame Khokhlakova’s pathos-filled though “most sincere self-castigation”³⁰⁵ that she is only interested in serving mankind in return for gratitude and admiration:

Love in dreams thirsts for immediate action, quickly performed, and with everyone watching. Indeed, it will go as far as the giving even of one’s life, provided it does not take long but is soon over, *as on stage*, and everyone is looking and praising.³⁰⁶

This attitude of theatrical love for mankind recurs in Ivan’s speech to Alesha in “Rebellion”. While evoking St. John the Merciful, who took in a half-frozen beggar to his own bed to warm him, Ivan eloquently claims to be incapable of such love.

If it were all as it is *on stage*, in a ballet, where beggars, when they appear, come in silken rags and tattered lace and ask for alms dancing gracefully, well, then it would still be possible to admire them. To admire, but still not to love.³⁰⁷

Though more refined than the naïve Madame Khokhlakova, Ivan, too, finds it hard to love his neighbor in absence of an aesthetic backdrop and the kind of social recognition that the theater stage metaphorically stands for.

Even the two rivaling leading ladies in the novel, Katerina Ivanovna and Grushen’ka are described in theatrical terms. In “The Two Together”, Alesha is at Katerina’s house where he meets Grushen’ka for the very first time, on Katerina’s premise that Grushen’ka will be so “noble” as to surrender Dmitrii to Katerina. Katerina calls to Grushen’ka, and she appears from behind a curtain, surprising Alesha saying: “‘I’ve only been waiting behind the curtain for you to call me,’ said a tender, even somewhat sugary woman’s voice.”³⁰⁸ Grushen’ka reveals that she has not the least intention to give Dmitrii up and ridicules Kater-

303 Dmitry Shlapentokh, *The French Revolution in Russian Cultural Life 1865–1905*, p. 55 ff.

304 Dostoevsky, *Demons*, p. 7.

305 *BK*, p. 57.

306 *BK*, p. 58, added emphasis.

307 *BK*, pp. 236–7, added emphasis.

308 *BK*, p. 148.

ina. The appearance from behind a curtain and the affected voice recall a theater situation, especially when coupled with Alesha's primary reason for visiting Katerina. The younger brother is there to relay the message that Dmitrii will not see her again, that he is "bowing" (*klaniat'sia*) to Katerina,³⁰⁹ like a theater actor leaving the stage. Katerina is also not innocent of theatricality, and Ivan accuses her precisely of that in her relentless pursuit of Dmitrii's unrequited love, that she "acted as if [...] in a comedy, in a theater..."³¹⁰

However, there is also a passage in which theater is referred to affirmatively. In response to Kolia, the fourteen-year-old leader of a band of boys, who is embarrassed that he was seen playing "robbers" with smaller kids, Alesha says,

"You should reason like this," Alyosha smiled. "Adults, for instance, go to the theater, too, all sorts of heroic adventures are acted out, sometimes also with robbers and battles—and isn't that the same thing, in its own way, of course? And a game of war among youngsters during a period of recreations, or a game of robbers—that, too, is a sort of nascent art, an emerging need for art in a young soul, and these games are sometimes even better conceived than theater performances, with the only difference that people go to the theater to look at the actors, and here young people are themselves the actors. But it's only natural."³¹¹

Beside allusions to Schiller's *Robbers*, the play also mentioned by Fyodor Karamazov in the novel,³¹² by saying that there is a "need for art in a young soul", Alesha here gestures towards Dostoevsky's own afore-mentioned view on the vital necessity of art, compared to food and drink.

When the readers first encounter him, the fourteen-year-old Kolia, the leader of the group of boys, is apparently influenced by slogans of aesthetic utilitarians, for he speaks in terms of "usefulness"³¹³ and employs theatrical devices to meet specific clearly defined ends, by contrast to Alesha's (and Dostoevsky's) intrinsic understanding of the "need" for art, not as an instrument for further ends, but as "natural" as child play. Kolia is almost a caricature of the sort of coercive approach to the way art can shape society that Dostoevsky criticizes in utilitarians like Chernyshevskii.³¹⁴ He at first considers himself as having similar intents as

309 *BK*, p. 118.

310 *BK*, p. 191. Cf. fn. 254 in this work.

311 *BK*, pp. 537–8.

312 *BK*, p. 71. The allusion to Schiller possibly also gestures towards Schiller's letters *The Aesthetic Education of Man*, in which he argues that art is a continuation of children's play and necessary for developing moral feeling.

313 *BK*, p. 534.

314 For a thorough account of Dostoevsky's animosity towards Chernyshevskii, cf. James P. Scanlan's "The Case against Rational Egoism" in *Dostoevsky the Thinker: A Philosophical Study*.

Alesha, to whom he says, “And you did befriend all these kids, Karamazov, which means you want the influence the young generation, develop them, be useful, no?” He then goes on to describe his “business” with Iliusha (using the same phrase “*k delu*” as the author-narrator of the novel itself uses to conclude his Foreword and to start the novel):

I noticed that a sort of tenderness, sensitivity, was developing in the boy, and, you know, I am decidedly the enemy of all sentimental slop, and have been since the day I was born. [...] And so, the more sentimental he became, the colder I was, in order to season him; I did it on purpose, because it’s my conviction. I had in mind to discipline his character, to shape him up, to create a person...³¹⁵

He goes on to explain how Smerdiakov had convinced Iliusha to bait a stray dog called Zhuchka with a piece of bread with a pin in it, and how Iliusha did it and was terribly remorseful for the pain he caused the dog, certain that the dog consequently died. Then he, Kolia, who “wanted to discipline him” pretended to be indignant, and cut off all relations with Iliusha, dropping him like a “scoundrel”. Iliusha got sick, and was all the time devastated with guilt about the dog, and for losing his only friend Kolia.

What happened afterwards, is that Kolia eventually found the dog, cleaned him up, trained him to perform tricks and renamed him Perezvon. However, he did not show up at Iliusha’s sickbed for weeks, building up maximal tension and waiting for the opportune moment to create a dramatic effect. After telling Alesha the backstory, when he finally came to Iliusha’s bedside, and in response to Alesha’s comparison of children’s games and theater, he said, “I’m going to show you a stunt now, Karamazov, also a theater performance”.³¹⁶ This particular children’s game turned out not at all innocent. Kolia begins his “performance” by politely bowing to everyone in the room, after the other boys have all dramatically stepped aside to make room for him at Iliusha’s bedside. He “displayed his extraordinary knowledge of social propriety”.³¹⁷ The fact that Kolia consciously “displayed” (*vykazal*) his manners adds a theatrical, consciously aesthetically formed dimension to his everyday behavior.

After scolding the sick Iliusha for having killed Zhuchka and agitating him with the prospect of having brought him “a new dog”, by the name of Perezvon, Iliusha whistles and calls in the dog. He proceeds to demonstrate all the tricks he had taught Zhuchka, to everyone’s amusement except Iliusha—“white as a sheet,

³¹⁵ BK, p. 534.

³¹⁶ BK, p. 538.

³¹⁷ BK, pp. 541–2.

he stared open-mouthed at Kolya, his big eyes somehow bulging terribly”—and except Alesha, who realized, by contrast to Kolia, the “tormenting and killing effect such a moment could have on the sick boy’s health”.³¹⁸ One particular trick he pulled was getting the dog to stand motionless on his hind legs with a piece of beef on his nose, but not moving until Kolia called “Fetch!” “The unfortunate dog had to stand without moving, with the meat on his nose, for as long as the master ordered, not moving, not budging, even for half an hour.” Alesha reproaches Kolia for taking so long to come and visit Iliusha’s sickbed, for the sake of teaching tricks to the dog. Iliusha responded shouting “in the most naïve way, ‘I wanted to show him in all his glory!’”³¹⁹ Kolia’s treatment of the dog recalls his treatment of Iliusha, which he too, left to wait in suffering before revealing to him the truth about the dog in the most theatrically effective way possible, just as he made the dog wait as long as Kolia thought fit before he would let him eat the meat placed squarely on his nose.

The equation of theatricality with a kind of narcissistic lack of concern for others, as shown in Kolia’s character, is also a motif in Denis Diderot’s *Rameau’s Nephew*. It is a dialogue in which the nephew (called “lui” throughout) explains and theatrically demonstrates his talent in acting, which he instrumentalizes towards living life with minimal effort and maximal profit. While calling virtue the same as being “left out in the cold, and in this world one must keep their feet warm”,³²⁰ he goes on about his strategies to dupe people into respecting him and paying him for doing nothing.³²¹ While Kolia is nowhere near as cynical and self-serving as Rameau’s nephew (the latter’s description fits Fyodor Karamazov and Stepan Verkhovenskii better), the connection between theatricality and amorality is worth exploring in Diderot’s work, as an important intertext in Dostoevsky’s novel. Furthermore, in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, Hegel, who was very influential in Russian Westernizing circles, discussed *Rameau’s Nephew*. Dostoevsky, who was dreaming of reuniting Westernizers and Slav-

318 BK, p. 544.

319 BK, p. 545.

320 Denis Diderot, *Rameau’s Nephew*, p. 36.

321 In a hilarious scene describing his “composition” lessons to upper-class daughters, when asked how he manages to teach a subject he knows nothing about, Rameau’s nephew replies, “The way they all do. I arrived. I threw myself into a chair. ‘What dreadful weather! How tiring the pavement is!’ I chattered about some news [...] I played the fool, and they listened to me. They laughed. [...] She sat at the keyboard. At first she made some noise there, all by herself. Then I came up, after having given her mother a sign of approval. [...] However, since I had to do something, I took her hands and placed them in a different position. I got upset. I cried out, ‘G, G, G, mademoiselle. It’s a G.’ [...]” (pp. 27–8.)

philes,³²² was surely familiar at least with the general outlines of Hegel's philosophy that greatly influenced his contemporaries.³²³

As Allen Speight observes in *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency*, Rameau's nephew is cited in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as an example of absolute culture (German: *Bildung*), as an example of "pure self-making". Hegel does not name Rameau, but introduces the work as a dispute between an "honest" (*ehrlich*) consciousness of the philosopher and the "disrupted" (*zerrissen*) consciousness.³²⁴ He points that out the latter's theatrical acting takes place in everyday life, and it therefore, according to Hegel, reveals the necessary theatricality of everyday action to meet social standards. Though Rameau's nephew obviously exaggerates the extent of his self-fashioning (Hegel discusses his character in his remarks on comedy), he is nonetheless shown as an astute observer of the artifice of social conventions.³²⁵ By contrast to the holy fool, who theatrically transgresses social norms to expose hypocrisy, Diderot's character knows how to mimic expected behavior in order to get what he wants, and he merely puts on appropriate masks. However, his main desire is that of maintaining a certain social role and being acknowledged as belonging to society.

However, according to Hegel, the "*philosophe*" in dialogue with him concludes that Rameau's nephew is only frankly and skillfully embracing what he perceives everyone else to be covertly striving to accomplish. As Speight concludes in Hegel's terms:

The theatricality of everyday agency in the world of "absolute culture" means that no one is what he is except by being taken by others to play that role. Likewise, an agent cannot claim exclusive epistemic access to his own desires and feelings except through the "mirror" of the spectatorship implicit in the social situation.³²⁶

The exaggerations and buffoonery of comic characters such as Rameau's nephew, but also Fyodor Karamazov, only highlight a feature of agency in general: that the meaning of any bodily gesture is mediated by the social context of a culture, and that to act in the everyday sense also includes theatricality, because the efficacy of most complex actions (i. e. getting what one wants) depends on social recognition. Action has a necessarily public character. Theater provides the per-

322 Cf. Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Stir of Liberation*, p. 25.

323 Cf. fn. 66 of the introduction to this work.

324 Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, §§539–40. Cf. Allen Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency*, p. 85.

325 Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency*, pp. 76–80.

326 Speight, *Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency*, p. 82.

fect metaphor for the kind of social recognition that action in general requires, because for it to function at all, it needs the institution of theater viewing and an audience that participates in the culture of theater viewing, and whose recognition imbues meaning to the acting on the stage.

It must be added that Hegel conceives of theatricality as just one step in the dialectics of mindedness. It needs to be integrated into a consciousness which is not at a remove from the social conventions it acts out, but which embraces them as its own. It can similarly be argued that Dostoevsky depicts theatricality as an aesthetic metaphor for a divided Russian consciousness, for the split between (often only outwardly enacted) Western ideas of individualism and the more traditional and deeply rooted Eastern orthodox identity. Throughout his works, Dostoevsky hopes for a reconciliation of these tendencies in Russian society, which appeared as opposing forces.

Court Trials as 'Real' Theater

Tsar Alexander II introduced a reform of the Russian legal system in 1864, making court cases public and trialed by a jury as opposed to legal professionals.³²⁷ The daily newspapers commenced reporting on court cases regularly, sometimes in a highly sensationalist fashion—a practice in which Dostoevsky, too, participated with his feuilleton column *A Writer's Diary*. For instance, he covered the “Kronenberg case”, a trial in which a father was accused of violent abuse of his seven-year-old daughter at the prompts of his wife, the child's stepmother. Dostoevsky comments on the proximity between literary talent and outright lying, which in the case of a lawyer can have disastrous consequences. He criticizes the defense attorney who in his desire for “resonance” does not shy away from distorting his statements to fit the desired outcome of the case. The latter depicted the child to be a coy, spoiled, lying creature, and the father a victim of her manipulations. However, there is another trial in which Dostoevsky's own artistic “resonance” has turned the whole case around, this time to the detriment of another child. Only three months later, in the *Diary* issue of May 1876, Dostoevsky starts to be preoccupied with a similar trial case. A woman pushed her stepdaughter out of the window, and while initially expressing some sympathy with the child, after learning that the woman was pregnant, Dostoevsky diagnosed a temporary insanity in the perpetrator in the December 1876 issue of his feuilleton. As Eric Naiman argues in “Of Crime, Utopia and Repressive Com-

327 Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions*, p. 55.

plements: The Further Adventures of the Ridiculous Man”, Dostoevsky has, with his feuilleton coverage of the case, “written the script for her resurrection and release”, that is, embellishing the narrative of the “fantastic” nature of her crime. At the re-trial, the woman was indeed released of all charges and the December 1876 issue of Dostoevsky’s *Diary* had laid open at the persecutor’s desk.³²⁸ The concern that the new system of a trial by jury would render the legal system vulnerable to emotional manipulation and the arousal of passions was commonly voiced at the time.³²⁹ Contemporary observers noted the spectacular, theatrical aspect of trials, and the literary aspect of persecution and defense speeches.³³⁰ In the following, I will focus on the representation of the theatricality of the Russian legal system in *The Brothers Karamazov*. The new system of trial by jury was put into practice in 1866,³³¹ and the said novel is set in that very year,³³² and culminates in Dmitrii Karamazov trial precisely in this new system. As far as I know, this correspondence of dates has so far not been mentioned in Dostoevsky scholarship. As I will show, the novel reflects on the ethical and legal consequences of narrative in the legal context. Furthermore, since the court trials as spectacles offered a new medium of public scrutiny of interiority, or mindedness, I would argue that the novel also explores the public communicability of what is traditionally conceived of as ‘interior’, for instance someone’s intentions.

The connection between art, journalism and the judicial system is already implied in the trial scene in *The Brothers Karamazov*. In the opening chapter of Book XII, “Judicial Error”, dedicated to Dmitrii’s trial for alleged parricide, the narrator describes the air of expectation and spectacle,

Everyone [...] knew that the case had been publicized all over Russia [...] By that day visitors had come to us not only from the provincial capital but from several other Russian cities, and lastly from Moscow and Petersburg. Lawyers came, several noble persons even came, and ladies as well.³³³

Thanks to journalists and the advent of mass publishing, the small town was put in the country’s center of attention. The audience of the trial was extended from

328 Eric Naiman, “Of Crime, Utopia and Repressive Complements: The Further Adventures of the Ridiculous Man”, p. 520.

329 Murav, *Russia’s Legal Fictions*, p. 61.

330 Murav, *Russia’s Legal Fictions*, pp. 67, 77, 79–84.

331 Murav, *Russia’s Legal Fictions*, p. 71.

332 Cf. p. 153 of this work.

333 *BK*, p. 656.

the provincial Skotoprignon'evsk (meaning approximately Cattle-town) to the whole of Russia. The narrator continues:

All the tickets were snapped up. For the most respected and noble of the men visitors, certain quite unusual seats were even reserved behind the table at which the judges sat: a whole row of chairs appeared there, occupied by various dignitaries [...] The lawyers alone, who arrived from all over, turned out to be so numerous that no one knew where to put them, since the tickets had all been given out, begged, besought long ago. [...] Some of the ladies, especially among the visitors, appeared in the gallery of the courtroom extremely dressed up [...]³³⁴

The description resembles a sold-out baroque theater performance, with seating accorded with respect to social status, and “extremely dressed up” ladies in the galleries. The theater metaphor continues throughout, for when Katerina Ivanovna is called to the witness stand, “the ladies snatched up their lorgnettes and their opera-glasses, the men began to stir, some stood in order to get a better view”³³⁵ The prosecutor’s speech against (innocent) Dmitrii, which highlights the horrors of parricide and speaks to the conscience of the nation not to simply enjoy the spectacle of the trial, but to condemn the crime, is interrupted by a resounding applause. The prosecutor is encouraged by the applause, for the “opportunity to speak out for all of Russia to hear!”³³⁶ visibly enjoying the spectacle he is discouraging.

Art in general is mentioned and literature is alluded to in the defense speech. The defense accuses the prosecutor of excessive artistry:

[...] there are things that are even worse, even more ruinous in such cases than the most malicious and preconceived attitude towards the matter. Namely, if we are, for example, possessed by a certain, so to speak, artistic game, by the need for artistic production, so to speak, the creation of a novel (*roman*) [...]³³⁷

The defense lawyer later goes on to describe the prosecutor’s entire case as within “the realm of novels (*oblast’ romanov*)”³³⁸ that “the prosecution liked its own novel (*ponravilsia sobstvennyi roman*)”³³⁹ namely describing Dmitrii as a man of weak will, that it has “created a novel (*sozdali roman*) around quite a different

334 BK, pp. 656–7.

335 BK, p. 679.

336 BK, p. 695.

337 BK, pp. 726–7.

338 BK, p. 730.

339 BK, p. 731.

person”.³⁴⁰ The prosecutor, in turn, too accuses the defense of excessive creativity in the psychological description of Dmitrii, “... We are reproached for having created all sorts of novels (*nasozdavali romanov*). But what has the defense attorney offered if not novel upon novel (*roman na romane*)?”³⁴¹

After all the witnesses, and after both prosecution and defense had made their case, the jury retired to make a decision. The break is again described in terms of an intercession in a theater performance, “The ladies were simply hysterically impatient, but their hearts were untroubled, ‘Acquittal is inevitable.’ They were preparing themselves for the spectacular moment of general enthusiasm.” The defense attorney was sure of his success, “‘There are,’ he said to one group, as was reported afterwards, ‘there are these invisible threads that bind the defense attorney and the jury together. They begin and can already be sensed during the speech. I felt them, they exist. Don’t worry, the case is ours...’”³⁴² He is confident that his rhetorical strength was able to ‘bind’ the jury to his desired outcome, to create a “resonance” with his words. The sentence of guilt provokes turmoil in the courtroom. As one onlooker comments, “our peasants stood up for themselves”,³⁴³ evoking the utilitarian aesthetic according to which art and eloquence have no use compared to the down to earth and practical judgment of the peasants, who condemn parricide without exception.

However, the trial as a spectacle is clearly relished by the narrator of *The Brothers Karamazov*. As already discussed, Dostoevsky’s novels, especially the late ones, *Demons* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, make use of the device of a limited narrator. The intradiegetic narrators, G–v in *Demons* and the unnamed townspeople’s voice in *The Brothers Karamazov* both narrate based on rumors, overheard conversations and their only partially comprehended witness accounts of public events in their respective provincial towns. They are both characters in the story-world they present, as opposed to omniscient narrators, and are therefore concretely situated, bodily and sociologically. Hence their narratives are constructed to simulate the limited perceptual field of a real person.

The narrator of *The Brothers Karamazov* opens the novel by introducing Alesha as the third son of Fyodor Karamazov, a landowner “from our district” and “still remembered among us”.³⁴⁴ By using the first-person plural, the narrator includes himself in the narrative, and situates himself in the story-world, the provincial district he, too, is a citizen of. Towards the end of the novel, in the open-

340 BK, p. 732.

341 BK, p. 749.

342 BK, p. 751.

343 BK, p. 753.

344 BK, p. 7.

ing of Book XII, in the morning of Dmitrii's trial, the narrator's presence can hardly be overlooked. Firstly, he interjects his own account of the public trial with a lengthy caveat to the effect that he may not remember all the events in the trial correctly, and he excitedly adds "before we enter the courtroom"—as if proudly ushering the reader to his town's spectacle of a trial—all the newest town talk: that the case was "publicized all over Russia", and that "visitors had come to us not only from the provincial capital but from several other Russian cities, and lastly from Moscow and Petersburg", "and ladies as well".³⁴⁵ As mentioned, this same narrator is not quite consistent in his limited perspective, and he sometimes assumes the outside perspective of an omniscient author by narrating events he could not have possibly witnessed (such as Ivan's nightmare), and he hints that the entire narrative is in fact his "novel" ("*roman*").³⁴⁶

Dostoevsky's inconsistent limited narrator draws attention to an artworks' power to simulate everyday perception of the world. The narrator's own comparisons of the courtroom to a theater suggest such an aesthetic self-reflection. He embarks on an ekphrasis of the courtroom for the benefit of the reader, simulating the perceptual field one would have as one of the intradiegetic members of the audience:

Our courtroom is the best hall in town, vast, lofty, resonant. To the right of the judges, who were placed on a sort of raised platform, a table and two rows of chairs were prepared for the jury. To the left was the place for the defendant and his attorney. In the center of the hall, close to the judges, stood a table with the "material evidence". [...] ³⁴⁷

By his use of indexicals, like "our", "to the right", "to the left", "in the center", the narrator simulates the perception of a real hall, immersing the readers in the fictional story. The narrator also reports what one could hear, "A hush came over the courtroom, one could have heard a fly buzz" when Dmitrii, the accused, appeared on the scene; and as "the defense attorney, the famous Fetyukovich" appeared "a sort of subdued hum, as it were, swept through the courtroom".³⁴⁸

The narrator's focus on the characters' body language, as already discussed in connection to the ambivalent meanings of bows throughout the novel, continues in the court scene, too. For instance, he describes the defense speech, that is, Fetiukovich's performance, as follows, "he somehow kept bending forward, especially at the beginning of his speech, not really bowing, but as if he were rush-

³⁴⁵ *BK*, p. 656.

³⁴⁶ *BK*, pp. 610–11.

³⁴⁷ *BK*, p. 656.

³⁴⁸ *BK*, p. 660.

ing or flying at his listeners, and this he did by bending precisely, as it were, with half of his long back, as if a hinge were located midway down that long and narrow back that enabled it to bend almost at a right angle”, his posture seemingly mimicking the two halves of his speech: the first vicious, the second reconciling and full of pathos.³⁴⁹ The reader viscerally feels the charging-forward mode of the celebrity attorney’s confidence in his case. When three physicians are called to the witness stand to state their diagnosis of the defendant’s medical condition, all three refer to the way Dmitrii walked into the courtroom (the scene that caused the afore-mentioned “hush”), and each ‘read’ it differently. First, Dr. Herzenstube diagnoses an “abnormal” psychological state in Dmitrii, because he “marched along like a soldier, and kept his eyes fixed straight in front of him, whereas it would have been more correct for him to look to the left where, among the public, the ladies were sitting, since he was a great admirer of the fair sex”.³⁵⁰ The second doctor, an unnamed “famous” one “from Moscow”, also considered Dmitrii’s condition as “abnormal”, but he disagreed with Herzenstube as to what a “normal” walking style would look like, “I assert that he ought not to have been looking to the left, at the ladies, but, on the contrary, precisely to the right, seeking out his defense attorney, in whose help all his hopes lie”.³⁵¹ The third doctor, Dr. Varvinsky, thought that the defendant was “in a perfectly normal condition”, and “‘in his humble opinion’ the defendant, on entering the courtroom, ought to have looked straight in front of him, as in fact he did, because in front of him were sitting the presiding judge and the members of the court, on whom his entire fate now depended.”³⁵²

It is precisely the task of the prosecution the defense attorneys, in their competing narratives, to provide a ‘reading’ of Dmitrii’s behavior, that would convince the jury, for which they consorted with literary means. The narrator’s limited, linear perception mimics the position of the jury, who, too, need to ‘read’ Dmitrii’s case and judge it accordingly. The paradox of privacy of ‘interior’ states, such as Dmitrii’s intentions, and their legibility from his body are negotiated in the novel. Particularly the role of art is emphasized, such as theater as visualization of texts as conceptual and narrative constructions, and such as the role of literary narrative in framing the material of Dmitrii’s overt behavior. The multi-spectivity of his behavior is evident in the three different interpretations medical experts gave of the manner in which he walked in the courtroom. If the overt pattern his body formed while walking across the room is like a material

349 *BK*, p. 725.

350 *BK*, p. 671.

351 *BK*, p. 673.

352 *BK*, p. 673.

sign, its meaning is intertwined with the conceptual and narrative framework attributed to it, just like, according to Wittgenstein, an unknown material sign is seen under different aspects according to the poetry (*Erdichtung*) one surrounds it with.³⁵³

To conclude, in the logic of Dostoevsky's writings, the notion of *artistic seeing*, that is seeing *well*, is interlinked with the notion of what can be called *aesthetic objectification*, that is, the *poiesis* of the object that is seen, be this a new social reality for Russia or a personal narrative. In Dostoevsky's poetics, when regarding how his novels are made and the intradiegetic reflections on the role of literature, this aesthetic objectification is morally ambivalent in the sense that it can also signify a delusion (today one might say a phantasm), or sadistic aesthetic sensation of sweetness at the sight of suffering, or in its most physically literal sense sexual instrumentalization. And the representation of this double-edged, disjunctive potential of literature (or art in general) is exemplified on the one hand in Dostoevsky's intradiegetic references to hagiography and representation of holiness and to theater, used for shaping public opinion in the French Revolution, but also for enabling an often-dubious scrutiny of 'interiority'. Especially considering Hegel's dialectics of the mind (*Geist*), in which the theatrical mind is discussed via the example of Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, an author important to Dostoevsky, it is crucial to ask how might Dostoevsky's novels express the rapid modernization in Russia, starting with Tsar Peter's reforms, in which there are discrepancies between private feelings and intentions and the constantly changing public codes and conventions for behavior, modeled after Western models that lead to a certain theatricality in everyday behavior. Wittgenstein's philosophical writings, which presuppose a unity of aesthetics and ethics in a complex way (for the *Tractatus* as a whole subverts its own propositions as "nonsense"), and which reflect on the interrelation of language and world in the early writings, and language games and material social practices in the later, yield conceptual resources for an analysis of how we might conceive of literary works reflecting and seeking to effect rules of the game in the social reality outside of literature. This intertwining of aesthetics and actual practices is salient in Dostoevsky's novels in their references to economic, social and legal dimensions of art.

353 *PI*, II, xi, p. 210; "Und je nach Erdichtung, mit der ich [ein bildliches Zeichen] umgebe, kann ich es in verschiedenen Aspekten sehen." *PU*, II, xi, p. 546.

3 The Visibility of Pain in W.G. Sebald's Novels

The introduction to the exhibition catalogue of Sebald's private collection of photographs and postcards—pictures clustering around the motifs of bicycles, water, fire, mountains, butterflies, buildings—opens with the observation that Sebald collected similarities (“Sebald sammelte Ähnlichkeiten”).¹ And indeed, not only did Sebald himself organize his collections of pictures around common motifs, but his character Austerlitz, in the novel of the same name, is permanently busy comparing and contrasting photographs of buildings in his architectural studies. Austerlitz's work is described as “endless preliminary sketches for a study, based entirely on his own views, of the family likeness between all these buildings”.² The notion of family resemblances is mentioned, made famous by Wittgenstein's definition in *Philosophical Investigations*.³ Austerlitz is explicitly compared first to a night-active raccoon, and then to Ludwig Wittgenstein within the novel, and a resemblance is noted. The narrator mentions “the personal similarity to Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the horror-stricken expressions on both their faces”.⁴

Sebald's narrators—whose embodiment is emphasized with the myriad of photographs presented highlighting the linear, spatially unique perspective of the person who took them—very much resemble Dostoevsky's limited narrators in the later novels, who, too, recount the intradiegetic events from within the world of the novel and from their unique and non-omniscient perspective. While in Dostoevsky the theatrical metaphor for the relation between the private and the public is employed, and ‘interiority’ is presented and scrutinized for instance by means of a theatrical spectacle of the public trial at the end of *The Brothers Karamazov*, in Sebald's novels it is photography and video, including television, that are the relevant media for the exploration of this distinction. For instance, in *Austerlitz*, Austerlitz mentions the dome of the Lucerne train station, and the narrator promptly presents a photo of a televised image in which that very dome is burning, from coverage of a devastating fire that engulfed it. The narrator furthermore remarks in a footnote that he had visited that very

1 Heike Gfrereis and Ellen Strittmatter, “Bild-Felder aus W.G. Sebald's Nachlass” (unnumbered pages).

2 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 44; “endlose Vorarbeiten zu einer ganz auf seine eigenen Anschauungen sich stützende Studie über die Familienähnlichkeiten, die zwischen all diesen Gebäuden bestünden”, *Austerlitz*, p. 52.

3 *PI*, §§ 66–7.

4 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 54; “die Ähnlichkeit seiner Person mit der Ludwig Wittgensteins, über den entsetzten Ausdruck, den sie beide trugen in ihrem Gesicht”, *Austerlitz*, p. 62.

building in February of 1971, presenting both a photograph he took of the still intact dome, and the televised image of the fire at the Lucerne train station the very next day (5 February 1971).⁵ The inclusion of a televised event in the novel relates its fictional plot to real-world news coordinates. Furthermore, Austerlitz looks for his mother, a Holocaust victim, by watching the Nazi propaganda video *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt* on Theresienstadt, where he knows his mother had been. It, too, is a televised event, however clearly it is staged and aestheticized in order to cover up the extent of human destruction going on in the camp-ghetto and to present it in a positive light.

Jean Baudrillard diagnoses that in the twentieth century the oppositions between subject and object, the public and the private domain have been rendered meaningless due to new technological possibilities. In “The Ecstasy of Communication” from the 1980s, Baudrillard claims that the (television) screen and the (telephone) network have replaced the modern prerogatives of (theater) scene and spectacle of the nineteenth century. Even before the advent of Facebook and other social media, Baudrillard noted that “the ecstasy of communication” has replaced the modern “drama of alienation”.⁶ The abolishment of the scene and the spectacle, for Baudrillard, thus also renders the aesthetic obsolete, for the conditions of pleasure have changed and have ceased to be other-oriented and have become “ecstatic, solitary and narcissistic”.⁷ He writes, whilst contrasting modern aesthetics to this “new state of things” that “we will have to suffer”:

If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject, a pathology of expression of the body's theatrical [...] conversion [...] then with communication and information, with the immanent promiscuity of all these networks, with their continual connections, we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. [...] [T]oo great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore.⁸

Baudrillard is certainly to some extent right, and new communication technologies are the key to understanding our current life form, while theatricality has become secondary. However, it is debatable whether his diagnosis still holds true for writers like Sebald, whose very concrete, embodied narrators live along the coordinates of real-world referents, such as topographic landmarks in cities (like the Lucerne train station) and very specific dates (like 5 Febru-

⁵ Austerlitz (Bell), p. 19.

⁶ Jean Baudrillard, “The Ecstasy of Communication”, pp. 130–1.

⁷ Baudrillard, “The Ecstasy of Communication”, p. 132.

⁸ Baudrillard, “The Ecstasy of Communication”, p. 132.

ary 1971). It seems that Sebald's novels from the brink of the twenty-first century counteract the hyperreal dissolution into a sea of information.

The second half of the twentieth century has been marked by an "increased blurriness between real and simulated spatialities", as Ursula Terentowicz-Fotyga has remarked.⁹ However, she understands Sebald, along with Zadie Smith and Iain Sinclair, to be a representative of a "new urban imaginary", of authors who defy Baudrillardian passivity in face of "hyperreality" and "traverse the urban simulacrum in search of a way out" by means of concrete, spatiotemporal referents.¹⁰ She makes clear that she does not consider these writers to be nostalgically seeking to return to a kind of nineteenth-century realism, but that they very confidently operate with metafictional devices in their novels, while at the same time refusing to surrender to an all-consuming hyperreal indifference.¹¹ I mostly agree with Terentowicz-Fotyga, but, by contrast to her reading, I would not go as far as to claim that Sebald creates the reality effect in his novels while he "distances [himself] from [his] own verbal artifice".¹² Rather, I would like to explore the possibility that *Austerlitz* operates on an alternative understanding of language, namely that of Wittgenstein, in which meaning functions practically, as potentially embodied in a real life-form and real practices.

Terentowicz-Fotyga constructs an opposition between the real-world referents of Sebald's novels and his "verbal artifice" (which he allegedly rejects), in favor of the former. However, if the former were the crux of Sebald's innovative style, there is nothing that would distinguish his novels from dry catalogues of facts. If we understood language meaning in Wittgenstein's terms as the practical use of concepts, as opposed to an elaborate system of labels for referents, then Sebald's "verbal artifices" do not lose their meaning and stoop to simulacra only because they cannot exhaustively be matched with real-world referents. Rather, we might explore how, for instance, the fictional character, "Austerlitz", is employed, of course not to refer to a real person—not even to a real place if one thinks of the battle of Austerlitz—but to symbolize the face of all Holocaust victims, among whom Jean Améry (an Austrian resistance fighter of Jewish origin in the Second World War, who is also mentioned in the novel) represents a real referent. This approach, based on Wittgenstein's practical understanding of language, can directly account for the novel's *fictionality*, and ask *how* this very artifice is employed to show aspects of *real* history and *real* suffering such as that

9 Ursula Terentowicz-Fotyga, "Unreal City to City of Referents: Urban Space in Contemporary London Novels", p. 306.

10 Terentowicz-Fotyga, "Unreal City to City of Referents", p. 307.

11 Terentowicz-Fotyga, "Unreal City to City of Referents", p. 326.

12 Terentowicz-Fotyga, "Unreal City to City of Referents", p. 326.

of Améry's. Indeed, it is precisely the artifice of literature and art in general that offers an outside perspective on the totality of facts that is the world (to use Wittgenstein's expression in the *Tractatus*, 1.1), and therefore scope for reflection on real-world events and people. To borrow Cave's term, it is possible to view a literary work as a "cognitive artifact"¹³—something crafted, which can show the 'interiority' of its characters from an outside perspective and render the private publicly communicable. Sebald was interested in breaking the silence about the Holocaust, and providing a fresh perspective as opposed to stale textbook images, and his novel *Austerlitz* indeed captures the kind of subtle psychic suffering that is not measurable or reducible to material damage, but that has to do with a feeling of metaphysical displacement from the world as a whole.

Seeing in the Dark: Platonic and Photographic Motifs

W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* opens with the narrator's arrival in Antwerp, Belgium. "Plagued by a headache and dark thoughts" (*ungute Gedanken*), he finds his sanctuary in a nearby night zoo called Nocturama: "I still remember [...] I took refuge in the zoo by the Astridplein, next to the Centraal Station."¹⁴ It is there, in the darkness, that he feels better, and starts looking at bats, mice, hogs, owls and other night-active animals. He is captivated by a raccoon who, with a serious face, keeps washing one and the same apple slice, "as if it hoped that all this washing, which went far beyond any reasonable thoroughness, would help it to escape the unreal world in which it had arrived, so to speak, through no fault of its own".¹⁵ Furthermore, the narrator compares the raccoon's eyes with the "fixed (*unverwandt*), inquiring gaze of certain painters and philosophers", "who seek to penetrate the darkness that surrounds us purely by means of looking and thinking".¹⁶ Two sets of photographs follow, showing owl eyes, the painter Jan Peter Tripp's and the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's eyes,

13 Terence Cave, *Thinking with Literature: Towards a Cognitive Criticism*, p. 1.

14 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 1; "Ich entsinne mich noch [...] wie ich mich schliesslich [...] in den am Astridplein, unmittelbar neben dem Zentralbahnhof gelegenen Tiergarten gerettet habe." *Austerlitz*, p. 10.

15 *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 2–3; "als hoffe er, durch dieses, weit über jede vernünftige Gründlichkeit hinausgehende Waschen entkommen zu können aus der falschen Welt, in die er gewissermassen ohne sein Zutun geraten war", *Austerlitz*, pp. 10–1.

16 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 3; "vermittels der reinen Anschauung und des reinen Denkens versuchen, das Dunkel zu durchdringen, das uns umgibt", *Austerlitz*, p. 11.



Fig. 2: *Austerlitz*, p. 3. Reproduced with permission from the Sebald Estate and the Trustees of the Ludwig Wittgenstein Trust Cambridge. Images provided by the German Literature Archive Marbach.

two “obsessive masters of looking at looking”.¹⁷ Thus, at the very beginning of the novel, the motifs of perception, as embedded in its natural historical continuity with other animal life, as well as aesthetic artifice, in the mention of the artist Tripp and in the very presentation of the photographs in the fictional text, are introduced. The novel encapsulates and reflects elusive cognitive processes of experiencing and remembering, as well as inherent problems involved in representing both the horrors of the Holocaust and the utopian hope of reconciliation.

¹⁷ Ross Posnock, “Don’t think, but look!” W.G. Sebald, Wittgenstein, and Cosmopolitan Poverty”, p. 118.

In *Austerlitz*, the motifs of seeing and aesthetic presentation are intertwined with the motif of darkness with which the novel both begins and ends: with *Nocturama* in Antwerp and with nightfall in Paris. This darkness signifies forgetfulness (among other things), for as the novel continues the narrator remarks, while visiting a former Nazi concentration camp at the Belgian fortress Breendonk,

Even now, when I try to remember, the darkness does not lift but becomes yet heavier as I think how little we can hold in mind, how everything is constantly lapsing into oblivion with every extinguished life, how the world is, as it were, draining itself, in that the history of the countless places and objects which themselves have no power of memory is never heard, never described or passed on.¹⁸

The inability to remember is likened to a darkness that fails to disperse, and again the deaths of the people perished in Breendonk, whose blueprint the narrator is here trying to recall again, are described as “extinguished”, disappearing into darkness. It is against this forgetting that the narrative process is opposed, for it is suggested that places and objects are disappearing from the world, or dissolving into darkness, because there is nobody there to recount them, to tell their story. As J.J. Long and Anne Whitehead remark, “By thus drawing attention [...] to his own representational strategies [both pictorial and textual], Sebald thematizes the question of transmission of historical knowledge and personal and collective memory.”¹⁹

In *Austerlitz*, the literally dark “false world” of *Nocturama* also alludes to Nazi rule. Austerlitz's former neighbor and close family friend, Věra, comments on the immediate effects of Nazi occupation of Prague and that its inhabitants were especially bothered by the rearrangement of the traffic to right-side driving, which gave them the impression of an inverted, false world, “It often made my heart miss a beat, she said, when I saw a car racing down the road on the wrong side, since it inevitably made me think that from now on we must live in a world turned upside down.”²⁰ Like the inversion of day and night at *Nocturama*, the

18 Austerlitz (Bell), pp. 29–30; “Selbst jetzt, wo ich mich mühe, mich zu erinnern, [...] löst sich das Dunkel nicht auf, sondern verdichtet sich bei dem Gedanken, wie wenig wir festhalten können, was alles und wieviel ständig in Vergessenheit gerät, mit jedem ausgelöschten Leben, wie die Welt sich sozusagen von selber ausleert, indem die Geschichten, die an den ungezählten Orten und Gegenständen haften, welche selbst keine Fähigkeit zur Erinnerung haben, von niemandem je gehört, aufgezeichnet oder weitererzählt werden.” Austerlitz, pp. 38–9.

19 J.J. Long and Anne Whitehead, “Introduction”, p. 5.

20 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 242.; “Es hat mir oft, sagte sie, das Herz einen Schlag ausgesetzt, wenn ich einen Wagen rechtsseitig auf der Fahrbahn dahinsausen sah, weil mir dabei unweigerlich der Gedanke kam, wir müssten fortan leben in einer falschen Welt.” Austerlitz, pp. 250–1.

shift of left to right-hand driving symbolized for Věra a more sinister inversion of the world, in which the National Socialists were in power. Furthermore, the ghetto town of Theresienstadt, termed “potemkinian” in the novel, is another such instance of a false world, which was aestheticized and presented as a safe haven for Jews. This fiction is expressed in the title of the Nazi propaganda film *Der Führer schenkt den Juden eine Stadt*, and in the film, the ghetto denizens were shown as if peacefully strolling the streets and having coffee in front of a “false” café.²¹ The inversion of day and night can easily be read as an instance of the classic Platonic topos according to which darkness represents evil and deception, and light represents the idea of the Good and truth, as symbolized by the sun.²² The *Nocturama* and Nazi rule in Sebald’s novel could be read as footnotes to Plato’s cave, described in Book VII of *The Republic*, its denizens deceived and isolated from daylight of the real world. Plato writes,

Picture human beings living in some kind of underground cave dwelling [...]. Here they live, from earliest childhood, with their neck and legs in chains, so that they have to stay where they are, looking only ahead of them, prevented by the chains from turning their heads. They have light from a distant fire [...]. Between the fire and the prisoners, at a higher level than them, is a path along which you must imagine a low wall that has been built, like the screen that hides people when they are giving a puppet show, and above which they make the puppets appear. [...] Picture also, along the length of the wall, people carrying all sorts of implements which project above it [...]. All in all [...] what people in this situation would take for truth would be nothing more than shadows of the manufactured objects.²³

The narrator of *Austerlitz* describes fort Breendonk in terms strikingly similar to the darkness of Plato’s proverbial cave, which only offered dim artificial light (and thus deceptive shadows): “All the outlines seemed to merge in a world illuminated only by a few dim electric bulbs, and cut off forever from the light of nature.”²⁴ What he sees are only shadow-like objects, lit by a weak source of light.

However, the motif of darkness in *Austerlitz* is not only encoded along Platonic lines in which it would represent deception. As mentioned in the beginning, in the opening of the novel, the narrator describes his visit to *Nocturama*

²¹ *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 341–3.

²² Cf. Plato, *The Republic*, 506e–509b.

²³ Plato, *The Republic*, 514a–515c.

²⁴ *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 29–30; “in dieser nur vom schwachen Schein weniger Lampen erhellen und für immer vom Licht der Natur getrennten Welt [schiene] die Konturen der Dinge zu zerfließen”, *Austerlitz*, p. 38.

as a welcome relief; he “saved” himself in the darkness, and only felt better after sitting in the dark and having his eyes adjust to it.²⁵ And, in describing his (as he terms it possibly hysteric²⁶) worsening of sight in the right eye, as terrified as the narrator was at the prospect of not being able to continue his work, the prospect of becoming blind seems to fill him with a “a vision of release in which I saw myself, free of the constant compulsion to read and write, sitting in a wicker chair in a garden, surrounded by a world of indistinct shades recognizable only by their faint colours”.²⁷ In this inversion of values, where darkness is described as redeeming, Sebald signals his proximity to the negative dialectics of the Frankfurt School. The reference to the raccoon in a “false world” from the beginning of the novel finds itself in *Nocturama* can also be read as a reference to Adorno's famous saying that there is no right life in a false one. (“Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen.”²⁸) And Adorno's method of negative dialectics—which was very influential for Sebald²⁹—insists on not representing images of utopia, and being true to the “damaged life”, to use the subtitle of Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, the negativity of the world. And indeed, the narrator only finds relief when his eyes adjust to the darkness of *Nocturama*, when he is able to face the darkness of the world. Therefore, dwelling in the darkness can be read as redemptive, since one is not seeking to escape from real suffering.

The image of darkness completely sheds negative connotations in the context of the process of developing analog photographs. For it is only in the darkroom, protected from any other harsh sources of light, that photographic images can be “redeemed” and brought to the surface in their chemical bath. Indeed, the novel compares the process of remembering with that of developing photographs:

In my photographic work I was always especially entranced, said Austerlitz, by the moment when the shadows of reality, so to speak, emerge out of nothing on the exposed paper, as

²⁵ Austerlitz (Bell), p. 10.

²⁶ Austerlitz (Bell), p. 55.

²⁷ Austerlitz (Bell), p. 48; “Vision der Erlösung, in der ich mich, befreit von dem ewigen Schreiben- und Lesenmüssen, in einem Korbsessel in einem Garten sitzen sah, umgeben von einer konturlosen, nur an ihren schwachen Farben noch zu erkennenden Welt.” Austerlitz, p. 56.

²⁸ Theodor W. Adorno: *Minima Moralia*, p. 43.

²⁹ Ben Hutchinson makes a thorough case for the presence of the Frankfurt School's philosophy, and especially Adorno, throughout Sebald's work in “The Shadow of Resistance: W. G. Sebald and the Frankfurt School”. Uwe Schütte also emphasizes the importance of Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt school in *W. G. Sebald: Einführung in Leben und Werk*, p. 20.

memories do in the middle of the night, darkening again if you try to cling to them, just like a photographic print left in the developing bath too long.³⁰

There is a parallel between Austerlitz's understanding of photography and memory with the narrator's observation of Austerlitz's narrating style,

From the first I was astonished by the way Austerlitz put his ideas together as he talked, forming perfectly balanced sentences out of whatever occurred to him, so to speak, and the way in which, in his mind, the passing on of his knowledge seemed to become a gradual approach to a kind of historical metaphysic, bringing remembered events to life.³¹

Austerlitz's thoughts are developed like photographs, distilled from dispersion; like old photographs they "revive" that which is remembered.

The need for darkness to develop photographs can be read along the lines of the Frankfurt School's rejection of affirmative culture that was very influential for Sebald's thinking. The "shadows of reality" that appear on photographic paper in the darkroom are not equivalent to the negatively connotated, deceptive shadows on the walls of Plato's cave. Rather, they can be read in Adorno's terms as "shadows of resistance" against post-war affirmative culture that seeks to forget the horrors of the past, or as the resistance of the poets banished from Plato's *Republic* (which can very easily be read in totalitarian terms). As Ben Hutchinson formulates it in "The Shadow of Resistance: W.G. Sebald and the Frankfurt School", in which he argues for the importance of this concept of Adorno's for Sebald's work as a whole, they symbolize the role of art: "if art is the 'shadow' of resistance to affirmative culture, then it participates aesthetically in this act of resistance."³² Hutchinson argues that the common concern for Sebald and the Frankfurt School is "resistance to reification".³³ However, despite Sebald's pro-

30 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 109; "Besonders in den Bann gezogen hat mich bei der photographischen Arbeit stets der Augenblick, in dem man auf dem belichteten Papier die Schatten der Wirklichkeit sozusagen aus dem Nichts hervorkommen sieht, genau wie Erinnerungen, sagte Austerlitz, die ja auch inmitten der Nacht in uns auftauchen und die sich dem, der sie festhalten will, so schnell wieder verdunkeln, nicht anders als ein photographischer Abzug, den man zu lang im Entwicklungsbad liegenläßt." *Austerlitz*, p. 117.

31 Austerlitz (Bell), pp. 13–4. "Es war für mich von Anfang an erstaunlich, wie Austerlitz seine Gedanken beim Reden verfertigte, wie er sozusagen aus der Zerstretheit heraus die ausgewogensten Sätze entwickeln konnte, und wie für ihn die erzählerische Vermittlung seiner Sachkenntnisse die schrittweise Annäherung an eine Art Metaphysik der Geschichte gewesen ist, in der das Erinnernte noch einmal lebendig wurde." *Austerlitz*, p. 23.

32 Ben Hutchinson, "The Shadow of Resistance: W.G. Sebald and the Frankfurt School", p. 276.

33 Hutchinson, "The Shadow of Resistance", p. 280.

imity to Adorno and Benjamin—I would like to offer another possible philosophical intertext for reading *Austerlitz*, namely Wittgenstein's philosophical works.

It is true that Sebald himself expressed aesthetic indebtedness to Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School, and not to Wittgenstein. He wrote in *A Place in the Country* (*Logis in einem Landhaus*),

[...] how dismal and distorted our appreciation of literature might have remained, had not the gradually appearing writings of Benjamin and the Frankfurt School [...] provided an alternative perspective.³⁴

This statement is often taken as evidence of Sebald's thorough obligation to the Frankfurt School, as for example in Ben Hutchinson's "The Shadow of Resistance: W.G. Sebald and the Frankfurt School".³⁵ As Hutchinson furthermore points out, much of Sebald's critical work, starting with the Sternheim thesis, employs the adjective "aesthetic-ethical" ("ästhetisch-ethisch"). Hutchinson reads this tendency in the context of the influence of the Frankfurt School has had on Sebald in terms of criticizing a blind belief in progress and an affirmative formulation of utopia.³⁶ However, given Wittgenstein's consistent pairing of ethics and aesthetics in his works, it is at least worth examining the possibility that Sebald's works can be read under the aspect of Wittgenstein's idea of a unity, or at least complementarity of ethics and aesthetics.

The image of developing photographs as a metaphor for memory (or, better, postmemory in Marianne Hirsch's sense) also echoes passage §56 from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*,

But what do we regard as the criterion for remembering it right?—When we work with a sample instead of our memory there are circumstances in which we say that the sample has changed colour and we judge of this by memory. But can we not sometimes speak of a darkening (for example) of our memory-image? Aren't we as much at the mercy of memory as of a sample? [...] Or perhaps of some chemical reaction.³⁷

34 W.G. Sebald, *A Place in the Country: On Gottfried Keller, Johann Peter Hebel, Robert Walser and Others*, "Introduction", p. 8; "[...] wie trüb und verlogen unser Literaturverständnis wohl geblieben wäre, hätten uns die damals nach und nach erscheinenden Schriften Benjamins und der Frankfurter Schule [...] nicht andere Perspektiven geöffnet." "Vorrede", p. 12.

35 Hutchinson, "The Shadow of Resistance", p. 271.

36 Hutchinson, *W. G. Sebald: Die dialektische Imagination*, "Einleitung: Zur Ästhetik der Ethik", especially p. 17. Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, pp. 206–7.

37 *PI*, §56, "[...] was sehen wir denn als das Kriterium dafür an, daß wir uns richtig an [eine Farbe] erinnern?—Wenn wir mit einem Muster statt mit unserm Gedächtnis arbeiten, so sagen wir unter Umständen, das Muster habe seine Farbe verändert und beurteilen dies mit dem Gedächtnis. Aber können wir nicht unter Umständen auch von einem Nachdunkeln (z.B.) unseres

Here, he likens memory to an image, a “memory-image” (*Erinnerungsbild*) and the process of remembering to a chemical reaction. Like Austerlitz, who that memory images might darken like a photographic print left in the chemical bath for too long, Wittgenstein, too, expresses the fragility of memory, the possibility that it might darken with time, and the near impossibility of comparing it to any sort of objective reality (comparing a possibly darkened memory-image of a color to a sample possibly darkened by age does not yield any definite results as to what the color originally was). Hence, we are delivered unto our memory, like a photograph to its chemical bath. In line with Wittgenstein’s anti-‘Platonism’,³⁸ Sebald’s texts and his use of photographs do not seek to directly refer to Platonic ideas of the Good, True and Beautiful, but like Wittgenstein’s philosophical texts, they rather suggest “an ethical relation to historical reality that is emergent, unstable and impressionistic”, as is the process of developing old photographs.³⁹

To return to the two pairs of eyes from the beginning of the novel: Tripp’s and Wittgenstein’s. Sebald himself explains in his essay “As Day and Night: On the Paintings of Jan Peter Tripp” that an artist like Tripp exercises resistance to the reifying mastering position: “In gazing, the painter surrenders our all-too superficial knowledge; things look across at us, unblinking, and fix us in their gaze.”⁴⁰ Here, the motif of a fixed and steady gaze (*unverwandt*), already used to describe the gaze of night-active animals and “certain painters and philosophers” is directly attributed to Tripp. Jan Peter Tripp, Sebald’s close friend, is perhaps most famous for his photographically precise paintings, sometimes accused of outdated illusionism, in the tradition of *trompe-l’oeil* paintings, as Sebald notes in his essay on Tripp.⁴¹ Sebald considers this a misunderstanding and insists that—far from a facile reproduction of reality as it supposedly is—Tripp’s paintings in slight and almost imperceptible ways deviate from straightforward realism:

Erinnerungsbildes reden? Sind wir dem Gedächtnis nicht ebenso ausgeliefert wie einem Muster? [...] Oder etwa einer chemischen Reaktion?”

38 Plato was in fact one of the rare philosophers Wittgenstein enjoyed reading, as his student Georg von Wright had noted. Cf. “A Biographical Sketch”, p. 79. Wittgenstein’s anti-‘Platonism’ refers to crude appropriations of Plato in the philosophy of his own time. For an account of this tendency, cf. W.W. Tait, “Truth and Proof: The Platonism of Mathematics”, for Wittgenstein’s counter-arguments, cf. especially p. 344.

39 Nina Pelikan Straus, “Sebald, Wittgenstein, and the Ethics of Memory”, p. 45.

40 W.G. Sebald, “As Day and Night: On the Paintings of Jan Peter Tripp”, pp. 158–9; “Schauend gibt der Maler unser allzu leichtfertiges Wissen auf [...] unverwandt blicken die Dinge zu uns herüber.” “Wie Tag und Nacht: Über die Bilder Jan Peter Tripps”, p. 174.

41 Sebald, “As Day and Night”, pp. 160–3.

The longer I look at paintings by Jan Peter Tripp, the more I realize that beneath the surface illusionism there lurks a terrifying abyss. It is, so to speak, the metaphysical underlining of reality, its dark inner lining.⁴²

Sebald mentions, for instance, everyday objects which seem to somehow gesture towards eternity:

A red glove, a burnt-out match, a pearl onion on a chopping board: these objects contain the whole of time within themselves, as it were redeemed forever by the painstaking, impassioned precision of the artist's work. The aura of memory which surrounds them lends them the quality of mementos: objects in which melancholy is crystalized.⁴³

This passage is strikingly reminiscent of Wittgenstein's own contemplation of an oven noted in his journals, an everyday object which he treated like a whole world in itself.⁴⁴

Another good example of the slight shift Tripp's works effect from a perfect illusionism to an uncanny gesturing towards something that cannot be captured by the pure realistic copying of objects is Sebald's discussion of the two paintings *Déclaration de guerre* and *Déjà vu oder der Zwischenfall*. In the former painting, a pair of a lady's shoes is depicted realistically, up to the creases in the leather from wear. Sebald asks who here is declaring war on whom and insinuates that it is a war between the patterns of the tiles and the squares from the window panes, projected by the sunlight on the floor.⁴⁵ It is a war waged, so to speak, from within the logic of linear perspective, and the different vantage points implied in it.

The other painting contextualizes the first as a painting in a museum, contemplated by a woman wearing one of the shoes. The other seems lost. It is in

⁴² Sebald, "As Day and Night", p. 166; "Je länger ich die Bilder Jan Peter Tripps betrachte, desto mehr begreife ich, dass sich hinter dem Illusionismus der Oberfläche eine furchterregende Tiefe verbirgt. Sie ist sozusagen das metaphysische Unterfutter der Realität." "Wie Tag und Nacht", p. 181.

⁴³ Sebald, "As Day and Night", p. 168; "Ein roter Handschuh, ein abgebranntes Zündhölzchen, eine Perlzwiebel auf einem Schneidbrett, diese Dinge tragen dann alle Zeit in sich, sind durch die passionierte Geduldsarbeit des Malers gewissermaßen für immer gerettet. Die Erinnerungssaura, die sie umgibt, verleiht ihnen den Charakter von Andenken, in denen Melancholie sich kristalisiert." "Wie Tag und Nacht", p. 183.

⁴⁴ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 83e.

⁴⁵ Sebald, "As Day and Night", p. 178.



Fig. 3: “As Day and Night”, p. 169. Reproduced with permission from the Sebald Estate. Image provided by the German Literature Archive Marbach.

this painting that the shift characterizing Tripp’s art in general is literally enacted, in Sebald’s words, “Something is shifted to another place.”⁴⁶

The painting thematizes the relation of art to ‘reality’, for the painted woman is beholding the painting of the shoes identical to her pair, now incomplete, leaving the beholders of the painting as a whole wondering where her other shoe is. In the introduction to *A Place in the Country (Logis in einem Landhaus)*, which contains the essay on Tripp “As Day and Night”, Sebald remarks on Tripp, “I learned from his pictures that one has to look into the depths, that art does not get on without handiwork and that one has to take many difficulties into account in recollecting [*Aufzählen*] things.”⁴⁷ The play on words between recollecting and recounting in the sense of enumerating (as the German *Aufzählen* suggests), is also visible on said painting, which makes clear that art, despite the perfection of Tripp’s *trompe d’oeil* handiwork does not, in fact, merely copy re-

⁴⁶ Sebald, “As Day and Night”, p. 164; “Etwas wird an eine andere Stelle gerückt.” “Wie Tag und Nacht”, p. 179.

⁴⁷ Sebald, *A Place in the Country*, pp. 2–3; “[A]n seinen Bildern [habe ich] gelernt, daß man weit in die Tiefe hineinschauen muss, daß die Kunst ohne das Handwerk nicht auskommt und daß man mit vielen Schwierigkeiten zu rechnen habe beim Aufzählen der Dinge.” *Logis in einem Landhaus*, “Vorrede”, p. 7.



Fig. 4: “As Day and Night”, p. 170. Reproduced with permission from the Sebald Estate. Image provided by the German Literature Archive Marbach.

ality. One of the lady’s shoes is missing. The reader is presented with a difficulty in “recollecting/recounting things”.

Sebald draws attention to the dog looking directly and fixedly at us from the painting and the object at his feet—another shoe, but of a different kind than the one missing. He contrives a fabulous history of the shoe: “[The dog] brought in a sort of wooden sandal, from the fifteenth century or more specifically from the wedding picture hanging in the London National Gallery which Jan van Eyck painted in 1434 for Giovanni Arnolfini and Giovanna Cenami affianced to him [...]”⁴⁸ The painting Sebald is referring to is Jan van Eyck’s *Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife*.

In the lower left corner, the same kind of antiquated wooden clogs are visible next to the dog in Van Eyck’s painting as the single shoe at Tripp’s dog’s feet. As Carol Jacobs suggests, this may be a reference to Tripp’s “exemplary mimetic,

⁴⁸ Sebald, “As Day and Night”, p. 171; “[Der Hund] hat eine Art Holzsandale herbeigebracht, aus dem 15. Jahrhundert beziehungsweise aus dem in der Londoner Nationalgalerie hängenden Hochzeitsbild, das Jan van Eyck 1434 für Giovanni Arnolfini und die ihm [...] angetraute Giovanna Cenami gemalt hat”, “Wie Tag und Nacht”, p. 187.

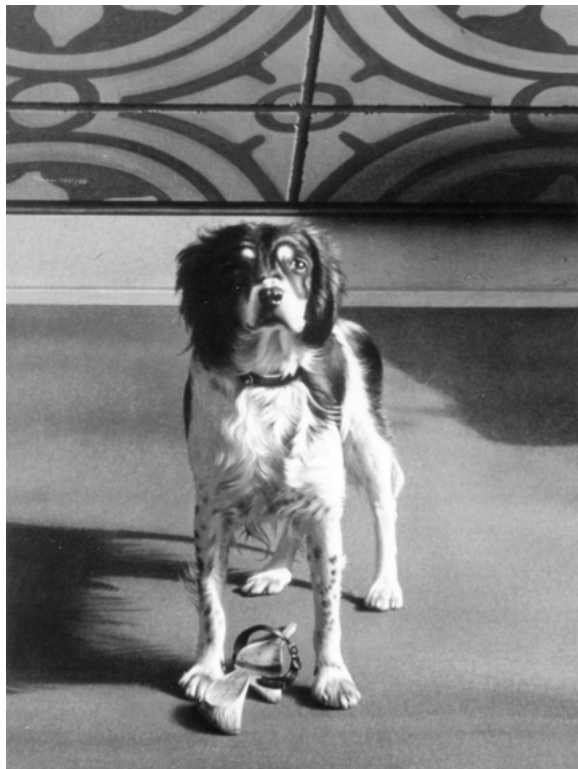


Fig. 5: “As Day and Night”, p. 172. Reproduced with permission from the Sebald Estate. Image provided by the German Literature Archive Marbach.

artistic accomplishment” comparable to Dutch masters of old.⁴⁹ But, beside a play on illusionism, it also testifies to Tripp’s ability, in Sebald’s words to “look into depths”, as opposed to merely copy reality—here the depths of art history. He comments that the dog runs “easily over the dark abysses of time because for him there is no difference between the fifteenth and the twentieth centuries”.⁵⁰ Sebald insists (with Barthes) that artless photography is tautological,⁵¹ in the simple sense that it seeks to merely double the world. Instead, he seeks the kind of art that does not simply mirror that which is the case. In Wittgen-

⁴⁹ Carol Jacobs, *Sebald’s Vision*, p. 163.

⁵⁰ Sebald, “As Day and Night”, p. 172; “der mit Leichtigkeit über die Abgründe der Zeit läuft, weil es für ihn keinen Unterschied gibt zwischen dem 15. und dem 20. Jahrhundert”, “Wie Tag und Nacht”, p. 188.

⁵¹ Sebald, “As Day and Night”, p. 164.



Fig. 6: “As Day and Night”, p. 171. Reproduced with permission from the Sebald Estate. Image provided by the German Literature Archive Marbach.

stein’s words, if the world is defined as all that is the case in *Tractatus* 1, then aesthetics (like ethics or “value” in general) are defined as “outside the world” in 6.41 and as inexpressible in factual language in 6.42. In that sense, art transcends that which is the case.

Sebald furthermore describes the dog as follows: “Attentively his left (domesticated) eye is fixed on us; the right (wild) one has a trace less light, strikes us as averted and alien. And yet it is precisely by this overshadowed eye that we feel ourselves seen through.”⁵² The left eye is “domesticated”, possibly signifying

⁵² Sebald, “As Day and Night”, p. 172; “Aufmerksam ist sein linkes (domestiziertes) Auge auf uns gerichtet; das rechte (wilde) hat um eine Spur weniger Licht, wirkt abseitig und fremd. Und doch fühlen wir uns gerade von diesem überschatteten Auge durchschaut.” “Wie Tag und Nacht”, p. 188.

the illusionistic linear perspective characteristic for Western art since the Renaissance, technically only possible if the artist closes one eye to sketch the lines of the scenes as converging on one horizon. The right eye is “wild”, it enables depth vision only possible when looking through both eyes. This interpretation of mine corresponds to Sebald’s characterization of Tripp as able to “look into depths” and of the painted dog as seeing “through” his beholders. Since Sebald has compared his own writing methods to that of a dog, sniffing his way back and forth, as opposed to a scholar proceeding linearly along established lines of thought, the comment on the dog can be read as a description of his own aspiration as a writer—to provide more than just a documentary enumeration of events, but a deeper view into the workings of history.⁵³ It also irresistibly evokes the narrator of *Austerlitz*, published only a year after *A Place in the Country*, who complains of a diminishing vision in his right eye.⁵⁴ In the narrator’s case, the eye is sick, not merely externally overshadowed. But the motif of an explicitly binocular vision, enabling depth perception is salient in both works, as well as the motif of a difficulty of “enumerating” things or “recounting” them narratively—things that cannot be simply listed but that evade quantitative representation.

Sebald and Tripp produced a picture-book together, in which Tripp’s precise paintings of eyes of famous poets, writers, scientists, and even W.G. Sebald’s dog is posthumously published alongside Sebald’s mini-poems in the collection *Unrecounted* (*Unerzählt*). As Andrea Köhler writes in the afterword to *Unrecounted*, “Penetrating the Dark”, the motif of the eye and seeing in the dark is central to Sebald’s work.⁵⁵ She notes the resemblance in approach that Sebald ascribes to both the narrator of *Austerlitz* and Tripp (in the quote cited above) in their tender relation to things in the world, by drawing our attention to the narrator’s remark “how the world is, as it were, draining itself, in that the history of the countless places and objects which themselves have no power of memory is never heard, never described or passed on”.⁵⁶ Tripp paints eyes in such a way as if they looked back at us, as if imbued with a life of their own, and not derivative of that of their creator; the narrator in *Austerlitz* embarks on recounting the stories of buildings

53 Cf. “A Conversation with W.G. Sebald” by Joseph Cuomo: “[My research] was always done in a random, haphazard fashion [...] in the same way in which, say, a dog runs through a field. If you look at a dog following the advice of his nose, he traverses a patch of land in a completely unplottable manner. And he invariably finds what he is looking for. [...]”, p. 94. For other interviews in which Sebald compares his methods to that of a dog, cf. Jacobs, *Sebald’s Vision*, pp. 165–6.

54 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 46. Carol Jacobs also notices this in *Sebald’s Vision*, p. 241, fn. 23.

55 Andrea Köhler, “Die Durchdringung des Dunkels”, p. 72.

56 *Austerlitz*, Bell (transl.), p. 30.

and people he encounters, as if saving them from the forgetfulness and the emptying of the world, just like Sebald in Wittgenstein's terms surrounds Tripp's "unrecounted" eye-pictures with mini-poems, thus "recounting" the *fiction* of what went into the making of the expressions in those eyes.⁵⁷ Therefore, Tripp's nearly illusionistic realism can be interpreted as a response to photographic technology. Like artistic photography, his work—despite its uncanny realism—does not merely replicate the world but seeks to "recount" and encapsulate its more elusive and unquantifiable aspects. As Köhler remarks, both Tripp and Sebald are interested in preserving the ephemeral, in conserving the moment.⁵⁸ They both turn to art, the making of artifices and fictions, in order to "preserve" the past. The providing of photographs, seemingly documenting his fictions, along with dates, precise locations and historical characters creates a reality effect in Sebald's novels. However, within his works of fictions this 'reality' is, of course, clearly woven into an artifice—a fictional narrative.

The Work of Memory

Memory is one of the most salient motifs of Sebald's works. In *On the Natural History of Destruction (Luftkrieg und Literatur)*, he postulates a collective loss of memory in the German experience of the British area bombing. In citing an American military psychologist, Sebald suggests an intimate link between the *polis* and the *psyche*, and that the sudden destruction of German cities also destroyed the ability in Germans to recall their first-hand experience of annihilation, beyond mere stereotypes and repetitions of widely circulating narratives.⁵⁹ Sebald suggests that descriptions commonly used by eyewitnesses such as "a prey to the flames", "that fateful night", "all hell was let loose", "we were staring into the inferno", "the dreadful fate of the cities of Germany" or even "On that dreadful day when our beautiful city was razed to the ground"⁶⁰ function as *cli-*

57 "I can see it in various aspects according to the fiction I surround it with." *PI*, II, xi, p. 210. "Und je nach Erdichtung, mit der ich [ein bildliches Zeichen] umgebe, kann ich es in verschiedenen Aspekten sehen." *PU*, II, xi, p. 546.

58 Köhler, "Die Durchdringung des Dunkels". "Präparierung des Augenblicks, die verlorene und wiedergefundene Zeit, ist das Thema der beiden Künstler", p. 75.

59 *NHD*, p. 33.

60 *NHD*, p. 24; "ein Raub der Flammen", "verhängnisvolle Nacht", "es brannte lichterloh", "die Hölle war los", "starten wir ins Inferno", "das furchtbare Schicksal der deutschen Städte", "An jenem furchtbaren Tag, an dem unsere schöne Stadt dem Erdboden gleichgemacht wurde", *LL*, p. 34.

chés that only cover up the actual, unfathomable experience that could not be put into words. For Sebald, they are nothing but a defense against memory, “gesture sketched to banish memory” (“eine Geste zur Abwehr der Erinnerung”).⁶¹ Sebald ventures to suggest,

The death by fire within a few hours of an entire city, with all its buildings and its trees, its inhabitants, its domestic pets, its fixtures and fittings of every kind, must inevitably have led to overload, to paralysis of the capacity to think and feel in those who succeeded in escaping.⁶²

The extent of destruction and its suddenness did not simply alter the lives of survivors—it brutally removed all coordinates of identity and purpose hitherto provided by the palpable reality of their city. Hence, their ability to experience first-personally at all was extinguished and the eyewitnesses could not actually speak about what they saw, but only offer the bits of vocabulary stereotypically used to describe unfathomable catastrophes.

Sebald furthermore suggests that art can, *post factum*, offer the kind of insight into the experience of catastrophe, “The accounts of individual eyewitnesses [...] are only of qualified value, and need to be supplemented by what a synoptic and artificial view reveals.”⁶³ To use Marianne Hirsch’s term, Sebald seeks to create a kind of postmemory of the unfathomable and unspeakable events. The creation of postmemory, according to Hirsch, is especially relevant to the generation following a cataclysmic event, such as the Second World War, the *Nachgeborene*, like Sebald, who have not experienced the events that left traces of trauma in their own lifetimes.⁶⁴ It is to be an “artificial” gaze, and its *artificiality* (*Künstlichkeit*) suggests the work of art in creating a kind of cognitive artifact of memory. Sebald furthermore speaks of a “synoptic” gaze, a kind of gaze that oversees the events from a distance of the following generation. Julia Hell discusses Sebald’s desire, as a *Nachgeborener*, “to be present at the cataclysmic

⁶¹ *NHD*, p. 24; *LL*, p. 34.

⁶² *NHD*, p. 25; “Der innerhalb weniger Stunden sich vollziehende Feuertod einer ganzen Stadt mit all ihren Bauten und Bäumen, mit ihren Bewohnern, Haustieren, Gerätschaften und Einrichtungen jedweder Art musste zwangsläufig zu einer Überladung und Lähmung der Denk- und Gefühlskapazität derjenigen führen, denen es gelang, sich zu retten.” *LL*, p. 35.

⁶³ *NHD*, p. 25; “Die Berichte einzelner Augenzeugen sind [...] nur von bedingtem Wert und bedürfen der Ergänzung durch das, was sich erschließt unter einem synoptischen, künstlichen Blick.” *LL*, p. 35.

⁶⁴ Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory*, p. 33.

events that formed his/her very subjectivity. [...] [V]isual immediacy, the desire to 'see' the past, is crucial."⁶⁵

This striving for a panoramic, aerial view on the past evokes Wittgenstein's notion that aesthetics and ethics require a work of viewing side-by-side from his *Lectures on Aesthetics* in Cambridge:

[A]ll that Aesthetics does is to 'draw your attention to a thing', to 'place things side by side'. He said that if, by giving 'reasons' of this sort, you make another person 'see what you see' [...] And he said that the same sort of 'reasons' were given, not only in Ethics, but also in Philosophy.⁶⁶

Wittgenstein had also noted on philosophical activity,

The difficulty is here essential to the thought not as in the sciences due to its novelty. It is a difficulty which I can't remove if I try to make you see the problems. I can't give you a startling solution which suddenly will remove all your difficulties. I can't find one key which will unlock the door of our safe. The unlocking must be done in you by a difficult process of synopsizing certain facts.⁶⁷

The notion of a "synoptic" gaze recurs in the *Philosophical Investigations*, where Wittgenstein is in search of a *übersichtliche Darstellung* that is, perspicuous or synoptic presentation, and where he proposes the method of looking for family resemblances in order to analyze complex phenomena.⁶⁸ This method, however, requires a non-hypostasized conception of time, for facts that are temporally far apart need to be synopsized together.

In the novel *Austerlitz*, at the Greenwich observatory, Austerlitz meditates on the relativity of time, criticizing Newton's linear notion of time (which has since, of course, been complemented with Einstein's theory of relativity):

If Newton thought, said Austerlitz, pointing through the window and down to the curve of the water [...] glistening in the last of the daylight, if Newton really thought that time was a river like the Thames, then where is its source and into what sea does it finally flow? Every river, as we know, must have banks on both sides, so what, seen in those terms, what are the banks of time? What would be this river's qualities, qualities perhaps corresponding to

⁶⁵ In Julia Hell, "The Angel's Enigmatic Eyes, or the Gothic Beauty of Catastrophic History in W.G. Sebald's 'Air War and Literature'", p. 374.

⁶⁶ G.E. Moore, "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930–33", p. 27.

⁶⁷ *Wittgenstein's Nachlass*, Ms153b, p. 30 (1931–1932).

⁶⁸ Cf. *PI*, §122; §§66–7.

those of water, which is fluid, rather heavy and translucent? [...] Why does time stand eternally still and motionless in one place, and rush headlong by in another?⁶⁹

Here he echoes Wittgenstein's questioning of the hypostasized view of time as a river, as one that disables us to see connections between different times. He noted, "[A]s long as we continue to talk of a river of time, of an expanse of space, etc., etc., people will still keep stumbling over the same puzzling difficulties and find themselves staring at something which no explanation seems capable of clearing up."⁷⁰ Rather than thinking of time akin to a physical thing, it is more fruitful to regard it as a function of experience per se—in this manner, Austerlitz's puzzles are not raised. Before this conversation, Austerlitz and the narrator are strolling next to an actual river on their way to Greenwich, which, of course, gave its name to Greenwich Mean Time and Greenwich Meridian, standard coordinates for the measurement of time zones and space longitudes on Earth. The narrator notes, "As we walked down to the river through Whitechapel and Shoreditch he said nothing for quite a long time [...] Only on the riverbank, where we stood for a while looking down at the gray-brown water rolling inland, did he say..."⁷¹ Carol Jacobs attributes the juxtaposition of the actual river with a conversation on Newton's imagery of time as a river to the binocular view of the narrator. The description of the stroll along the river is "language mapped onto the objective reality in a conventional and unproblematic way, it is like seeing with the left eye of the narrator."⁷² Jacobs does not press the metaphor further, but it follows that the view revealed in the ensuing conversation, which ques-

69 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 142; "Wenn Newton gemeint hat, sagte Austerlitz und deutete durch das Fenster hinab auf den im letzten Widerschein des Tages gleißenden Wasserbogen [...] wenn Newton wirklich gemeint hat, die Zeit sei ein Strom wie die Themse, wo ist dann der Ursprung der Zeit und in welches Meer mündet sie endlich ein? Jeder Strom ist, wie wir wissen, notwendig von beiden Seiten begrenzt. Was aber wären, so gesehen, die Ufer der Zeit? Was wären ihre spezifischen Eigenschaften, die etwa denen des Wassers entsprächen, das flüssig ist, ziemlich schwer und durchscheinend? [...] Warum steht die Zeit an einem Ort ewig still und verrauscht und überstürzt sich an einem anderen?" Austerlitz, p. 150.

70 CV, 15e.; "[S]olange von einem Fluss der Zeit und von einer Ausdehnung des Raumes die Rede sein wird [...] solange werden die Menschen immer wieder an die gleichen rätselhaften Schwierigkeiten stoßen, und auf etwas starren, was keine Erklärung scheint wegheben zu können." VB, p. 15.

71 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 139; "[...] während wir durch Whitechapel und Shoreditch zum Fluss hinabgingen, sagte er lange Zeit nichts [...] Erst drunten am Flussufer, wo wir eine Weile stehenblieben und hinabschauten auf das graubraun landeinwärts sich wälzende Wasser, sagte er [...]." Austerlitz, p. 147.

72 Jacobs, *Sebald's Vision*, p. 132.

tions Newton's conception of time, corresponds to a view as seen from the narrator's right, damaged eye. This eye that does not see the empirical world very well anymore, but, perhaps like the mythical blind prophet Tiresias, and like Tripp's dog that sees "through" his beholders through his right, "wild" eye, is capable of seeing deeper into conditions of the possibility of experience whatsoever—into space and time as functions rather than objects of experience. Jacobs instead insightfully draws attention to another scene in which Austerlitz and the narrator are contemplating a river, closer to the beginning of the novel, this time in a painting by Lucas van Valckenborch, thus introducing the motif of art and aisthesis.⁷³ The painting depicts a frozen river, with people ice skating over it. Austerlitz remarks both on the painting and the kind of attention (and looking) it requires,

In the foreground, close to the right-hand edge of the picture, a lady has just fallen. She wears a canary yellow dress [...] When I look out there now, and think of that painting and its tiny figures, it seems to me as if the moment depicted by Lucas van Valckenborch had never come to an end, as if the canary-yellow lady had only just fallen over or swooned [...] as if the little accident, no doubt unnoticed by most viewers, were always happening over and over again, would never cease, and nothing and no one could ever remedy it.⁷⁴

As Jacobs notices, "the icy moment depicted from the sixteenth century is made one with that of the two conversationalists standing on a summer's day in the late 1960s on the river bank".⁷⁵ The frozen river represents the capacity of art to bring the 'river of time' to a standstill, to freeze and preserve it. As Austerlitz notes, "as if the little accident [*Unglück*], no doubt unnoticed by most viewers, were always happening over and over again, would never cease, and nothing and no one could ever remedy it". The little accident or unhappiness (the German word *Unglück* signifies both) can be read as a euphemism for Austerlitz's own tragedy. Like the sixteenth-century painting, Sebald preserves the tragedy of Holocaust in a single fictional biography, as if the tragedy, no doubt unnoticed

⁷³ Jacobs, *Sebald's Vision*, pp. 135–6.

⁷⁴ Austerlitz (Bell), p. 15; "Im Vordergrund, gegen den rechten Bildrand zu, ist eine Dame zu Fall gekommen. Sie trägt ein kanariengelbes Kleid [...] Wenn ich nun dort hinausschaue und an dieses Gemälde und seine winzigen Figuren denken, dann kommt es mir vor, als sei der von Lucas van Valckenborch dargestellte Augenblick niemals vergangen, als sei die kanariengelbe Dame gerade jetzt erst gestürzt oder in Ohnmacht gesunken [...] als geschähe das kleine, von den meisten Betrachtern gewiss übersehene Unglück immer wieder von neuem, als höre es nie mehr auf und sei es durch nichts und von niemandem mehr gutzumachen." Austerlitz, p. 24.

⁷⁵ Jacobs, *Sebald's Vision*, pp. 135–6.

by most of Austerlitz's acquaintances, were always happening over and over again, would never cease and nothing and no one could ever remedy it. Like Tripp's dog, leaping "easily over the dark abysses of time",⁷⁶ Sebald draws together a sixteenth-century Dutch painting with a twentieth-century personal tragedy.

Given Sebald's emphasis on the recovery of memory destroyed in the rubble of World War Two, it is arguable that even Austerlitz, an architecture historian, who was a victim of the war in a very different way than the citizens of the destroyed German cities, works out his trauma by means of the study of architecture. It is as if his psyche, too, is bound up with the material and cultural world of European architecture. Austerlitz looks for family resemblances between different buildings he studies. As the narrator of *Austerlitz* mentions, looking over Austerlitz's photographs,

Some of the pictures were already familiar to me, so to speak: pictures of empty Belgian landscapes, stations and metro viaducts in Paris, the palm house in the Jardin des Plantes, various moths and other nightflying insects, ornate dovecotes, Gerald Fitzpatrick on the airfield near Quy, and a number of heavy doors and gateways. Austerlitz told me that he sometimes sat here for hours, laying out these photographs or others from his collection the wrong way up, as if playing a game of Patience, and then, one by one, he turned them over, always with a new sense of surprise at what he saw, pushing the pictures back and forth and over each other, arranging them in an order depending on their family resemblance [...] until he felt exhausted by the constant effort of thinking and remembering and had to rest on the ottoman.⁷⁷

The pictures range over both the natural and the cultural world, with a hybrid case such as the inclusion of a birdhouse for doves, which stretches the extension of the concept of architecture into the animal kingdom.

Austerlitz describes his inability to write and compares it to an inability to navigate a city:

⁷⁶ Sebald, "As Day and Night", p. 172.

⁷⁷ *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 166–7; "Austerlitz sagte mir, dass er hier manchmal stundenlang sitze und diese Photographien, Aufnahmen von leeren belgischen Landstrichen, von Bahnhöfen und Métroviadukten in Paris, vom Palmenhaus im Jardin des Plantes, von verschiedenen Nachtfaltern und Motten, von kunstvoll gebauten Taubenhäusern, von Gerald Fitzpatrick auf dem Flugfeld in der Nähe von Quy und von einer Anzahl schwerer Türen und Tore mit der rückwärtigen Seite nach oben auslege, ähnlich wie bei einer Partie Patience, und dass er sie dann, jedesmal von neuem erstaunt über das, was er sehe, nach und nach umwende, die Bilder hin und her und übereinanderschiebe, in eine aus Familienähnlichkeiten sich ergebende Ordnung [...] bis er sich, erschöpft von der Denk- und Erinnerungsarbeit, niederlegen müsse auf der Ottomane." *Austerlitz*, p. 176.

If language may be regarded as an old city full of streets and squares, nooks and crannies, with some quarters dating from far back in time while others have been torn down, cleaned up and rebuilt, and with suburbs reaching further and further into the surrounding country, then I was like a man who has been abroad a long time and cannot find his way through this urban sprawl any more, no longer knows what a bus stop is for, or what a backyard is, or a street junction, an avenue or a bridge. The entire structure of language, the syntactical arrangement of parts of speech, punctuation, conjunctions, and finally even the nouns denoting ordinary objects were enveloped in an impenetrable fog. I could not even understand what I had myself written in the past—perhaps I could understand that least of all. All I could think was that such a sentence only appears to mean something, but in truth is at best a makeshift expedient, something which we use, in the same way as many sea plants and animals use their tentacles, to grope blindly through the darkness enveloping us.⁷⁸

Contrary to Plato's imagery of the sun as signifying the idea of the Good, shining on the world, Austerlitz evokes incomprehension and proximity to plant and animal life on the bottom of the sea, helplessly groping around in darkness.

Wittgenstein, too, compares language to a city:

Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from various periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.⁷⁹

78 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 174. "Wenn man die Sprache ansehen kann als eine alte Stadt, mit einem Gewinkel von Gassen und Plätzen, mit Quartieren, die weit zurückreichen in die Zeit, mit abgerissenen, assanierten und neuerbauten Vierteln und immer weiter ins Vorfeld hinauswachenden Außenbezirken, so glich ich selbst einem Menschen, der sich, aufgrund einer langen Abwesenheit, in dieser Agglomeration nicht mehr zurechtfindet, der nicht mehr weiß, wozu eine Haltestelle dient, was ein Hinterhof, eine Straßenkreuzung, ein Boulevard oder eine Brücke ist. Das gesamte Gliederwerk der Sprache, die syntaktische Anordnung der einzelnen Teile, die Zeichensetzung, die Konjunktionen und zuletzt sogar die Namen der gewöhnlichen Dinge, alles war eingehüllt in einem undurchdringlichen Nebel. Auch was ich selber in der Vergangenheit geschrieben hatte, ja insbesondere dieses, verstand ich nicht mehr. Immerzu dachte ich nur, so ein Satz, das ist etwas nur vorgeblich Sinnvolles, in Wahrheit allenfalls Behelfsmäßiges, eine Art Auswuchs unserer Ignoranz, mit dem wir, so wie manche Meerespflanzen und -tiere mit ihren Fangarmen, blindlings das Dunkel durchtasten, das uns umgibt." Austerlitz, p. 183.

79 *PI*, §18; "Unsere Sprache kann man ansehen als eine alte Stadt: Ein Gewinkel von Gässchen und Plätzen, alten und neuen Häusern, und Häusern mit Zubauten aus verschiedenen Zeiten; und dies umgeben von einer Menge neuer Vororte mit geraden und regelmäßigen Straßen und mit einförmigen Häusern." *PU*, §18. What Wittgenstein calls the new "boroughs" of language are for instance infinitesimal notation in mathematics. As Jonathan Lear explains, Wittgenstein emphasizes that new concepts in mathematics, but also for instance in ethics, inaugurate a new way of life for communities that assimilate them to such an extent that it becomes difficult to imagine life as it was before this inauguration. Lear mentions the introduction of irrational numbers, but focuses on Aristotle's introduction of *eudaimonia* (roughly translated

In his Cambridge lectures from 1939, Wittgenstein had compared himself to a guide:

I am trying to conduct you on tours in a certain country. I will try to show that philosophical difficulties arise [...] because we find ourselves in a strange town and do not know our way. So we must learn the topography by going from one place in town to another, and from there to another, and so on.⁸⁰

The notion of doing philosophy as the activity of journeying criss-cross in a “strange town” (resembling also the foreword to *Philosophical Investigations*: “For [the nature of the investigation] compels us to travel over a wide field of thought criss-cross in every direction”⁸¹) evokes a result that can hardly be uni-linear, but one that provides multiple perspectives on issues in philosophy, like glimpses on the same town-square from different vantage points⁸²—akin to Sebald’s understanding of his own research method as that of a dog sniffing his way through history and geography. These intertexts provide a hidden, unconscious method to Austerlitz’s seamlessly restless and pointless nightly wanderings. It is as if he is synopsisizing the city, viewing it from all angles and vantage points and seeking clues to his own past.

Austerlitz describes the feeling of someone pulling him by the sleeve, almost as if directing him: “It sometimes seemed to me as if the noises of the city were dying down around me and the traffic was flowing silently down the street, or as if someone had plucked me by the sleeve.”⁸³ He remembers, “I had several such experiences in the Liverpool Street Station, to which I was always irresistibly drawn back on my night journeys.”⁸⁴ Austerlitz describes the station as, “a kind of entrance to the underworld” (“eine Art Eingang zur Unterwelt”),⁸⁵ and

as happiness or flourishing), the concept that human life taken as a whole has a goal, namely happiness in *Nikomachian Ethics* and reads it in Wittgensteinian terms as the expansion of our life with language. Cf. *Happiness, Death and the Remainder of Life*, pp. 8–10.

80 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 44.

81 *PI*, “Preface”, p. vii; “Vorwort”, p. 231; cf. fn. 181.

82 Indeed, Kjell S. Johannessen commented on the aesthetics of the *Investigations* as providing impressions from various perspectives in “Philosophy, Art, and Intransitive Understanding”, p. 224.

83 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 180; “Manchmal kam mir dann vor, als ersterbe ringsum das Dröhnen der Stadt, als ströme der Verkehr lautlos über den Fahrdamm dahin oder als hätte mich jemand am Ärmel gezupft.” Austerlitz, p. 188.

84 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 180; “In der Liverpool Street Station, zu der es mich auf meinen Wanderungen unwiderstehlich immer wieder hinzog, hatte ich mehrere solche Erlebnisse.” Austerlitz, p. 188.

85 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 180; Austerlitz, p. 188.

he later speaks of his troubled dreams in the process of remembering as a crawl through low passages of a fort, and past all the buildings he had ever visited.⁸⁶ His repressed memories are represented by architectural structures metaphorically 'below' his conscious life. And the metaphor of an isomorphy between the *psyche* and the *polis* is sustained in the act of remembering itself, even though here the metaphorical spatiality is lateral. He describes images as "scraps of memories beginning to drift through the outlying regions of my mind".⁸⁷ This is even clearer in the German original, where it says that unconscious memories drift through the suburbs (*Aussenbezirke*) of his consciousness. He suddenly sees a scene from the past, the couple he identifies as his adoptive parents: the Calvinist pastor and his pale wife, who have come to pick him up from that very station after the *Kindertransport*. He recognizes himself, the little boy, only by way of recognizing the little rucksack he is carrying with all his belongings, similarly to the way the narrator of the novel recognizes Austerlitz's family resemblance to Wittgenstein because of the old rucksack they both wear.⁸⁸

According to psychoanalytic literature, the compulsion to repeat, such as Austerlitz's repeated hauntings of the Liverpool Street Station, can stem from a trauma. As Jonathan Lear points out, trauma can occur if the person being overwhelmed is unprepared for the stimuli—they create a rift in his or her psychic functioning and flood the mind.⁸⁹ And, Austerlitz, who experienced the *Kindertransport* as a young child, was thoroughly unprepared for losing his whole family and the familiarity of his prior life in a day—to be replaced with cold strangers in a cold country. That he is repeatedly drawn back to the Liverpool Street Station, the scene of his trauma, where he first arrived to his new country and met his new family, can be read as a manifestation of this compulsion to repeat. His whole obsessive study of architecture can be compared to the little *Nocturama* raccoon's compulsively repetitive washing of the apple slice. According to Lear, the repetition of actions is not to be hypostasized along Freud's lines of a "death principle"—in the sense that the mind is supposedly unconsciously but actively seeking to destroy itself by repeating past traumatic experiences. Rather, such repetitions manifest the mind's failures to create meaning, and can only be healed over by a "cultural achievement" such as a game designed to defuse tension surrounding the experience and to aid in conceptualiz-

⁸⁶ Austerlitz (Bell), pp. 195–6.

⁸⁷ Austerlitz (Bell), p. 191; "Erinnerungsfetzen, die durch die Außenbezirke meines Bewusstseins zu treiben begannen", *Austerlitz*, p. 199.

⁸⁸ Austerlitz (Bell), p. 201 and pp. 62–3.

⁸⁹ Lear, *Happiness, Death and the Remainder of Life*, p. 71.

ing and therefore externalizing the traumatic events.⁹⁰ Seen in this light, Austerlitz's game of Patience in which he searches for family resemblances between various photographs of buildings is not an expression of despair, as Peter Drexler suggests,⁹¹ but a valid tool in seeking to recover a sense of meaning after a trauma.

The work of memory in *Austerlitz*, which consists both in 'reconstructing' Austerlitz's life as well as the search for photographs of family members, echoes Wittgenstein's self-understanding of his own philosophy as expressed in *Philosophical Investigations* §127, as the work of gathering memories to a specific end, "The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose."⁹² Wittgenstein described the project of *Philosophical Investigations* as "only an album", and Sebald's novels, especially *Austerlitz* with its eighty-one photographs can also be seen under the aspect of a photo-album, maybe even an unusual family album. Wittgenstein's self-understanding is a refusal to treat phenomena as simply things to be labeled and defined, but as always caught up in relations of similarities and differences, as when for instance he insists in *Philosophical Investigations*, §77, that aesthetics and ethics cannot be defined in terms of a thing-like, isolable referent, but that their meaning is largely formed by the manner in which people are socialized, in their use.

For without this context in ordinary life, we are faced with the impossible task of trying to define phenomena so intricate that they defy any of our rigid classificatory boxes. Wittgenstein compares looking for definitions in ethics and aesthetics to attempting to draw the boundaries of a fuzzy picture in §77:

But if the colours in the original merge without a hint of any outline won't it become a hopeless task to draw a sharp picture corresponding to the blurred one? Won't you then have to say: "Here I might just as well draw a circle or heart as a rectangle, for all the colours merge. Anything—and nothing—is right."—And this is the position you are in if you look for definitions corresponding to our concepts in aesthetics or ethics.

In such a difficulty always ask yourself: How did we *learn* the meaning of this word ("good"

90 Lear refers to Freud's famous "Fort/da" case study, in which a child who had behaved in a disturbingly repetitive and compulsive manner eventually developed a game out of his stereotypical movements. Freud interprets this game as the boy's way of conceptualizing his mother's absence. *Happiness, Death and the Remainder of Life*, pp. 90–2.

91 In "Erinnerung und Photographie", p. 91, Peter Drexler takes Wittgenstein references in the novel to signify a growing skepticism, relativism and despair in Austerlitz's attempts to reconstruct history: "Die implizite Willkür und der Relativismus dieser Theorie [der Familienähnlichkeiten] sind es offenbar, die Austerlitz's wachsende Skepsis begründen [...]."

92 *PU*, §127, "Die Arbeit des Philosophen ist ein Zusammentragen von Erinnerungen zu einem bestimmten Zweck." Nina Pelikan Straus suggests this link between Austerlitz and Wittgenstein in "Sebald, Wittgenstein, and the Ethics of Memory", pp. 43 and 48.

for instance)? From what sort of examples? in what language-games? Then it will be easier for you to see that the word must have a family of meanings.⁹³

Rather than seeking definitions, Wittgenstein prompts readers to look for similarities, families of meaning in ordinary use of concepts. To this end the reader is required to gather memories, to think back to one's childhood and the first simple language games where one learned how to maneuver in the social world of adults.

In his introduction of the term "family resemblances", Wittgenstein had noted in *Philosophical Investigations* §66,

Consider for example the proceedings that we call "games". I mean board-games, card-games, ball-games, Olympic games, and so on. What is common to them all? [...]—For if you look at them you will not see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, relationships, and a whole series of them at that.⁹⁴

In §67, he continues:

I can think of no better expression to characterize these similarities than 'family resemblances'; for the various resemblances between members of a family: build, features, colour of eyes, gait, temperament, etc. etc. overlap and criss-cross in the same way.—And I shall say: 'games' form a family.⁹⁵

The notion of family resemblances is a search, not for the lowest common denominator in phenomena, but for the intricate overlapping and intertwining of

93 *PU*, §77, "Wenn aber im Original die Farben ohne die Spur einer Grenze ineinanderfließen,—wird es dann nicht eine hoffnungslose Aufgabe werden, ein dem verschwommenen entsprechendes scharfes Bild zu zeichnen? Wirst du dann nicht sagen müssen: 'Hier könnte ich ebenso gut einen Kreis wie ein Rechteck oder eine Herzform zeichnen; es fließen ja alle Farben durcheinander. Es stimmt alles; und nichts.' Und in dieser Lage befindet sich z. B. der, der in der Ästhetik oder Ethik nach Definitionen sucht, die unseren Begriffen entsprechen. Frage dich in dieser Schwierigkeit immer: Wie haben wir denn die Bedeutung für dieses Wort ('gut' z. B.) *gelernt*? An was für Beispielen; in welchen Sprachspielen? (Du wirst dann leichter sehen, daß das Wort eine Familie von Bedeutungen haben muss.)" (original italics)

94 *PU*, §66, "Betrachte z. B. einmal die Vorgänge die wir 'Spiele' nennen. Ich meine Brettspiele, Kartenspiele, Ballspiel, Kampfspiele, usw. Was ist ihnen allen gemeinsam? [...] [W]enn du sie anschaut, wirst du zwar nicht etwas sehen, was *allen* gemeinsam wäre, aber du wirst Ähnlichkeiten, Verwandtschaften, sehen, und zwar eine ganze Reihe."

95 *PU*, §67, "Ich kann diese Ähnlichkeiten nicht besser charakterisieren als durch das Wort 'Familienähnlichkeiten', denn so übergreifen und kreuzen sich die verschiedenen Ähnlichkeiten, die zwischen den Gliedern einer Familie bestehen: Wuchs, Gesichtszüge, Augenfarbe, Gang, Temperament, etc. etc.—Und ich werde sagen: die 'Spiele' bilden eine Familie."

both similar and dissimilar features (such as in games of Patience, chess, and tennis). It is arguably not only Austerlitz's strategy in his studies of architectural history, but also Sebald's narrative strategy in *Austerlitz*.⁹⁶ For the reader is first prompted to look for family resemblances by comparing Wittgenstein to a wide-eyed raccoon, to Jan Peter Tripp, but also to juxtapose the image of Wittgenstein onto the face of Austerlitz himself. This game of searching for family resemblances dissolves rigid binaries of nature and culture, philosophy and art, natural history and human history.

Austerlitz's game of Patience with architectural pictures therefore echoes the concept of a game in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. Austerlitz is trying to understand, not the workings of language as such like Wittgenstein, but the disappearing traces of European history, and (unconsciously) his own history, since it is usually places that trigger his childhood memories.⁹⁷ But, just like for Wittgenstein public meanings of words and one's own childhood memories are closely interlinked, for Austerlitz public buildings and places are inextricably connected to his own pale childhood memories, which he is laboriously trying to reconstruct.

Ethics and Aesthetics of Representation: Architecture, Text, and Image

The proximity of aesthetics to ethical and political criticism, that is, to normative dimensions pertinent to life outside literature, is a point that comes up in interviews with Sebald. For instance, Sebald stated in an interview that "Much of German prose fiction writing, of the fifties certainly, but of the sixties and seventies also, is severely compromised, morally compromised, and because of that, aesthetically frequently insufficient."⁹⁸ Sebald suggests an almost direct causal link between morally compromised prose writing and the aesthetic insufficiency thereof. Even his early university thesis (*Lizenziatsarbeit*) on Carl Sternheim manifests an ethical criticism of the latter's assimilation to mainstream discourses that implied aesthetic inferiority. Sebald rejects the possibility of direct representation of the good life. He furthermore rejects direct representations of the evils of the Holocaust, as he said in an interview, "It can only become an obscen-

⁹⁶ Ross Posnock argues thus in "Don't think, but look!", pp. 113 and 118.

⁹⁷ In addition to the Liverpool Street Station scene, cf. also the Marienbad scene, in which Austerlitz feels distinctly uncanny, not knowing that he had visited the place before, as a child with his parents. Cf. *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 300–4.

⁹⁸ Cf. the interview with Michael Silverblatt, "A Poem of an Invisible Subject", p. 83.

ity, like *Schindler's List*, where you know the extras who get mown down will be drinking Coca Cola after the filming.”⁹⁹ In *On the Natural History of Destruction*, Sebald stresses the question of ethics and aesthetics, central to the experience of almost total annihilation that the German civil population experienced—a question evaded by most German post-war writers: “They did not go deeply into the complex question of the relationship between ethics and aesthetics that tormented Thomas Mann.”¹⁰⁰ The distinct aesthetic of the rubble landscape—described by some authors like stage sets for a phantastic opera¹⁰¹—apparently hardly raised any questions as to what effect this sudden annihilation has had on the German collective psyche, and whether the acceptance of one's principal guilt in the horrors of World War Two really precluded grief and outrage at the fate the German children, old people, other randomly assorted civilians (such as anti-fascist political prisoners¹⁰²), and even zoo animals¹⁰³ suffered in the areal bombings of Germany. That the bombing was called “*moral bombing*”,¹⁰⁴ suggesting a deserved punishment, all the more calls for an *ethical* reflection, a meta-reflection on whether such a collective punishment is indeed “moral”. In “What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals”, Todd Samuel Presner argues in reference to Sebald's appeal to the need for a “synoptic and artificial view” in *On the Natural History of Destruction*¹⁰⁵ that Sebald very much acknowledges Walter Benjamin's dictum from “The Storyteller”, that modern warfare has destroyed the possibility of realistic representation of experience.¹⁰⁶ Presner points out that Sebald's work is *not* the attempt to say what cannot any longer be meaningfully represented—namely the scale and depth of suffering in the world wars—in the style of a nineteenth-century historical novel. Namely, these events evade any traditional form of spectatorship of battle maneuvers (one might add,

99 Maya Jaggi, “Recovered Memories”, p. 7.

100 *NHD*, p. 44; “Auf die komplizierte Frage des Verhältnisses von Ethik und Ästhetik, mit der Thomas Mann sich plagte, ließ man sich nicht ein.” *LL*, p. 56.

101 *NHD*, p. 53.

102 Sebald describes Friedrich Reck's notes on the bombings of German cities, which he experienced from a Nazi prison, *NHD*, p. 32.

103 *NHD*, pp. 91–2.

104 *NHD*, p. 33. Sebald uses the term in English in his otherwise German lectures.

105 *NHD*, p. 25.

106 Todd Samuel Presner, “‘What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals’: Extreme History and the Modernism of W. G. Sebald's Realism”, pp. 343–4. Presner means Benjamin's claim that because of World War One we have “lost the ability to exchange experiences”. Walter Benjamin, “The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov”, p. 83; “Es ist, als wenn ein Vermögen, das uns unveräusserlich schien, das Gesicherste unter dem Sicherem, von uns genommen würde. Nämlich das Vermögen, Erfahrungen auszutauschen.” (p. 103)

like the kind still possible in the case of the battle of Austerlitz) and involve the totality of a society.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, there is no possible external point of view available for uninvolved spectatorship. Rather, Sebald's writings circumscribe, with *modernist* literary means the many fragmented perspectives available on the historical events and people, in a way that blends historical facts and novelistic fiction. For instance, in *On the Natural History of Destruction*, "Sebald enacts an extraordinarily realistic 'view' of the destruction of Hamburg, which, upon close inspection of his text, is an impossible view of the modernist event made realistic by modernist techniques."¹⁰⁸ As J.J. Long and Anne Whitehead formulate it, "a recurrent topos of Sebald's writing is the desire for a stable perspective or vantage point from which the object, be it a landscape or a historical event, can be reliably represented, even if the possibility of such a vantage point is ultimately recognized as an illusion."¹⁰⁹

Austerlitz can be read as one of Sebald's own attempts to create a cognitive artifact of postmemory for these traumatic events. Just as it is clear to him that many people who survived the world-extinguishing destruction of their cities and families in Germany cannot speak about it, and even that it is their inalienable right to keep their silence,¹¹⁰ so it is also clear that the representations of the Holocaust also deserve circumspect attention. It is clearly impossible to simply tell it 'as it was'. Hence, 'good' and 'evil' are highly mediated in the novel. The only representation of a 'utopia' of sorts is the textual and visual representation of the Nazis' perverse simulacrum of Theresienstadt as documented in the video *Der Führer schenkt Juden eine Stadt*. The double mediation of this parallel polis, in the text and the photo of the Nazi propaganda video about Theresienstadt, which was promised to be a holiday destination but turned out to be a concentration camp, only reveals madness and absurdity. There is no attempt in the novel to show how it 'really' was, and the precise and meticulous blueprint of Theresienstadt and the description of its bureaucratic organization in German, its "Barackenbestandteillager, Zusatzkostenberechnungsschein, Bagatellreparaturwerkstätte, Menagetransportkolonnen, Küchenbeschwerdeorgane, Reinlichkeitsreihenuntersuchung oder Entwesungsübersiedlung"¹¹¹ only augments the sense of insane attempts at mastery and subjugation masquerading as con-

107 Presner, "What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals", p. 347.

108 Presner, "What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals", p. 345.

109 Long and Whitehead, "Introduction", p. 5.

110 *NHD*, p. 89. And indeed silence was one of the most noticeable phenomena in the rubble landscapes right after the bombings: "The silence above the ruins is striking." *NHD*, p. 67. "Aufällig ist die Stille, die über der Trümmerstätte liegt." *LL*, p. 79.

111 *Austerlitz*, p. 338. The German terms are used in the English translation as well, p. 331.

scientious management. The precise bureaucracy of the language and the visual blueprint of the ghetto are representations that exude power and control. It is representation overkill and its brutality shows the potentially damaging hegemonial effects of language. The kind of philosophical framework for an ethics of aesthetic representation must be sensitive to the historical context of the traumatic impact of the fact that Holocaust happened. Therefore, referring to traditional ethics, such as Aristotle's notion of the good life or the Kant's concept of the good will without any qualifications seems false and even unjust in the face of the scale of destruction experienced in the twentieth century. However, Adorno's philosophy takes into account precisely these traumatic blows to a confident and naïve belief in human morality. For instance, Adorno's non-identity principle, his resistance against the notion that referents are identical to their concepts, and that attempts to present them as identical (as in the Theresienstadt blueprint) are instances of domination and violence, can be regarded as a philosophical framework suitable to the historical context of the novel. Arguably, Wittgenstein's work can also offer useful analytic resources for exploring the novel's philosophical dimensions.

Doren Wohlleben indeed discerns an ethics of aesthetics in Sebald's works, in an explicit reference to Wittgenstein. She notices an "ethical dimension" in Sebald's novels, which demands of readers to use their imagination to fill the gaps and to invent links.¹¹² She links this "ethical dimension" to contemporary German writers' tendency not to directly represent 'the truth', which remains "a blank space to be circumscribed in an essayistic manner and so rendered tangible".¹¹³ Furthermore, she cites Wittgenstein's approach to ethics as running up against the boundaries of language.¹¹⁴ In German literature at the end of the twentieth century, including Sebald's works, Wohlleben reads new utopian yearnings, by contrast to the literature of the 1980s. And the attempts to show, or point to (*hindeuten*) the limits of the sayable, and so gesture towards the eth-

112 My translation: "eine ethische Dimension [...] in der Machart der Texte, die den Leser auffordern, Lücken und Leerstellen auszuphantasieren und Bindungen herzustellen", Doren Wohlleben, *Schwindel der Wahrheit: Ethik und Ästhetik der Lüge in Poetik-Vorlesungen und Romanen der Gegenwart*, p. 19.

113 My translation: "Bildhaft gesprochen bleibt die Wahrheit eine Leerstelle, die essayistisch umkreist werden muss, um sie auf diese Weise zumindest erfahrbar zu machen." Wohlleben, *Schwindel der Wahrheit*, p. 35.

114 Wohlleben, *Schwindel der Wahrheit*, p. 36. Wohlleben cites a conversation Wittgenstein had with the members of the Vienna Circle, but another, more well-known source of that metaphor is his "Lecture on Ethics", where he states, "My whole tendency and, I believe, the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language." (pp. 47–51)

ical, towards absolute value, as Wittgenstein insisted, are regaining relevance.¹¹⁵ To add to Wohlleben's observation, by way of an example: in *Austerlitz*, evil is not talked about, but the subtle machinations of evil, leaving their traces in the aftermath of the Holocaust, are narratively shown in the utter brokenness of Austerlitz's world—just like for Wittgenstein ethics cannot be expressed in factual language, but it is “shown”.¹¹⁶ As Alice Crary argues in “W.G. Sebald and the Ethics of Narrative”, the numerous references to Wittgenstein in *Austerlitz* signal an ethical sensitivity to the refinability of one's conceptual engagement with the world, not, as Wittgenstein is often misunderstood, a playful disregard for the real world in favor of ‘mere’ language.¹¹⁷ In turn, Wittgenstein's conjunction of ethics with aesthetics imbues ethics with a less predetermined quality.¹¹⁸

Sebald uses both language and photographs to create cognitive artifacts of (post)memory, which are employed in order *not* to represent the horrors of the Holocaust, nor prematurely consoling visions of utopian reconciliation. The isomorphism of image and text, along with their paradoxical use to express *non-representability* echoes Adorno's considerations on the image ban, the *Bilderverbot*. The *Bilderverbot* is a corollary of Adorno's non-identity principle. As Elizabeth A. Pritchard interprets Adorno's work in “Bilderverbot Meets Body in Theodor W. Adorno's Inverse Theology”, the image ban in Judaic theology corresponds to Adorno's philosophical resistance to the kind of representation that implies a “reduction of persons and things to the definitions assigned to them by the ruling elite”.¹¹⁹ However, according to Pritchard, this does not imply silence and despair, but rather a kind of negative, or “inverted” approach—and inversion of day and night, light and darkness is, as argued, one of the key motifs of *Austerlitz*—to artistic representation that he finds in Franz Kafka's works.¹²⁰

Wittgenstein's version of a picture theory of language (*Abbildungstheorie*) implies an asymmetric correlation between image and text. The use of visual motifs, such as for example that of language as a “picture”, or the notion of “show-

115 Wohlleben, *Schwindel der Wahrheit*, pp. 36–7.

116 TLP 6.42, 6.421, 6.43; *Tagebücher*, 5.7.1916, pp. 167–8.

117 Alice Crary, “W.G. Sebald and the Ethics of Narrative”, p. 499.

118 Wittgenstein's ethics contain both allusions to deontological ethics (in the notion of the “good will”) and to eudaimonic ethics (the notion that the purpose or *ergon* of life is happiness). But, as Majetschak has noted, he was not particularly interested in situating his remarks in academic discussions on ethics. Rather, ethics for him had an existential significance. Cf. *Ludwig Wittgensteins Denkweg*, p. 28.

119 Elizabeth A. Pritchard, “Bilderverbot Meets Body in Theodor W. Adorno's Inverse Theology”, pp. 312–3.

120 Pritchard, “Bilderverbot Meets Body in Theodor W. Adorno's Inverse Theology”, pp. 307–8.

ing” as opposed to “saying”,¹²¹ is only heuristic, since Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* 4.014 also refers to, for instance musical notes as a “picture” of the melody they denote, but also to the vinyl record, notes and sound waves as being in a “pictorial” (*abbildend*) relation to each other. Furthermore, in 4.015, he calls proverbs and the imagery in language in general as relying on picture logic. For Wittgenstein, the role of images and their relation to language also suggests an ethics—a reflection on representation and its ability to shrink or expand the world, according to the metaphor in the *Tractatus*, 6.43. Wittgenstein, like Adorno with his image ban (*Bilderverbot*), is also cautious with images. This is salient in his simultaneous claim in *Tractatus* 2.1 that “We make to ourselves pictures of facts” (“Wir machen uns Bilder der Tatsachen”), the claim that ethics, or “the good life”,¹²² cannot be pictured (*abgebildet*) factually, and in his struggles against rigid images, as in *Philosophical Investigations* §115, where he notes, “a picture held us captive.” As mentioned earlier, Wittgenstein does not consider himself religious, but he “cannot help seeing every problem from a religious point of view”.¹²³ Therefore, his ideas on making pictures and his work against pictures that have gained too much of a grasp on the popular imagination can be read as a version of the image ban based on the logic of representation, as opposed to an appeal to a deity’s prohibition.

Wittgenstein’s writing is a continual battle against various hypostasizing tendencies, be it in physics or in ethics and aesthetics, against deeply ingrained rigid images that block any further understanding of phenomena. For instance, he noted, against the overly simplifying notion that a word is always defined by a referent:

The questions “What is length?”, “What is meaning?”, “What is the number one?” etc., produce in us a mental cramp. We feel that we can’t point to anything in reply to them and yet ought to point to something. (We are up against one of the great sources of philosophical bewilderment: a substantive makes us look for a thing that corresponds to it.)¹²⁴

Similarly like in the “fundamental thought” (*Grundgedanke*) of the *Tractatus*, where he asserted the non-referentiality of logical constants (4.0312), he argues

121 Cf. e.g. 4.022, 4.121, 4.1212, 6.124.

122 Cf. “das gute Leben ist die Welt sub specie aeternitatis gesehen”, *Tagebücher*, p. 178.

123 Cf. Maurice Drury’s “Some Notes on Conversations with Wittgenstein”, p. 761.

124 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue Book*, p. 1; “Die Fragen ‘Was ist Länge?’, ‘Was ist Bedeutung?’, ‘Was ist die Zahl Eins?’ etc. verursachen uns einen geistigen Krampf [...] (Wir haben es hier mit einer der großen Quellen philosophischer Verwirrung zu tun: ein Substantiv läßt uns nach einem Ding suchen, das ihm entspricht).” *Das blaue Buch*, p. 15.

against ‘Platonic’ tendencies in mathematics, which construe mathematical constants and operations as entities to which mathematical symbolism corresponds to. Against this view, he argues for the importance of the practical context of symbolism, be it in physics or mathematics or ethics, and explains their meaning not from a presumable referent, but from their use in the respective practices of mathematics or physics or human life as a whole. Analogously, in *Philosophical Investigations*, he argues against the hypostazing of psychological and social phenomena, such as the Cartesian notion that ‘inner’ states such as pain are things ‘inside’ bodies as opposed to intimately interlinked with bodily expressions of pain, and their possible social contexts.¹²⁵

Even though he did not engage in political discussions often, here and there, Wittgenstein too dropped hints in his works on the devastating effects a destructive ruling party can have. As he notes in §420 of *Philosophical Investigations*, it is possible to abstract from people’s interiority and to view them as machines, and he suggestively associates such a perspective with the sign of the swastika and therefore with Nazi rule: “Seeing a living human being as an automaton is analogous to seeing one figure as a limiting case or variant of another; the cross-pieces of a window as a swastika, for example.”¹²⁶ The notion that Nazi rule likened people to machines is echoed in Austerlitz, who lost his entire family in the Holocaust, and whose behavior resembles that of a machine to others, as is evident in a remark of Marie’s to Austerlitz after their night together in Marienbad, “When we wake up tomorrow, she said, I shall wish you every happiness, and it will be like telling a machine working by some unknown mechanism that I hope it will run well.”¹²⁷ Austerlitz, a character clearly traumatized by the aftereffects of the Holocaust is here described as a machine, a person that has become a thing. Marie’s observation complements the notion of a compulsion to repeat, due to trauma, which leads the survivor of traumatic events to behave in a limited and compulsive manner, like a machine. A machine is bound by pre-programmed rules, and it is possible to see too rigid social rules, such as the ones imposed by totalitarian regimes, as decreasing the freedom of their citizens to such an extent that they become predictable and life-less in their movements, like automata. While Wittgenstein does conceive of social practices and language

125 Cf. e.g. *PI*, §293. Cf. also Christoph Demmerling, *Sprache und Verdinglichung: Wittgenstein, Adorno und das Projekt einer kritischen Theorie*, pp. 48–52.

126 *PU*, §420, “Einen lebenden Menschen als Automaten sehen, ist analog dem, irgend eine Figur als Grenzfall oder Variation einer anderen zu sehen, z.B. ein Fensterkreuz als Swastika.”

127 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 303. “Morgen, sagte sie, werde ich dir alles Liebe wünschen, und das wird dann so sein, als wünschte ich einer Maschine, deren Mechanismus man nicht kennt, einen guten Gang.” Austerlitz, p. 311.

as rule-governed and mutually interlinked, he conceives these rules as akin to rules of games, which are inherently diverse and can be improvised and, as he notes in §83, made up “as we go along”, by contrast to machine algorithms.

As discussed in the first chapter, Wittgenstein conceived of his philosophy in loosely aesthetic terms, in the sense of paying close attention to the intertwining of language and our perception of the world, be it in his early picture theory of language in the *Tractatus*, or in the characterization of his later work in *Philosophical Investigations* as “a number of sketches of landscapes” (“eine Menge von Landschaftsskizzen”),¹²⁸ made on long cross-country journeys, which is the reason he calls this work “an album”. He hopes, “It is not impossible that it should fall to the lot of this work, in its poverty and in the darkness of this time, to bring light into one brain or another.”¹²⁹ This Foreword to the *Philosophical Investigations*, written in 1945, may have inspired Sebald to compare Wittgenstein to a night-active raccoon, seeking to penetrate the figurative darkness of Europe caught up in World War Two solely by the power of pure thought. This and the by now familiar remark from *Tractatus*, 6.43,

If good or bad willing changes the world, it can only change the limits of the world, not the facts; not the things that can be expressed in language.

In brief, the world must thereby become quite another. It must so to speak wax or wane as a whole. The world of the happy is quite another than that of the unhappy.

Wittgenstein’s “aesthetic” approach to philosophy seeks not to change facts in the world, but to transform the world as a whole through the power of his “good willing” and “right seeing” (as expressed in 6.54, “[The reader] must surmount these propositions, then he sees the world rightly”).

Wittgenstein does not seem to consider changing facts in the world to improve it—by means of political action, for instance. Rather, he insists on a change “from within”, a change of the way the world is viewed. And it is by function of this change he thinks that the world as a whole will change—that it will grow or shrink. When juxtaposed with a little raccoon in a night zoo from the novel’s opening, trying to escape the “false world” by means of a kind of ritualized cleansing—or in Wittgenstein’s terms the “world of the unhappy”—by the power of pure thought, Wittgenstein does indeed cut an absurd figure. This can be read as Sebald’s criticism of Wittgenstein’s silence on the Holocaust.

¹²⁸ *PI*, “Preface”, p. vii; “Vorwort”, p. 231.

¹²⁹ *PI*, II, viii; “Es ist nicht unmöglich, daß es dieser Arbeit in ihrer Dürftigkeit und der Finsternis dieser Zeit beschieden sein sollte, Licht in ein oder das andere Gehirn zu werfen.” *PU*, II, p. 233.

The peculiar dialectics of Wittgenstein's works does *prima facie* seem to embody the kind of affirmative culture¹³⁰ that points toward an ethereal reality, the empirically impossible view on the world 'as a whole' rather than intervening in the material world.¹³¹ However, it is often forgotten that the *Tractatus* is structured so that it in the end denies the "mystical" language it develops. The last proposition is famously: "7 Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." If we take seriously the notion that ethics is aesthetically *shown* as opposed to referentially said, then we might consider the question how art, according to Wittgenstein, can show conflicts in the material world. One very concrete instance of this is how art—in the form of architecture—can be interpreted as making visible and viscerally felt the conflicts of the epoch in which it was constructed.

In the novel *Austerlitz*, the aesthetics of certain architectural structures is described as encapsulating wider moral, social and political currents of the times. Austerlitz comments on the "the compulsive sense of order and the tendency toward monumentalism evident in law courts and penal institutions, railway stations and stock exchanges, opera houses and lunatic asylums, and the dwellings built to rectangular grid patterns for the labor force".¹³² He describes, for instance, the Palace of Justice in Brussels as an "architectural monstrosity", as "empty spaces surrounded by walls and representing the innermost secret of

130 Herbert Marcuse defines affirmative culture as "that culture of the bourgeois epoch which led in the course of its own development to the segregation from civilization of the mental and spiritual world as an independent realm of value that is also considered superior to civilization. Its decisive character is the assertion of a universally obligatory, eternally better and more valuable world that must be unconditionally affirmed: a world essentially different from the factual world of the daily struggle for existence, yet realizable by every individual himself 'from within', without any transformation of the world of fact." "The Affirmative Character of Culture", p. 70; "Unter affirmativer Kultur sei jene der bürgerlichen Epoche angehörige Kultur verstanden, welche im Laufe ihrer eigenen Entwicklung dazu geführt hat, die geistig-seelische Welt als ein selbstständiges Wertreich von der Zivilisation abzulösen und über sie zu erhöhen. Ihr entscheidender Zug ist die Behauptung einer allgemein verpflichtenden, unbedingt zu bejahenden, ewig besseren, wertvolleren Welt, welche von der tatsächlichen Welt des alltäglichen Daseinskampfes wesentlich verschieden ist, die aber jedes Individuum 'von innen her', ohne jene Tatsächlichkeit zu verändern, für sich realisieren kann." *Kultur und Gesellschaft*, p. 85.

131 For a more explicit criticism of Wittgenstein's alleged complacency, cf. Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (originally published in English), pp. 177–202.

132 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 44; "Ordnungszwang und den Zug ins Monumentale, der sich manifestierte in Gerichtshöfen und Strafanstalten, in Bahnhofs- und Börsengebäuden, in Opern- und Irrenhäusern und den rechtwinkligen Rastern angelegten Siedlungen für die Arbeiterschaft." *Austerlitz*, p. 52.

all sanctioned authority”.¹³³ The building’s “monstrously” monumenal aesthetic is directly linked with state violence. Towards the end of the novel, the description of the enormous Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris resonates with the same monumentality. Austerlitz describes the building as “both in its outer appearance and inner constitution unwelcoming if not inimical to human beings, and [running] counter, on principle, one might say, to the requirements of any true reader”.¹³⁴ Indeed, for instance, by placing photographs of the Breendonk fort and the Brussels Palace of Justice one after the other in the novel itself, the narrator, too, encourages a study of family resemblances in monumental architecture. He thus echoes Walter Benjamin’s study of architecture to reveal hidden structures of the collective consciousness,¹³⁵ but also Wittgenstein’s experience of work as an amateur architect: “Working in philosophy—like work in architecture in many respects—is really more a working on oneself. On one’s own interpretation. On one’s way of seeing things. (And what one expects of them.)”¹³⁶ David Macarthur interprets Wittgenstein’s approach to architecture in terms of his ethical approach to philosophy, as refraining from imposing one’s own control, but rather being sensitive and paying attention.¹³⁷ Apart from Wittgenstein’s remark quoted above, Macarthur also refers to his note that “My ideal is a certain coolness. A temple providing a setting for the passions without meddling with them.”¹³⁸ Both Sebald and Wittgenstein observe an analogy between their textual work and that of physical artifacts of architecture, and both are concerned with the mode of perception and experientiality (for instance the experience of being physically opposed by the brute dimensions of the National Library in Paris) that these textual and architectural artifacts reflect.

133 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 39; “deren ummauerte Leere das innerste Geheimnis sei aller sanktionierten Gewalt”, Austerlitz, pp. 46–7.

134 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 387; “in seiner ganzen äußeren Dimensionierung und inneren Konstitution menschenabweisenden und den Bedürfnissen jedes wahren Lesers von vornherein kompromisslos entgegengesetztes Gebäude”) Austerlitz, p. 392 (a picture follows in Austerlitz, p. 394).

135 Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, p. 39.

136 CV, p. 16e; “Die Arbeit an der Philosophie ist—wie vielfach die Arbeit in der Architektur—eigentlich mehr eine Arbeit an Einem selbst. An der eigenen Auffassung. Daran wie man die Dinge sieht. (Und was man von ihnen verlangt.)” VB, p. 16.

137 David Macarthur, “Working on Oneself in Philosophy and Architecture: A Perfectionist Reading of the Wittgenstein House”, p. 16 ff. Wittgenstein’s ideal of sensitivity in architecture and philosophy is strikingly like Bakhtin’s account of Dostoevsky’s aesthetic approach in his “polyphonic” novels, not as imposing control and mastery over his characters, but as allowing them to develop their own life and voice.

138 CV, p. 2e; “Mein Ideal ist eine gewisse Kühle. Ein Tempel der den Leidenschaften als Umgebung dient ohne in sie hineinzureden.” VB, p. 2.

Wittgenstein's notion that art works show the unsayable from an outside perspective is suggested in Sebald's lecture *On the Natural History of Destruction (Luftkrieg and Literatur)*, in which he reflects on both ethical and aesthetic effects of the bombings of German cities, and with it, the importance of urban landscape in relation to people's inner lives. Sebald quotes Walter Benjamin's remark on Klee's *Angelus Novus*, and compares Alexander Kluge's helpless descriptions of the rubble landscape to the angel's horrified eyes,

For all Kluge's intellectual steadfastness, therefore, he looks at the destruction of his hometown with a horrified fixity of Walter Benjamin's "angel of history," whose "face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. [...]"¹³⁹

The angel's gaze fixed in horror (*entsetzenstarr*) later echoes both the fixed gaze of the raccoon at the beginning of *Austerlitz (unverwandt)*, compared to that of "certain painters [Tripp] and philosophers [Wittgenstein]", and to the expression of outrage (*entsetzter Ausdruck*) that both Wittgenstein and Austerlitz are said to habitually display. It also echoes the steady (*unverwandt*) gaze of Johann Peter Tripp's painted eyes. As Julia Hell points out in "The Angel's Enigmatic Eyes, or the Gothic Beauty of Catastrophic History in W.G. Sebald's 'Air War and Literature'", Benjamin first of draws attention to the angel's eyes.¹⁴⁰ His interpretation of the work of art emphasizes the act of perception represented in the painting—staring with eyes wide open. Sebald's aesthetic strategy, described in *On the Natural History of Destruction* as striving to provide a *synoptic* and *artificial* gaze (*synoptischer, künstlicher Blick*) on the historical events, *post factum*, too simulates the perspective of the angel, whose *artificial* eyes can be said to view ruined cities from a perspective outside the world. Like the painting depicting eyes, Sebald's art is concerned with representing perception, but not in the naïve sense of showing what is somehow obviously there. As Hell argues, "Sebald's central project in 'Air War and Literature' is to make visible what post-war German literature left invisible: the 'images of this horrifying chapter of our history.'"¹⁴¹ And: "The project rests on an undaunted belief in the power of (textual) images."¹⁴² However, as Hell also points out, the project raises ethical

139 *NHD*, p. 67; "Kluges Blick auf seine zerstörte Heimatstadt ist darum, aller intellektuellen Unentwegtheit zum Trotz, auch der entsetzensstarre des Engels der Geschichte, von dem Walter Benjamin gesagt hat, dass er mit seinen aufgerissenen Augen eine einzige Katastrophe [sieht], die unablässig Trümmer auf Trümmer häuft und sie ihm vor die Füße schleudert. [...]" *LL*, p. 80.

140 Hell, "The Angel's Enigmatic Eyes", p. 363.

141 Hell, "The Angel's Enigmatic Eyes", p. 365.

142 Hell, "The Angel's Enigmatic Eyes", p. 365.

dilemmas, for *aisthesis*, the artificially produced gaze into the past can easily topple into voyeuristic staring,¹⁴³ and, in Lacanian sense, scopophilia, the desire to gain mastery over that which one sees.¹⁴⁴ Sebald's Zurich poetics lecture series (*Zürcher Poetikvorlesung*) *On the Natural History of Destruction*, which Hell translates more literally from the German *Luftkrieg und Literatur* as "Air War and Literature", is explicitly a lecture on *poetics*, which means that Sebald's project of making the past visible is explicitly linked to the question how literary texts may achieve this aim. The artifice of visual art (Klee's *Angelus Novus*) is comparable to the artifice of literature, which is powerless to change facts in the world, but, by maintaining its autonomy, its distance from the facts of the world, it expresses a perspective that allows the world to appear as a whole, more precisely, as an infernal whole.

While Klee's *Angelus Novus* shows art's perspective from outside on the infernal whole of the world, in literature Kafka's stories can be interpreted as offering a similar perspective. In fact, in a letter to Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno calls Benjamin's essay on Kafka "a photograph of earthly life from the perspective of the redeemed",¹⁴⁵ an "inverse" view equivalent to a photographic negative. As opposed to presenting falsely consoling visions, Kafka's work itself "feigns" an outside view on the actual brokenness of the world. The notion that art simulates an angelic perspective and the notion that art is a view 'from outside' the world, and, in Wittgenstein's terms *sub specie aeternitatis*, evoke the same metaphor of a perspective outside everyday chronology and spatiality.

Franz Kafka is another denizen of Sebald's novels: for instance, he comes up in "Dr. K. Takes the Waters at Riva" in *Vertigo* (*Schwindel.Gefühle*), which was largely based on a fictional reconstruction of Kafka's travels to Italy.¹⁴⁶ The story opens in Vienna, where Kafka's *doppelgänger*, Dr. K. is suffering from "de-

143 Hell, "The Angel's Enigmatic Eyes", pp. 366 and 370–1.

144 Hell, "The Angel's Enigmatic Eyes", p. 373.

145 Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *The Complete Correspondence 1828–1940*, p. 66; "eine Photographie des irdischen Lebens aus der Perspektive des Erlösten", *Briefwechsel 1928–1940*, p. 90.

146 Martin Klebes discusses Sebald's fictional reconstruction of Kafka's travel from Vienna to Riva via Venice, Trieste and Desenzano in autumn of 1913 in "Dr. K.'s Badereise nach Riva" in his text "Infinite Journey: From Kafka to Sebald", pp. 131–4. In "Sebald's Kafka", Brad Prager discusses numerous references to Kafka throughout Sebald's writings, especially the motifs of the *doppelgänger*, proximity of human and animal life and the inhumanity of civilization, metamorphosis, and death (as for instance the images of butterflies and moths as symbols for evading death), cf. especially p. 123.

jectedness, and his sight is troubling him.”¹⁴⁷ Later on in the novel, a carnival standee photograph of the young Kafka with three acquaintances in a flying airplane is inserted into the text.¹⁴⁸ The novel thus thematizes both the diminishing of sight and the ensuing darkness, and so the inverted view of the world, at the very beginning of the narrative on Dr. K, and the feigned angelic point of view, from above, from a photograph standee of an airplane. The artifice of the posed

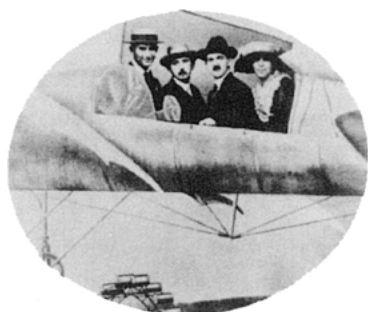


Fig. 7: *Vertigo*, p. 144. Reproduced with permission from the Sebald Estate. Image provided by the Sebald Estate.

photograph against the background of a great height in another photograph of the standee echoes the artifice of the fictional narrative.

In *Austerlitz*, too, there is a semantics of inverted optics, offering a view on the world as an infernal whole akin to Kafka’s stories. The narrator’s “redemption” in the darkness of *Nocturama* in the opening of the novel sets the tone for the rest of the novel and provides a hermeneutic key for the significance of the photographic darkroom as the *locus* of redemptions of the past and a material metaphor for the workings of the novel as a whole. One can venture on interpreting even such ordinary scenes, such as the narrator’s visit to an eye doctor with this hermeneutic key. When the narrator first notices his diminishing vision, he visits a certain Czech ophthalmologist called Zdenek Gregor.¹⁴⁹ Dr. Gregor can be read as a nod of acknowledgment to *Gregor Samsa* from “The Metamorphosis” (“Die Verwandlung”), Kafka’s most famous character and to “Dr. K.” in *Vertigo*,

¹⁴⁷ W.G. Sebald, *Vertigo*, p. 142; “Bedrücktheit und Sehstörungen”, *Schwindel.Gefühle*, p. 158.

¹⁴⁸ Sebald, *Vertigo*, p. 144. The narrator comments that “Dr. K. is himself bemused to find that he is the only one who can still manage some kind of smile at such dizzy heights”; “Dr. K [ist] zu seiner eigenen Verwunderung der einzige, der in dieser Höhe noch eine Art Lächeln zustande bringt”, apparently taking the fiction of “great heights” on an obviously carnevalesque standee at face value. *Schwindel.Gefühle*, p. 160.

¹⁴⁹ *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 56–60.

i. e. Kafka (this reading appears all the more likely when juxtaposed with Austerlitz's origin in Prague, Kafka's city). The narrator's ophthalmological treatment can be read as a self-reflexive observation about literature's power of showing the world from the aspect of a possible redemption, without directly representing it.

The visit to "a Czech ophthalmologist who had been recommended to me"¹⁵⁰ is prefaced by the association that the narrator had once read that up until the nineteenth century, opera singers before performing on the stage and young ladies before being presented to a suitor (or to a client in the case of a prostitute), were administered drops of the poison belladonna in order to achieve a particular devoted shine in their eyes, which made it impossible for them to perceive almost anything. The narrator comments that he is not entirely certain why he associated that to his own diminishing vision, but that it had something to do with "the deceptiveness of that star-like, beautiful gleam, and the danger of its premature extinction, an idea that filled me with concern for my ability to continue working, and at the same time, if I may so put it, with a vision of release".¹⁵¹ The notion of "false" but beautifully consoling appearances echoes Marcuse's criticism of "affirmative culture" as putting art on a pedestal as belonging in the realm of the ethereal and the beautiful and therefore turning a blind eye to the cruel realities of the world. Within the novel, a visit to 'Dr. Kafka' would correct this false optics, by providing a truer image of absurdities of the world, an "inverse" perspective on hellish realities.

At the consultation, the ophthalmologist Zdenek Gregor diagnoses a disorder common to middle aged men "who spent too much time reading and writing" ("die zuviel mit Schreiben und Lesen beschäftigt seien"),¹⁵² and recommends photographing the narrator's retina in order to get a better view of the damage to the eye. After the procedure, the narrator comments, "And as I write this, I once again see the little points of light that shot into my widely opened eyes each time he pressed the shutter release."¹⁵³ The narrator describes seeing dots of light as he is writing the text of the novel. However, a direct stimulation

150 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 48; "einem mir empfohlenen tschechischen Ophthalmogen", Austerlitz, p. 56.

151 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 47; "Falschheit des schönen Scheins und der Gefahr des vorzeitigen Erlöschens, und daß ich darum mich ängstigte um die Fortführung meiner Arbeit, zugleich aber erfüllt war [...] von einer Vision der Erlösung [...]", Austerlitz, p. 56.

152 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 51; Austerlitz, p. 59.

153 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 52; "Und jetzt, indem ich dies niederschreibe, sehe ich auch wieder die kleinen Lichtpunkte, die bei jedem Druck auf den Auslöser in meinen weit aufgerissenen Augen zersprangen." Austerlitz, p. 60.

by light to the eye produces a negative after-image, a dark spot akin to the photographic negative, so the narrator's dots of light would be experienced as dark spots. The narrator's process of writing under the influence of this inverted light thus echoes Kafka's ability, in Adorno's terms, to produce a photographic negative of the world. By having his eye photographed, it is as if 'Dr. K.' drew attention to the damaged tissue of the eye, evoking Adorno's attention to "damaged life". What happens next is that the narrator encounters Austerlitz again, for the first time after twenty years, and for the first time notices the latter's "personal similarity to Ludwig Wittgenstein, and the horror-stricken expressions on both their faces".¹⁵⁴ As Peter Drexler comments on the photographic paradigm of narrative in *Austerlitz*, it is now that the body of the narrator itself became a light-sensitive medium.¹⁵⁵ It is only then—after 'Dr. Kafka's' 'treatment'—that Austerlitz commences to recount his fragmented memories, his "damaged life" to the narrator.¹⁵⁶

Like Sebald, Wittgenstein, too, is interested in the capacity of language to "show" and uses various visual tropes in his language philosophy. The *Tractatus* is like an elaborate language game showing the possibilities and limits of positivistic truth-functional language, the *Abbildungstheorie* of language. As Wittgenstein notes in the preface to the *Tractatus*, it shows just how *little* is achieved by defining these parameters: "the value of this work [...] consists in the fact that it shows how little has been done when these problems [i. e. philosophical problems about the essence of reference] have been solved."¹⁵⁷ As discussed in the first chapter, Wittgenstein had written to the publisher of the *Tractatus* that "the point of the book is ethical" and that it is contained in the part of the book that was *not* written, but that is more important than what is written.¹⁵⁸ Already the *Tractatus* suggests the non-representability of ethics along the usual signified/signifier or *Sachverhalt/Abbild* pairs, by claiming that ethics is inexpressible (6.421), if language meaning is understood along the lines of the rules of the game the *Tractatus* is playing, that meaning is simply correspondence or non-correspondence with isolable facts in the world (as defined in the *Tractatus* 4.022–4.024). However, rather than reading remarks like these in positivistic terms, that therefore nothing exists apart from directly verifiable prop-

154 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 54.

155 "der Körper des Erzählers selbst [ist] zu einem lichtempfindlichen Medium geworden." Drexler, "Erinnerung und Photographie. Zu W.G. Sebalds *Austerlitz*", p. 284.

156 *Austerlitz*, pp. 68 ff.

157 *TLP*, p. 24; "so besteht nun der Wert dieser Arbeit [...] darin, dass sie zeigt, wie wenig damit getan ist, dass diese Probleme gelöst sind." (p. 10)

158 Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Letters to Ludwig von Ficker", p. 94.

ositions, Wittgenstein insists on the enormous value he attributed to all that *cannot* be put in exact, positivistic terms, but which is 'shown' aesthetically.

Furthermore, the journal entry of 5 July 1916, a draft for *Tractatus* 6.43, introduces the already mentioned subversive reference to his image theory of language (*Abbildungstheorie*): "If good or evil willing affects the world it can only affect the boundaries of the world, not the facts, what cannot be portrayed by language but can only be shewn in language."¹⁵⁹ "Good or bad willing" are introduced as not describable in terms of Wittgenstein's own picture theory of language, as not to be understood referentially, but as "shown" in language. The reference to Dostoevsky follows on 6 July 1916, suggesting that novelists can "say" what cannot be expressed discursively, that art works succeed in showing the good life obliquely, without directly representing it. Moreover, Wittgenstein thinks that art allows one to face the darker aspects of the world, as opposed to merely lulling one to complacency. For instance, he noted on the music of Beethoven:

Beethoven is a realist through & through; I mean his music is *totally true*, I want to say. He sees life *totally* as it is & then he exalts it. It is totally religion & not at all religious poetry. That's why he can console in real pain while others fail & make one say to oneself: but this is not how it is. He doesn't lull one into a beautiful dream but redeems the world by viewing it like a hero, as it is.¹⁶⁰

For Wittgenstein, the good life is not reified and treated like another fact in the world (unlike, for instance, the perverse Nazi aesthetic presentation of Theresienstadt as a paradisiacal community), but in the best case, as communicable through art.

Wittgenstein's non-hypostasizing of the good life parallels his non-hypostasizing of the subject. For Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, there is a certain sense in which there is no subject, at least not as understood like another fact in the world. He writes in 5.632, "The subject does not belong to the world but it is a limit of the world." ("Das Subjekt gehört nicht zur Welt, sondern es ist eine Grenze der Welt.") And in 5.633: "Where in the world is a metaphysical subject to be noted? You say that this case is altogether like that of the eye and the field

¹⁵⁹ Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, p. 73e.

¹⁶⁰ James C. Klagge and Alfred Nordmann (eds.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Public and Private Occasions*, p. 81; "Beethoven ist ganz & gar Realist; ich meine seine Musik ist *ganz wahr*, ich will sagen: er sieht das Leben ganz wie es ist & dann erhebt er es. Es ist ganz Religion & gar nicht religiöse Dichtung. Drum kann er wirkliche Schmerzen trösten wenn andere versagen & man sich bei ihnen sagen muss: aber so ist es ja nicht. Er wiegt in keinen schönen Traum ein sondern erlöst die Welt dadurch daß er sie als Held sieht, wie sie ist." (p. 80).

of sight. But you do not really see the eye.” Just like the good life is not expressible in truth-functional propositions or images of facts in the world (*Abbilder*), the subject, too is not representable in the ordinary sense because it demarcates a “limit of the world”, a condition of the possibility of sayability. Wittgenstein compares the subject with the eye, which cannot be located in the world because it is the medium of access to the world in the first place.

Wittgenstein comments that the eye cannot see itself. (“But you do not really see the eye.”) To look in the mirror is not a real option, since, as Bakhtin remarks, a glance in the mirror almost always entails a kind of posturing.¹⁶¹ The eye one sees in the mirror is not a view of the eye as it looks out into the world. However, it is possible to *photograph* the eye as it is trained on an ophthalmological optical instrument, which usually presents an artificial horizon for the eye to focus on in order to observe the eye as it is looking in the simulated distance. That is how looking at a looking eye is made possible, and not at an eye focused on the observer. This, of course, is exactly what *Austerlitz’s* narrator does. The Czech doctor’s prescription to get his eye photographed is what enables the narrator to achieve the impossible within the narrow confines of *Tractarian* rules. He is technologically enabled to embody the kind of outside perspective onto his own medium of access to the world. This photograph is a metaphor for Wittgenstein’s suggestion that art or aesthetics can ‘show’ from ‘the outside’ what is ordinarily not representable in limited positivistic language.

After the ophthalmologist, the narrator encounters Austerlitz, and notes his similarity to Wittgenstein, as mentioned above. Austerlitz is described as inhabiting the Tractarian language game, as somebody who cannot see and represent his own self, in the literal sense that his personal history had been lost to him. He compensates this by knowledge of facts, and by pictures of buildings he sees, like the subject in the *Tractatus*, who is mostly occupied with the truth-functional picture theory of propositions that depict possible facts in the world, without resources to refer to himself or to anything of value beyond truth-factual propositions. When the narrator first sees Austerlitz, the latter is busy with “making notes and sketches obviously relating to the room in which we were both sitting”.¹⁶² This seems almost like a quotation from the *Tractatus*, for instance 2.1 “We make to ourselves pictures of facts” and 2.15 “That the elements of the picture are combined with one another in a definite way, represents that the things

¹⁶¹ Mikhail Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, p. 33.

¹⁶² *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 6; “Anfertigen von Aufzeichnungen und Skizzen, die offenbar in einem Bezug standen zu den prunkvollen [...] Saal”, *Austerlitz*, p. 15.

are so combined with one another.”¹⁶³ The narrator continues in his observation, “Once Austerlitz took a camera out of his rucksack [...] and took several pictures of the mirrors, which were now quite dark, but so far I have been unable to find them among many hundreds of pictures, most of them unsorted, that he entrusted to me soon after we met again in the winter of 1996.”¹⁶⁴ The narrator received pictures of what Austerlitz saw, but not of Austerlitz himself, for the pictures of the mirror, which would have, however faintly, mirrored himself, are missing. This lack of pictorial representation is an omen for further developments, for it turns out that Austerlitz is at first incapable of speaking about himself: for him “it was almost impossible to talk to him about anything personal”.¹⁶⁵ Of course, the narrator finds out the reason for this silence, which lies in his personal history of having been saved from the Holocaust via the *Kindertransport* from Prague to Great Britain and that he knew nothing of his origin while growing up. Austerlitz commences upon his recollections after they accidentally meet again, following the narrator’s eye treatment, “Austerlitz fell silent, and for a while, it seemed to me, he gazed into the farthest distance. Since my childhood and youth, he finally began, looking at me again, I have never known who I really was.”¹⁶⁶ Austerlitz furthermore mentions that he “had constantly been preoccupied by that accumulation of knowledge which I had pursued for decades, and which had served as a substitute or a compensatory memory”.¹⁶⁷ Instead of memories of his own history, he turned himself into an encyclopedia of architectural history. He says, “As far back as I can remember, said Austerlitz, I have always felt as if I had no place in reality, as if I were not there at all.”¹⁶⁸ This remark can be read in several ways: as an allusion to the wide-spread silence on

163 *TLP* 2.1 “Wir machen uns Bilder der Tatsachen” and 2.15 “Dass sich die Elemente des Bildes in bestimmter Art und Weise zu einander verhalten, stellt vor, dass sich die Sachen so zu einander verhalten.”

164 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 6; “Einmal holte Austerlitz aus seinem Rucksack einen Photoapparat heraus [...] und machte mehrere Aufnahmen von den inzwischen ganz verdunkelten Spiegeln, die ich jedoch unter den vielen Hunderten mir von ihm [...] überverantworteten [...] noch nicht habe auffinden können.” *Austerlitz*, p. 15.

165 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 42; “so gut wie unmöglich [...] von sich selber beziehungsweise über seine Person zu reden”, *Austerlitz*, p. 50.

166 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 60; “Austerlitz verstummte [...] und schaute eine Weile [...] in die weiteste Ferne. Seit meiner Kindheit und Jugend, so hob er schließlich an, indem er wieder erblickte zu mir, habe ich nicht gewusst, wer ich in Wahrheit bin.” *Austerlitz*, p. 68.

167 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 198; “[Er] war andauernd beschäftigt mit der von mir Jahrzehnte hindurch fortgesetzten Wissensanhäufung, die mir als ein ersatzweises, kompensatorisches Gedächtnis diente.” *Austerlitz*, p. 206.

168 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 261; “Soweit ich zurückblicken kann [...] habe ich mich immer gefühlt, als hätte ich keinen Platz in der Wirklichkeit, als sei ich gar nicht vorhanden.” *Austerlitz*, p. 268.

the Holocaust and its victims that Sebald was criticizing, as if there is no place for them in reality, as a self-referential remark on the fictionality of Austerlitz and the artifice of the novel, but also as an *artificial* rendition of the Tractarian subject—and the Tractarian subject marks precisely the distinction between the first-personal perspectivity of seeing and the seen empirical facts in the world.

Aisthesis and “Outsidedness”

The “outside” or “angelic” perspective in Sebald’s works is most conspicuous in *On the Natural History of Destruction*. Here, Sebald first describes with dissatisfaction the BBC live video footage of areal bombings of Germany, and then embarks on providing his own cognitive artifact of postmemory for the bombing of Hamburg. He comments on BBC’s video:

The first live report of a raid on Berlin, for instance, transmitted by the BBC Home Service, is rather a disappointment to anyone expecting it to provide insight into the event from some superior viewpoint. Since despite the ever-present danger very little capable of description at all happened on these night flights, the reporter (Wilfred Vaughan-Thomas) had to manage with a minimum of facts. Only the emotion he injects into his voice now and then averts the impression of tedium. We hear the heavy Lancaster bombers take off at nightfall; soon afterwards, they are flying out over the North Sea, with white breakers on the coastline before them. “Now, right before us,” comments Vaughan-Thomas, “lies darkness and Germany.” [...] Vaughan-Thomas tries to find appropriate ways of emphasizing the dramatic climax, he speaks of a “wall of searchlights, in hundreds, in cones and clusters. It’s a wall of light with very few breaks and behind that wall is a pool of fiercer light, glowing red and green and blue, and over that pool myriads of flares hanging in the sky. That’s the city itself! ... [...] We are running straight into the most gigantic display of soundless fireworks in the world and here we go to drop our bombs on Berlin.” But after this prelude, there is not really anything more; everything happens much too fast.¹⁶⁹

169 NHD, pp. 20–1. “Die erste Live-Reportage von einem Angriff auf Berlin zum Beispiel, die der Home Service der BBC ausstrahlte, ist für jeden, der sich von ihr einen Einblick in das Geschehen aus übergeordneter Sicht erhofft, eher enttäuschend. Da trotz der ständig gegenwärtigen Gefahr kaum etwas irgendwie beschreibbares passierte auf diesen nächtlichen Exkursionen, muss der Berichterstatter (Wilfred Vaughn Thomas) auskommen mit einem Minimum an Realitätsgehalt. Einzig dem Pathos, das er hin und wieder in seine Stimme legt, ist es zu verdanken, daß kein Eindruck von Langeweile entsteht. Wir hören, wie die schweren Lancaster-Bomber bei Einbruch der Dunkelheit abheben und bald darauf, den weißen Küstensaum unter sich, hinausfliegen über die Nordsee. ‘Now, right before us’, kommentiert Vaughn Thomas mit spürbarem Tremolo, ‘lies darkness and Germany.’ [...] Vaughn Thomas versucht, den dramatischen Höhepunkt angemessen hervorzuheben, spricht von einer ‘wall of search lights, in hundreds, in

Vaughn Thomas's word flood does not communicate anything of the events except abstract visions of matter-like light, a "wall of light" and "behind that wall [...] a pool of fiercer light". The events are too swift, too soundless to be captured on camera, and the whole footage relies on the journalist's fumbling and stereotypical descriptions, comparing the bombings euphemistically to "fireworks".

After this interlude, Sebald notes the afore-discussed importance of a synoptic and artificial gaze, and embarks on delivering his own version of a view on the annihilation of Hamburg, based on his researches, but in a poetic mode. The intricacy and attention to unlikely details in the text merit the lengthy citation:

In the summer of 1943, during a long heat wave, the RAF, supported by the U. S. Eight Army Air Force, flew a series of raids on Hamburg. The aim of Operation Gomorrah, as it was called, was to destroy the city and to reduce it as completely as possible to ashes. In a raid early in the morning of July 27, beginning at one A.M., ten thousand tons of high-explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on the densely populated residential area east of the Elbe, comprising the districts of Hammerbrook, Hamm-Nord and Hamm-Süd, Billwerder Ausschlag and parts of St. Georg, Eilbek, Barmbek, and Wandsbek. A now familiar sequence of events occurred: first all the doors and windows were torn from their frames and smashed by high-explosive bombs weighing four thousand pounds, then the attic floors of the buildings were ignited by lightweight incendiary mixtures, and at the same time firebombs weighing up to fifteen kilograms fell onto the lower stories. Within a few minutes, huge fires were burning all over the target area, which covered some twenty square kilometers, and they merged so rapidly that only a quarter of an hour after the first bombs were dropped the whole airspace was a sea of flames as far as the eye could see. Another five minutes later, at one-twenty A.M., a firestorm of an intensity that nobody would have ever before thought possible arose. The fire, now rising two thousand meters into the sky, snatched oxygen to itself so violently that air currents reached hurricane force, resonating like mighty organs with all their stops pulled out at once. The fire burned like this for three hours. At its height, the storm lifted gables and roofs from buildings, flung rafters and entire advertising billboards through the air, tore trees from the ground, and drove human beings before it like living torches. Behind collapsing facades, the flames shot up as high as houses, rolled like a tidal wave through the streets at the speed of over a hundred and fifty kilometers an hour, spun across open squares in strange rhythms like rolling cylinders of fire. The water in some of the canals was ablaze. The glass in the tram car windows melted; stocks of sugar boiled in the bakery cellars. Those who had

cones and clusters. It's a wall of light with very few breaks and behind that wall is a pool of fiercer light, glowing red and green and blue, and over that pool myriads of flares hanging in the sky. That's the city itself! ... [...] We are running straight into the most gigantic display of soundless fireworks in the world and here we go to drop our bombs on Berlin.' Aber nach diesem Vorspiel kommt eigentlich nichts mehr. Es geschieht alles viel zu geschwind." *LL*, pp. 29–31.

fled from their air-raid shelters sank, with grotesque contortions, in the thick bubbles thrown up by the melting asphalt. No one knows for certain how many lost their lives that night, or how many went mad before they died. When the day broke, the summer dawn could not penetrate the leaden gloom above the city. The smoke had risen to a height of eight thousand meters, where it spread like a vast, anvil-shaped cumulonimbus cloud. A wavering heat, which the bomber pilots said they had felt through the sides of their plane, continued to rise from the smoking, glowing mounds of stone. Residential districts so large that their total length amounted to two hundred kilometers were totally destroyed. Horrible disfigured corpses lay everywhere. Bluish little phosphorous flames still flickered around many of them, others had been roasted brown or purple and reduced to a third of their normal size. They laid doubled up in pools of their own melted fat, which had sometimes already congealed. The central death-zone was considered off limits in the next few days. When punishment labor gangs and camp inmates could begin clearing it in August, after the rubble had cooled down, they found people still sitting at tables or up against walls where they had been overcome by monoxide gas. Elsewhere, clumps of flesh and bone or whole heaps of bodies had cooked in the water gushing from bursting boilers. Other victims had been so badly charred or reduced to ashes by the heat, which had risen to a thousand degrees or more, that remains of families consisting of several people could be carried away in a single laundry basket.¹⁷⁰

170 *NHD*, pp. 25–8. In German: “Im Hochsommer 1943, während einer lang anhaltenden Hitzeperiode, flog die Royal Air Force, unterstützt von der 8. amerikanischen Luftflotte, eine Reihe von Angriffen auf Hamburg. Das Ziel dieses ‘Operation Gomorrha’ genannten Unternehmens war die möglichst vollständige Vernichtung und Einäscherung der Stadt. Bei einem Angriff in der Nacht auf den 28. Juli, der um 1 Uhr morgens begann, wurden zehntausend Tonnen Spreng- und Brandbomben ausgeladen über dem dichtbesiedelten Wohngebiet östlich der Elbe, das die Viertel Hammerbrook, Hamm-Nord und -Süd, Billwerder Ausschlag sowie Teile von St. Georg, Eilbek, Barmbek und Wandsbek umfasste. Nach einem bereits bewährten Verfahren wurden zunächst durch viertausendpfündige Sprengbomben sämtliche Fenster und Türen zerschlagen und aus den Rahmen gerissen, dann mit leichten Brandsätzen die Dachböden angesteckt, während Brandbomben mit einem Gewicht bis zu 15 Kilo zugleich bis in die tieferen Geschosse durchschlugen. Binnen weniger Minuten brannte überall auf dem zirka zwanzig Quadratkilometer großen Angriffsareal riesige Feuer, die so schnell zusammenwuchsen, daß bereits eine Viertelstunde nach dem Niedergehen der ersten Bomben der gesamte Luftraum, soweit man sah, ein einziges Flammenmeer war. Und nach weiteren fünf Minuten, um ein Uhr zwanzig, erhob sich ein Feuersturm von einer Intensität, wie sie kein Mensch für möglich gehalten hätte bis dahin. Mit solcher Gewissheit riss das jetzt zweitausend Meter in den Himmel hinaufplodernde Feuer den Sauerstoff an sich, daß die Luftströme Orkanstärke erreichten und dröhnten wie mächtige Orgeln, an denen alle Register gezogen wurden zugleich. Drei Stunden lang brannte es so. Auf seinem Höhepunkt hob der Sturm Giebel und Hausdächer ab, wirbelte Balken aus ihrem Grund und trieb Menschen als lebendige Fackeln vor sich her. Hinter einstürzenden Fassaden schossen haushoch die Flammen hervor, rollten gleich einer Flutwelle mit einer Geschwindigkeit von über 150 Stundenkilometer durch die Straßen, kreiselten als Feuerwalzen in seltsamen Rhythmen über die offenen Plätze. In einigen Kanälen brannte das Wasser. In den Straßenbahnwaggons schmolzen die Glasscheiben, der Zuckervorrat kochte in den Kellern der Bäckereien. Die aus ihren Unterständen Geflohenen sanken unter grotesken Verrenkungen in

What Sebald is describing here could not have been recorded by any video or audio device, nor witnessed by a mortal. He commences with exploding windows and doors, symbolizing the violent intrusion of a relentless force that swiftly oversteps all conventional measures of protection. Supported with exact figures, he describes the events concretely, also offering a documentary photograph of blackened, shrunk corpses on the streets. It is an outside perspective, an aerial view, comparable to that of the bomber pilots. As Carol Jacobs points out, they represent somewhat of a usurpation of God's point of view (metaphorically from Heaven), especially since the operation is named "Gomorrhah" evoking the Old Testamental city that was utterly destroyed by God for its sins.¹⁷¹ Sebald further mentions boiling sugar in bakeries and bubbling asphalt that sucked in anyone attempting to flee, thus abandoning the purely aerial view. As Presner notes, Sebald shifts between an embodied mode, from the point of view of the pilots, in noting "the whole airspace was a sea of flames as far as the eye could see"¹⁷² and a kind of impossible view inaccessible to anyone who might have been harmed by the destruction if they had witnessed from a great enough proximity to describe it in such detail (one might call it an "angelic" perspective). Presner writes, "it offers a 'synoptic view' (and there may be many synoptic views) of the totality of the destruction through the multiplicity

den aufgelösten, dicke Blasen werfenden Asphalt. Niemand weiß wirklich, wie viele ums Leben gekommen sind in dieser Nacht oder wie viele wahnsinnig wurden, ehe der Tod sie ereilte. Als der Morgen anbrach, durchdrang das Sommerlicht nicht die bleierne Düsternis über der Stadt. Bis in eine Höhe von achttausend Metern war der Rauch aufgestiegen und hatte sich dort ausgebreitet als eine riesige ambossförmige Kumulonimbuswolke. Eine wabernde Hitze, von der die Bomberpiloten berichteten, daß sie sie gespürt hätten durch die Wandungen ihrer Maschinen, ging lange noch von den qualmenden, glosenden Steinbergen aus. Wohnsiedlungen mit einer Straßenfront von insgesamt zweihundert Kilometern waren restlos zerstört. Überall lagen grauenvoll entstellte Leiber. Auf manchen flackerten noch die bläulichen Phosphorflämmchen, andere waren braun oder purpurfarben gebraten und zusammengeschnurrt auf ein Drittel ihrer natürlichen Größe. Gekrümmt lagen sie in den Lachen ihres eigenen, teilweise schon erkalteten Fetts. In der schon in den nächsten Tagen zum Sperrgebiet erklärten inneren Todeszonen wurden, als Strafbbrigaden und Lagerhäftlinge nach dem Abkühlen der Trümmer im August mit der Räumung beginnen konnten, Menschen gefunden, die, überwältigt von Monoxydgas, noch an Tischen oder gegen die Wand gelehnt saßen, anderwärts klumpenweise Fleisch und Knochen oder ganze Körperberge gesotten von dem siedenden Wasser, das aus gebohrten Heizkesseln geschossen war. Wieder andere waren in der bis auf tausend Grad und mehr angestiegenen Glut so verkohlt und zu Asche geworden, daß man die Überreste mehrköpfiger Familien in einem einzigen Waschkorb davontragen konnte." *LL*, pp. 35–8.

171 Jacobs, *Sebald's Vision*, p. 80.

172 *LL*, p. 26, quoted in Presner, "What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals", p. 355.

and simultaneity of its many contingent perspectives.”¹⁷³ Its strategy is not realist, but modernist.¹⁷⁴

Like Benjamin’s angel, Sebald gazes at these events fixedly, unblinkingly, eyes wide with horror, but also without any pathos—with an almost angelic serenity. Like the angel, he is transposed from the events described, and unharmed by them. Unlike the angel, Sebald obviously does not occupy an ethereal, immaterial realm at a remove from concrete reality, but, as a *Nachgeborener*, someone reconstructing historical events, what he is ‘seeing’ is the past. Like the angel, Sebald only watches from ‘outside’, unaffected by the scorching heat. The effect of immediate vision is of course highly mediated via Sebald’s narration and via the texts he uses to reconstruct the events;¹⁷⁵ it is of course an *artificial*, a simulated and a *post factum* vision—a cognitive artifact.

Whereas the aesthetic outsidedness pursued in *On the Natural History of Destruction* is a spatio-temporal one, in which the narrator (i.e. Sebald) is able to describe historical events by reconstructing them decades later, the kind of aesthetic outsidedness, or to use another one of Bakhtin’s terms, aesthetic seeing in *Austerlitz* is more interpersonal and it is about reconstructing Austerlitz’s life with the help of the narrator. Austerlitz needs the narrator to help him piece together the fragments of his life, and to recount them so that they are not forgotten. Austerlitz says, “he must find someone to whom he could relate his own story, a story which he had learned only in the last few years and for which he needed the kind of listener I had once been in Antwerp, Liège and Zeebrugge.”¹⁷⁶ Rather than reveling in a Baudrillardian dissolution of the subject in information, the novel is structured by the process of Austerlitz’s slow and steady attempts at a reconstruction of his own subjectivity, by means of the very narrative told. He seeks to re-emerge from the sea of historical and architectural facts, which he admits to having accumulated for years to compensate for his own lack of memory. Like many of Sebald’s characters, Austerlitz had fervently collected facts, but had lacked the self-understanding in order to relate these facts to himself. As Alice Cray noted,

The kind of self understanding [Sebald’s characters] are cut off from doesn’t consist in and can’t be reduced to the sort of neutral knowledge distinctive of the sciences. Participation in

173 Presner, “What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals”, p. 356.

174 Presner, “What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals”, p. 356.

175 Hell also observes this. “The Angel’s Enigmatic Eyes”, pp. 369–70.

176 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 59; “daß er bald für seine Geschichte, hinter die er erst in den letzten Jahren gekommen sei, einen Zuhörer finden müsse, ähnlich wie ich es seinerzeit gewesen sei in Antwerpen, Liège und Zeebrugge”, *Austerlitz*, p. 68.

scientific and other practices of fact-gathering presents no special obstacle to them. [...] Yet these characters lack the sort of insight into themselves that would allow them to truly live.¹⁷⁷

It is perhaps this emotional limitation that merits Austerlitz's comparison to the captive raccoon in the opening of the novel. According to Bakhtin, self-understanding is inherently linked to interpersonal relations. He writes in "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", "In this sense, one can speak of a human being's absolute need for the other, for the other's seeing, remembering, gathering, and unifying self-activity..."¹⁷⁸ Early Bakhtin conceived of the 'outsidedness' of the author in the author-hero relation as paradigmatic for interpersonal relations and for self-constitution in relation to others. The narrator's genuine interest and concern for Austerlitz helps him to coax out the truth about his past. As Bakhtin noted, "Words of love and acts of genuine concern come to meet the dark chaos of my inner sensation of myself: they name, direct, satisfy and connect it with the outside world..."¹⁷⁹ For Bakhtin, the fact that the author did not belong to the same world as the hero is considered a necessary condition for the constitution of the hero from a privileged, 'outside' perspective:

The author's consciousness is the consciousness of a consciousness, that is, a consciousness that *encompasses* and *finalizes* the consciousness of a hero by supplying those moments which are in principle transgredient to the hero's consciousness and which, if rendered immanent, would falsify his consciousness. The author not only sees and knows everything seen and known by each hero individually and by all the heroes collectively, but he also sees and knows *more* than they do; moreover, he sees and knows something that is in principle inaccessible to them. And it is precisely in this invariably determinate and stable *excess* of the author's seeing and knowing in relation to each hero that we find all those moments that bring about the finalizing of the whole...¹⁸⁰

Since Austerlitz had at first managed to repress any knowledge of World War Two or the Holocaust,¹⁸¹ the narrator's view is in a sense transgredient to his—he is simply more aware of the traumatic history between his and Austerlitz's people. It is suggested that Austerlitz's opening up to the narrator on an interpersonal level helped the former face his difficult history. As Crary has noted, "Sebald's narratives represent emotional development as internal to the cognitive growth

177 Crary, "W.G. Sebald and the Ethics of Narrative", p. 495.

178 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", pp. 35–6.

179 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 50.

180 Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity", p. 12

181 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 197.

of their characters”¹⁸²—implying that cognition is much more psychologically complex than a passive receptivity to the world, and that one’s perception correlates with one’s emotional development.

However, it must be added that Sebald’s embodied, and hence—finite, narrator does not regard Austerlitz ‘from above’, or from the outside. The relation between the narrator and Austerlitz therefore resembles more what early Bakhtin called an “ethical” relation: that is, one when two people are “beside” each other,¹⁸³ as opposed to one’s perspective being completely transgredient to the world of the other. Sebald has precisely denied the role of the omniscient narrator who has complete control over his characters:

[This] whole process of narrating something which has a kind of reassuring quality is called into question. That uncertainty which the narrator has about his own trade is then, I hope, imparted to the reader who will, or ought to, feel a similar sense of irritation about these matters. I think that fiction writing, which does not acknowledge the uncertainty of the narrator himself, is a form of imposture and which I find very, very difficult to take. Any form of authorial writing, where the narrator sets himself up as a stagehand and director and judge and executor in a text, I find somehow unacceptable.¹⁸⁴

However, a modest homage to the art of authorship ‘from outside’ is paid within *Austerlitz*. The narrator, after his treatment by ‘Dr. Kafka’ is enabled to see “invertedly”, to see his own eye, and so, with the aid of his own ‘self-knowledge’ can approach Austerlitz and help him to do the same.

The position of aesthetic outsidedness in *Austerlitz* is simulated in the sense of an outsider’s status to a polis—the perspective archetypically embodied by Plato’s banished poets.¹⁸⁵ Both the narrator and Austerlitz are depicted as taking up an outside perspective on European cities such as London and Paris, and both are engaged in reconstructing a more experiential understanding of European history, one that involves taking to heart concrete suffering as opposed to only agglomerating knowledge of facts. Therefore, Austerlitz seeks to put himself together by placing himself in relation to European history, alongside the narrator, echoing Wittgenstein’s post-Cartesian view of the subject as always already social, as summarized by Chantal Bax: “the outer can be the said to be the locus of the inner and can more specifically be said to be the locus of the inner

182 Crary, “W.G. Sebald and the Ethics of Narrative”, p. 496.

183 Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity”, p. 13.

184 James Wood, “An Interview with W.G. Sebald”, p. 26.

185 In Book X of Plato’s *The Republic*, Socrates reasons that poets, as well as painters and other artists are not to be allowed in his imagined perfect polis. For, they would allegedly confuse the populace with their illusive mimicry of the real. Cf. 595a–605d.

against the background of the community of which someone is part.”¹⁸⁶ The need for an Other for the testimony of trauma is fulfilled by the figure of the narrator, but then extended to all the readers of the novel, who form an echo chamber for the testimony of second-generational Holocaust trauma crafted by the novel as postmemory.¹⁸⁷

The narrator also takes up the position of the ideal reader of the *Tractatus*, who as Wittgenstein concludes at the end of the book, in 6.54 “My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands *me* finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly.”¹⁸⁸ The reader who understands the subject in the *Tractatus* recognizes the inconsequence of an encyclopedic knowledge of facts to questions of self-knowledge and the good life, since these cannot be grasped referentially. Rather, they are only grasped inter-personally, for the reader is prompted to understand “me” (*mich*), and not the propositions. The reader who can take up this aesthetic, outside perspective on the world as the totality of all facts, can grasp the good life and the self, just like Austerlitz, during his sporadic conversations with the narrator, is intersubjectively able to find his way back to his self as opposed to living in an agglomeration of reified compensatory images. Even though he never quite re-emerges as a wholesome and strong subject, he does not dissolve into despair.

The outsideness of perspective characteristic of art is literally embodied both in Wittgenstein's biography as in the fictional life of Austerlitz. Wittgenstein remarked, “(The philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him into a philosopher.)”¹⁸⁹ This remark follows a critique of Plato's

186 Chantal Bax, *Subjectivity after Wittgenstein: The Post-Cartesian Subject and the Death of Man*, p. 9.

187 In “A Way of Seeing: Dan Jacobson's *Heshel's Kingdom*”, Sheila Roberts describes the respective functions of the narrator and the reader in similar terms (*Heshel's Kingdom* is a prominent intertext in *Austerlitz*: the narrator discusses it at length at the end of the novel on pp. 418–20; it describes Jacobson's search for traces of his grandfather's life, who died in a Nazi concentration camp in Lithuania, and it is suggested that Austerlitz's father may have been among the victims of the same camp on p. 421). Roberts writes, “As readers of *Heshel's Kingdom* we form a collective testimonial space in which Jacobson addresses us, we others who have been spared much—more than he has, spared even the shame of survivorhood.” (p. 70)

188 Added emphasis.

189 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, §455; “(Der Philosoph ist nicht Bürger einer Denkgemeinde. Das ist, was ihn zum Philosophen macht.)” Cf. Also James C. Klagge's *Wittgenstein in Exile* for an account of the motif of voluntary exile throughout Wittgenstein's biography.

conception of knowledge, and indeed, the remark itself is a critique of Plato’s conception of philosopher kings. In contrast to the Socratic notion that only philosophers are fit to rule the polis,¹⁹⁰ Wittgenstein ascertains that *in order* to practice philosophy, one must maintain a distance to the polis. Therefore, Wittgenstein requires of philosophers a certain voluntary exile—a status more akin to poets, who are banished from Plato’s Republic, than to its philosopher kings. His position on philosophy is therefore very similar to today’s new aestheticists’ conception of the role of art, along the lines of Adorno’s philosophy of autonomy of art, as always a step apart from society, preserving its identity and its ability to critique the *status quo*.¹⁹¹

By declining his inheritance, by considering entering a monastery,¹⁹² and later becoming a schoolteacher in a mountain village in Austria, Wittgenstein literally exercised outsidedness in his life. A family resemblance echoes in Austerlitz’s displacement,¹⁹³ in the scene in Germany where he is mistaken for a beggar, partially because of the old backpack resembling the one Wittgenstein always wore, which leads the narrator to notice a certain “personal similarity”¹⁹⁴ between Austerlitz and Wittgenstein, who are both described as having only a “makeshift organisation of their lives”¹⁹⁵:

I cannot now say for certain how long I stood there, my senses dazed, on the outer edge of this flood of Germans moving endlessly past me, said Austerlitz, but I think it was already four or five o’clock by the time an elderly woman [...] stopped beside me, probably taking me for one of the homeless because of my old rucksack, fetched a one-mark coin out of her purse with arthritic fingers, and carefully handed it to me as alms.¹⁹⁶

190 Plato writes in Socrates’s voice in Book V of *The Republic*, “There is no end to suffering, Glaucon, for our cities, and none, I suspect, for the human race, unless either philosophers become kings, or the people who are now called kings and rulers become real, true philosophers”, 473d.

191 John J. Joughin and Simon Malpas, *The New Aestheticism*, p. 7.

192 Wittgenstein indeed worked as a gardener in a monastery for a short while. Cf. Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, p. 191. He considered entering one as a monk. Cf. p. 234 and p. 575.

193 Ross Posnock notices a family resemblance between Wittgenstein and Sebald himself, in their status of émigrés in Great Britain as German speakers, their acceptance of deracination and “cosmopolitan poverty” that Posnock also compares to Adorno’s stance in ““Don’t think, but look!””, pp. 114–5.

194 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 55.

195 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 56.

196 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 315; “Wie lange ich mit benommenen Sinnen gestanden bin am Rande des ohne Unterbrechung an mir vorüberziehenden Volks der Deutschen, kann ich mit Gewissheit heute nicht mehr sagen, sagte Austerlitz, ich denke aber, daß es bereits vier oder fünf Uhr gewesen ist, als eine ältere Frau [...] die mich wohl wegen meines alten Rucksacks für einen Obdachlosen gehalten hat, bei mir stehenblieb, mit gichtigen Fingern aus ihrer Börse

The outsider status of a beggar, who is on the margins of the political and social life of the city, while physically present in its midst, like Austerlitz, also evokes a family resemblance to Alesha Karamazov, who is described as capable of a beggar existence.¹⁹⁷ In the Foreword to *The Brothers Karamazov*, “From the Author”, the “hero” Alesha, too is introduced as marginal, as “by no means a great man”, but nonetheless “noteworthy”, who is “strange”, however, not in the sense of an isolated, particular case, but as someone “who bears within himself the heart of the whole, while the other people of his epoch have all for some reason been torn away from it”.¹⁹⁸ Both Alesha and Wittgenstein, whose sisters thought of him as “Alyosha of the family”, partly because of his ability to make do without personal money,¹⁹⁹ seem to view the outsider status as beneficial. Austerlitz in turn inhabits his outsiderness “on the outer edge of this flood of Germans” not cheerfully, like Alesha, but in a mode of petrified numbness. (Indeed, family resemblance relations according to Wittgenstein do not imply that all members share all features, or even a single common feature.)

Furthermore, a characteristic of “Russian Idiocy” has been noted in connection to both Sebald's characters and Wittgenstein, thus allowing a parallel between Sebald's novels and Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. John Marks describes Sebald's narrators' techniques of offering fragments of the past that “floated free from the conventional moorings” and like “a Russian idiot, renouncing preconceived ways of thinking and judging”.²⁰⁰ The narrator thus draws the reader outside of established conventions of the polis and onto uncharted territory of banished poets. Marks borrows the allusion to Prince Myshkin from John Rajchman, who in turn uses the term “Russian Idiot” for none other than Ludwig Wittgenstein. Rajchman suggests,

One example [of a Russian Idiot] might be Wittgenstein, always ill at ease with his public professorship and with the emergence of a new analytic “Scholasticism”, who declared, “a philosopher is a citizen of no circle of ideas; that is just what makes him a philosopher” [...] For what Russian Idiots show is not only that philosophical thought is unlearned, but also that it is free in its creation not when everyone agrees or plays by the rules, but on the contrary when what the rules and who the players are is not given in advance, but instead emerges along with the new concepts created and the new problems posed. Such Idiots

ein Marktstück herausholte und vorsichtig als ein Almosen mir überreichte.” *Austerlitz*, pp. 323–4.

197 *BK*, p. 21. Cf. also p. 175 of this text.

198 *BK*, p. 3.

199 Hermine Wittgenstein, “My Brother Ludwig”, p. 123.

200 John Marks, “W.G. Sebald: Invisible and Intangible Forces”, p. 102.

help dramatize, in other words, what is “pragmatically supposed”, by a philosophy that no longer even purports to be derived from fixed methods [...]”²⁰¹

Rajchman draws a parallel between Prince Myshkin’s outsider status in Russia and Wittgenstein, a self-declared citizen of no community of thought. After his years spent at a clinic in the Swiss countryside, Myshkin returns to Russia, to St. Petersburg, and like an idiot or a child, is not entirely able to follow the unspoken social rules and conventions he encounters there. However, it is suggested that his perspective allows him a somewhat privileged insight into people and situations around him, such as into Nastas’ia Filippovna’s character. The novel *The Idiot* thematizes a breakdown of realist narrative conventions coinciding with a scene of a parlor game at Nastas’ia Filippovna’s birthday party. The people who seemed to be important ‘players’ at the beginning of the novel, Gania and Totskii, who were negotiating a payment for Nastas’ia’s hand in marriage to Gania, fade into the background with Nastas’ia’s newly won agency, when she turns the tables on the rules of the mercenary game, burns Rogozhin’s money that was his bid for her hand in marriage and runs off with him—plunging the rest of the novel into a phantasmagoric guessing game based on rumors as opposed to an omniscient realist narration. While the term “idiot” in nineteenth-century Russian had pathological connotations, its original Greek meaning stems from *idios*, meaning “own”—as in “idiosyncratic” or not explainable by recourse to general convention.²⁰² Wittgenstein’s non-foundationalist philosophy, which is not moored in prior principles and conventions, but which seeks to unearth the workings of these very conventions, follows a very similar narrative. He is an “idiot” in the sense of subverting rigid preconceptions, and striving for a perspective outside the solid structure of established conventions of the polis.

Just like Prince Myshkin, who arrives to Petersburg from the Swiss countryside and innocently challenges the accepted and unwritten social conventions, Wittgenstein describes his philosophy as navigating an urban space and studying seemingly trivial social practices and ordinary language use: “I will try to show that philosophical difficulties arise [...] because we find ourselves in a strange town and do not know our way.”²⁰³ Throughout *Austerlitz*, a certain “Russian idiocy” is insinuated as well. It is staged through Austerlitz’s perpetual wanderings in cities, his claim that he never felt he belonged anywhere, his lack of

201 John Rajchman, *The Deleuze Connections*, p. 38.

202 Brian R. Johnson, “Diagnosing Prince Myshkin”, pp. 386–7.

203 Wittgenstein, *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, p. 44.

relationships but cherishing of photographs, as for instance that of a young girl, thus evoking Myshkin's enchantment with Nastas'ia Filippovna's portrait.²⁰⁴ The description of Austerlitz's writer's block discussed above is that of a man lost in a city to which he has come after a long absence, like Prince Myshkin: "I was like a man who has been abroad a long time and cannot find his way through this urban sprawl any more."²⁰⁵

In Paris, Austerlitz's visits the top of a tower at the National Library, and marks his outside perspective to the polis:

Lemoine [a library employee] took me up to the eighteenth floor of the south-east tower, where one can look down from the so-called belvedere at the entire urban agglomeration which has risen over the millennia from the land beneath its foundations, which is now entirely hollowed out: a pale limestone range, a kind of excrescence extending the concentric spread of its incrustations far beyond the boulevards Davout, Soult, Poniatowski, Masséna and Kellerman, and on into the outermost periphery beyond the suburbs, which now lay in the haze of twilight. [...] Closer to hand, we saw the convoluted traffic routes on which the trains and cars crawled back and forth like black beetles and caterpillars. [...] From the other side of the belvedere storey, said Austerlitz, you looked north over the transverse ribbon of the Seine, the Marais quarter and the Bastille. [...] Sometimes, so Lemoine told me, said Austerlitz, he felt the current of time streaming around his temples and brow when he was up here, but perhaps, he added, that is only a reflex of the awareness formed in my mind over the years of the various layers which have been superimposed over each other in order to form the carapace of the city.²⁰⁶

204 While living at the Calvinist preacher's house, Austerlitz was bored with the austere lack of images. When he accidentally found a calendar with a few old photos, he cherished them especially: "I leafed again and again through these few photographs [...] until the people looking out of them [...] and most of all the girl sitting in a chair in the garden with her little dog on her lap, became as familiar to me as if I were living with them down at the bottom of the lake." *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 72–3; "ich [habe] diese paar wenigen Photographien [...] immer wieder von neuem angeschaut, bis die Personen, die mir aus ihnen entgegensahen [...] vor allem das Mädchen, das mit einem kleinen Hund auf dem Schoss auf einem Sessel im Garten sitzt, so vertraut wurden, als lebte ich bei ihnen auf dem Grund des Sees. [...] Bisweilen bildete ich mir sogar ein, die eine oder andere der Photofiguren aus dem Album gesehen zu haben auf der Straße [...]", *Austerlitz*, pp. 80–2.

205 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 174; "[S]o glich ich selbst einem Menschen, der sich, aufgrund einer langen Abwesenheit, in dieser Agglomeration nicht mehr zurechtfindet." *Austerlitz*, p. 183.

206 *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 398–400; "Lemoine [ein Bibliotheksangestellter] [hat mich] [...] in das 18. Stockwerk des Südostturms hinaufgeführt, wo man von dem sogenannten Belvedere aus die gesamte im Laufe der Jahrtausende aus dem jetzt völlig ausgehöhlten Untergrund herausgewachsene Stadtglomeration überblickt, ein fahles Kaltsteingebilde, eine Art von Exkreszenz, die mit ihren auszertretenden sich ausbreitenden Verkrustungen weit über die Boulevards Davout, Soult, Poniatowski, Masséna und Kellermann hinausreichte bis an die im Dunst jenseits der Vorstädte verschwimmende äußerste Peripherie. [...] Mehr in der Nähe sahen wir die verschlungenen Ver-

Lemoine tells Austerlitz that before the “Babylonian library” was built, there was a large warehouse complex in its stead, until the end of the war, where possessions and values confiscated from Jews were sorted and, some, sent to the “ruined German cities”. A storm is forming on the horizon: “An inky wall of storm clouds was building up above the city as it sank into shadow, and soon no more could be distinguished of its towers, palaces and monuments than the spectral white dome of the Sacré-Coeur.”²⁰⁷ Lemoine’s resemblance to Benjamin’s angel of history is striking. The latter is imagined by Benjamin as encircled by the currents of time, a storm called “Progress”, indicating forgetfulness of the past:

But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in [the angel’s] wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.²⁰⁸

Lemoine and Austerlitz are protected from the storm, because they are behind a thick pane of glass,²⁰⁹ and they are at a temporal remove from the historical events of World War Two that they are contemplating—just like the ethereal angel of history is at a remove from the physical cities he is watching over. The family resemblance between Lemoine and the angel of history is strengthened by a conversation Lemoine and Austerlitz have right before the episode on the tower. Lemoine, who had recognized Austerlitz as one of the library regulars from previous years, laments to the latter softly (in a *Flüstergespräch* in the library) on themes of progress and proliferation of information, which dissolve our capacity for memory.²¹⁰ It is not difficult to see the National Library in Paris as a piece of monumental architecture built for obfuscating the history of the ground it stands on, symbolizing progress. Austerlitz comments, “For awhile, said Austerlitz, we stood together in

kehrswegen, auf denen Eisenbahnzüge und Automobile hin- und herkrochen wie schwarze Käfer und Raupen. [...] Von der anderen Seite der Belvedere-Etage, sagte Austerlitz, sah man über das diagonale Band der Seine, über das Marais-Viertel und die Bastille nach Norden hinauf. [...] Manchmal, sagte Lemoine, sagte Austerlitz, sei es ihm, als spüre er hier oben die Strömung der Zeit um seine Schläfen und seine Stirn, doch wahrscheinlich, setzte er hinzu, ist das nur ein Reflex des Bewusstseins, das sich im Laufe der Jahre in meinem Kopf ausgebildet hat von den verschiedenen Schichten, die dort drunten auf dem Grund der Stadt übereinandergewachsen sind.” *Austerlitz*, pp. 404–7.

207 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 400; “Eine tintenfarbene Wetterwand neigte sich über die nun in den Schatten versinkende Stadt, von deren Türmen, Palästen und Monumenten bald nichts mehr auszumachen war als der weiße Schemen der Kuppel von Sacré Coeur.” *Austerlitz*, p. 406.

208 Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”, pp. 257–8.

209 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 400.

210 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 404.

silence on the library belvedere, looking out over the city where it lay now sparkling in the light of its lamps.”²¹¹ They take up the position of Benjamin's angel of history, from the outside and above.

In addition, it is not accidental that the narrator's visit to the ophthalmologist is juxtaposed with contemplations of the city of London from above, from a high-rise building. While in the Czech doctor's waiting room, the narrator looks out of the window and muses,

I imagined that out there in the gathering dusk I could see the districts of the city of London criss-crossed by innumerable streets and railway lines, crowding ever more closely together as they marched east and north, one reef of buildings above the next and then the next, and so on [...] London a lichen mapped on mild clays and its rough circle without purpose...²¹²

The last line from a poem by Stephen Watts alludes to the large M-25 motorway that encircles London and gives it its distinctive shape, a circle as seen from above. In the following line in the novel, the narrator juxtaposes the circle around the city with the circle the ophthalmologist draws on a piece of paper, symbolizing his eye: “It is a circle of this kind with an indistinct outline that Zdenek Gregor drew on a piece of paper to illustrate the extent of the grey area in my right eye when he had examined it.”²¹³ The doctor's sketch of the eye, its simple functionality resembles Wittgenstein's sketch of the eye in *Tractatus* 5.6331, but also his emphasis on the advantages of intentionally inexact sketches for capturing elusive phenomena in *Philosophical Investigations* §77. This sketch of the eye is juxtaposed to the image of the city of London, as seen from above and from outside, the perspective of a poet (and who would as such be banished from Plato's *Republic* and thus have a literally ‘outside’ view on the city), as well as to the numerous maps and blueprints of cities and fortresses presented throughout the

211 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 403; “Eine Zeitlang, sagte Austerlitz, standen wir noch stillschweigend auf dem Belvedere beisammen und schauten hinaus auf die jetzt in ihrem Lichterglanz funkelnde Stadt.” Austerlitz, p. 409.

212 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 51; “Ich bildete mir ein, ich sähe dort draußen in der zunehmenden Dunkelheit die von ungezählten Straßen und Bahnwegen durchfurchten Areale der Stadt, wie sie sich ostwärts und nordwärts übereinanderschoben, ein Häuserriff über das nächste und übernächste und so fort [...] London a lichen mapped on mild clays and its rough circle without purpose...” Austerlitz, pp. 58–9.

213 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 51; “Einen ebensolchen, an seinem Rand ins Ungefähre übergehenden Kreis zeichnete Zdenek Gregor auf ein Blatt Papier, als er mir nach der von ihm vorgenommenen Untersuchung die Ausdehnung der grauen Zone in meinem rechten Auge zu veranschaulichen versuchte.” Austerlitz, p. 59.

novel.²¹⁴ The consultation with the eye doctor ('Dr. Kafka') that rendered the narrator symbolically receptive to Austerlitz's story apparently also served the purpose of approximating Austerlitz's and Kafka's outside perspective on the polis, which enables their "inverse" view on the darkness and absurdity of the world.

The Meaning of (Pictorial) Signs: Reference versus Use

The symbolic outsidedness of aesthetic seeing is not bound by the totality of facts; rather, aesthetic seeing frees one to devise cognitive artifacts that show overlooked aspects of the world. Photographs are tangible examples of such cognitive artifacts. They are sometimes viewed as indexes of reality, as for instance by Roland Barthes who claims that "a photograph is literally an emanation of the referent [...] light, though impalpable, is here a carnal medium, a skin I share with anyone who has been photographed."²¹⁵ However, Silke Horstkotte has pointed out that, in a fictional narrative such as *Austerlitz*, the indexical aspect does not exhaust the meaning of the photographs used. Horstkotte cites Christina von Braun's thesis that photographs cannot be viewed as only indexical, since that would obfuscate the aspect of aesthetic presentation, especially when photographs are part of an imaginative discourse, which von Braun critically calls a "photo-morgana" of "transforming horror into the aesthetic".²¹⁶ Horstkotte ventures that the symbolic aspect of photography in Sebald's novels should be considered, as well. A photograph should be read as a sign that "hints at a larger context with which it stands in a conventional relation", as for instance the way a black and white photograph of a city in ruins in history textbooks is conventionally read as symbolic of World War Two.²¹⁷

However, if we consider photographs such as that of Austerlitz's mother and of Austerlitz himself in the novel, none of structuralist signifier-signified binaries quite fit. These pictures cannot be understood indexically, since both Austerlitz and his mother are fictional characters. Of course, the photographs we are presented with are photographs of real people, but these real people obviously bear no

214 Saarlouis Vauban, p. 26; Breendonk, pp. 35 and 40; the London train station Bishop's gate, described as at the "Rand der City", pp. 194 and 195; Theresienstadt ghetto, pp. 336 and 337.

215 Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, pp. 80–1.

216 Christina von Braun, *Die schamlose Schönheit des Vergangenen*, p. 116ff. Translated and cited by Silke Horstkotte in "Fantastic Gaps", p. 280. Von Braun thus demonstrates a distrust of the aesthetic as supposedly anaestheticizing she shares with other post-modern critics of "the aesthetic". Cf. e.g. Hal Foster (Ed.) *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, p. xv.

217 Horstkotte, "Fantastic Gaps", p. 282.

causal relation to the fiction that surrounds them, let alone that of an “emanation of the referent” as Barthes conceives photography. For, in the case of Austerlitz (and his mother), there *are no* referents²¹⁸—except perhaps the actual battlefield of Austerlitz or the Gare d’Austerlitz in Paris, but it is clear that the ‘meaning’ of the novel cannot be reduced to the factual existence of these events and places. It is also meaningless to speak of these photographs’ iconicity, since there can be no talk of signs that bear *resemblance* to fictional characters. Lastly, we might construe the picture of Austerlitz’s mother to symbolize not a particular person, but with Horstkotte, as hinting at the larger reality of all Holocaust victims. As Straus noted, the mother’s face can be read as symbolizing Levinas’s post-Holocaust ethics of the face of the Other, according to which the face of the Other is itself an expression of the command “Thou shalt not murder”.²¹⁹ It is worth adding that, considering the stark contrast between light and dark in the photograph of Austerlitz’s mother, it can be read as an abstraction of a face, an expression of the absolute ethical imperative, a personified face of the Other in Levinas’s sense. However, there is no conventional connection between this photograph as a sign and Levinas’s ethics, which is why it is not a typical instance of structuralist symbolism.

If we consider Wittgenstein’s alternative view of language, upon which meaning is not coded along the signifier/signified binary and does not depend on a referent, but on the *use* of the sign, we can read the photograph of the mother as introducing the subtext of meaning of Levinas’s ethics on a pictorial level by introducing a new language game, by making up a rule “as we go along”. As Wittgenstein noted in *Philosophical Investigations*, “I can see [a strange sign] in various aspects according to the fiction/poetry I surround it with.”²²⁰ Within the language game of the novel, the fiction that surrounds the photograph of Austerlitz’s mother gives it the meaning it has, and not the referent. The real woman that was photographed is mostly irrelevant to the meaning of the photograph suggested in the novel. This does not imply that Wittgenstein considers all of reality to be subject to human beings’ fiction making capacities, for he does point out our reliance on the kind of (empirically) groundless certainties of (natural) historical facts. For instance, as he notes elliptically in *On Certainty*, §183, “It

218 Sebald has revealed that the photograph of the boy on the cover page of *Austerlitz* is that of an architecture historian from London, who was but one of the people that inspired the character of Austerlitz. Cf. the interview with Sebald: “Ich fürchte das Melodramatische”, p. 228.

219 Emmanuel Levinas “Ethics as a First Philosophy”, pp. 82–4, mentioned in Nina Pelikan Straus’s “Sebald, Wittgenstein, and the Ethics of Memory”, p. 51.

220 *PI*, II, xi, p. 210.



Fig. 8: *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 355. Reproduced with permission from the Sebald Estate. Image provided by the German Literature Archive Marbach.

is certain that after the battle of Austerlitz Napoleon....' [sic] Well, in that case it's surely also certain that the earth existed then."²²¹ He continues in §185:

It would strike me as ridiculous to want to doubt the existence of Napoleon; but if someone doubted the existence of the earth 150 years ago, perhaps I should be more willing to listen, for now he is doubting our whole system of evidence. It does not strike me as if this system were more certain than a certainty within it.²²²

This does not cue in a sort of total skepticism about the knowledge of the outside world, but rather the holistic character of knowledge and certainties which depend on the whole picture one has of the world. He notes in §209, "The existence

²²¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 26e; "Es ist sicher, daß Napoleon nach der Schlacht bei Austerlitz.... Nun, dann ist es doch auch sicher, daß die Erde damals existiert hat." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Über Gewissheit*, p. 26.

²²² Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, p. 26e; "Es käme mir lächerlich vor, die Existenz Napoleons bezweifeln zu wollen; aber wenn Einer die Existenz der Erde vor 150 Jahren bezweifelte, wäre ich vielleicht eher bereit aufzuhorchen, denn nun bezweifelt er unser ganzes System der Evidenz. Es kommt mir nicht vor, als sei dies System sicherer als eine Sicherheit in ihm." *Über Gewissheit*, p. 26.

of the earth is rather part of the whole *picture* which forms the starting-point of belief for me."²²³ And in §344, "My *life* consists in my being content to accept many things."²²⁴ Wittgenstein proposes a non-foundationalist epistemology, which is not grounded in isolable first principles, but accepts that most of human knowledge is based on the socialization undergone. As he notes in §94, "But I did not get my picture of the world by satisfying myself of its correctness; nor do I have it because I am satisfied of its correctness. No: It is the inherited background against which I distinguish between true and false."²²⁵ He compares the empirically impossible picture of the world as a whole to a "kind of mythology" in §95, therefore expressing its proximity to cultural artifacts, like games,²²⁶ and literature, as opposed to demanding hard, empirical evidence.

The aesthetic presentation of the photograph of Austerlitz's mother, the fictional narrative it is embedded in, is not detrimental to the meaning it conveys—contrary to von Braun's criticism of "photo-morgana" and the allegedly anaestheticizing use of the aesthetic. Rather, the fictional and aesthetic presentation is crucial for conveying the meaning of absolute value, which according to Wittgenstein is not to be found within the agglomerate of facts of the world.²²⁷ As he writes in the conclusion of the "Lecture on Ethics",

For all I wanted to do with [words like "absolute value"] was just *to go beyond* the world and that is to say beyond significant language. My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk ethics or religion was to run against the boundaries of language. [...] Ethics, so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable can be no science.²²⁸

223 Wittgenstein, *Über Gewissheit*, §209, "Dass die Erde existiert, ist vielmehr ein Teil des ganzen *Bildes*, das den Ausgangspunkt meines Glaubens bildet."

224 Wittgenstein, *Über Gewissheit*, §344, "Mein *Leben* besteht darin, dass ich mich mit manchem zufrieden gebe."

225 Wittgenstein, *Über Gewissheit*, §94, "Aber mein *Weltbild* habe ich nicht, weil ich mich von seiner Richtigkeit überzeugt habe; auch nicht weil ich von seiner Richtigkeit überzeugt bin. Sondern es ist der überkommene Hintergrund, auf welchem ich zwischen wahr und falsch unterscheide."

226 The full quote of §95 is as follows, "The propositions describing this world-picture might be part of a kind of mythology. And their role is like that of rules of a game; and the game can be learned purely practically, without learning any explicit rules." "Die Sätze, die dies *Weltbild* beschreiben, könnten zu einer Art Mythologie gehören. Und ihre Rolle ist ähnlich der von Spielregeln, und das Spiel kann man auch rein praktisch, ohne ausgesprochene Regeln lernen."

227 Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics", p. 45.

228 Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics", p. 51.

If absolute value cannot be expressed *in* positivist language, it can perhaps be “shown”, for instance in pictures, like the moving and almost inexplicably deep photograph of Austerlitz’s mother (but also in poetic language). Surrounded by Sebald’s text, the photographed face emerges from darkness like a long-lost memory, because it is used in the aesthetic language game of a cognitive artifact for postmemory that the novel plays.

Austerlitz at first has difficulties recognizing himself when looking at the picture their old family friend Věra produces as the picture of himself, of Jacquot Austerlitz at the age of four, half a year before the *Kindertransport*. He is wearing



Fig. 9: *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 258. Reproduced with permission from the Sebald Estate. Image provided by the German Literature Archive Marbach.

a pageboy costume for the “Rose Queen” that is, his mother, dressed as a queen for a masquerade (the same picture is chosen for the cover of the novel). Austerlitz remarks,

The picture lay before me, said Austerlitz but I dared not touch it. The words páže růžové královny, páže růžové královny went round and round in my head, until their meaning came to me from far away, and once again I saw the live tableau with the Rose Queen and the little boy carrying her train at her side. Yet hard as I tried both that evening and later, I could not recollect myself in that part.²²⁹

Austerlitz did not recognize himself, but only saw himself in the *role* of the pageboy, as if in theater. He mentions the *tableau vivant*, which is a reference to Denis Diderot's eighteenth-century understanding of theater—as ideally showing a painted picture come alive, or using actors standing perfectly still to re-enact a painting.²³⁰ This theatrical scene within the novel is before Austerlitz, and try as he might, he cannot regain first-personal memory of himself in it. Here, Sebald's novel manifests the change in aesthetic possibilities after the traumas of the twentieth century, in which theatricality has become an inadequate means of presenting the self.

However, Sebald's novel can be read as a language game seeking to overcome trauma, recover meaning and the possibility of a non-hypostasized, non-Cartesian self. On Wittgenstein's view, the fiction that surrounds a new pictorial sign—such as Austerlitz's picture when he was little—and gives it meaning allows us to see it in new light. It is possible to compare these fictions to facts in the world and it is possible to compare and contrast resemblances between fictional characters and historical biographies without confounding fact and fiction. As Wittgenstein notes in *Philosophical Investigations* §25, “Commanding, questioning, recounting, chatting, are as much a part of our natural history as walking, eating, drinking, playing.”²³¹ Narrating fictions is therefore as natural an activity as is walking and eating, and as recent research in the field of cogni-

229 Austerlitz (Bell), p. 259; “Das Bild lag vor mir, sagte Austerlitz, doch wagte ich nicht, es anzufassen. Andauernd kreisten die Worte páže růžové královny, páže růžové královny in meinem Kopf, bis mir aus der Ferne ihre Bedeutung entgegenkam und ich das lebende Tableau mit der Rosenkönigin und dem kleinen Schleppenträger zu ihrer Seite wieder sah. An mich selber in dieser Rolle aber erinnerte ich mich nicht, so sehr ich mich an jenem Abend und später auch mühte.” Austerlitz, p. 267.

230 Ursula Renner draws attention to this subtle reference to Diderot via the concept of *tableau vivant* in “Fundstücke: Zu W.G. Sebalds ‘Austerlitz’”, p. 21.

231 *PU*, §25, “Befehlen, fragen, erzählen, plauschen gehören zu unserer Naturgeschichte so wie gehen, essen, trinken, spielen.”

tive aesthetics has shown, humans are experts in “decoupling”, namely the “cognitive mechanism that allows us to become immersed in fiction without responding as if the fictional scenario was real”.²³² And because Wittgenstein situates meaning in its dynamic and variable use within social practices—and reading or listening to fictional stories is one characteristic human practice—and not as attached onto a presumed referent, the non-existence of characters like Austerlitz and his mother is not problematic when addressing the cognitive value of literature. For, literature can encapsulate and finely render intelligible the kind of brokenness of the world many real Holocaust survivors actually experienced.

W.G. Sebald’s novels are an amalgamation of historical and geographical references and fictional characters. They can be seen as cognitive artifacts that provide new perspectives on the totality of facts that is the world. *Austerlitz* can be read as a postmemory of the Holocaust, which allows insight into real people’s suffering. The novel can also be read as an enactment of Wittgenstein’s philosophical views, according to which art works offer a view from outside on people’s interiority, which is possible because of Wittgenstein’s strict rejection of a hypostasized view of suffering and other mental states. The characterization of photographs in *Austerlitz* as emerging like “shadows of reality” and their intertwining with the narrative that surrounds them, can be put into relation with Wittgenstein’s suggestion that ethics can be shown as opposed to directly represented. For instance, the evil of the Holocaust cannot be pinpointed and exhaustively defined, but it can be shown in language, in a novel, by showing Austerlitz’s almost complete breakdown of personality.

This breakdown of the self is described in Jean Améry’s factual autobiographical essay “Torture” (*Die Tortur*). The narrator of *Austerlitz* mentions it toward the beginning of the novel, during the narrator’s visit to the underworld of the Breendonk fort, the very place where Améry was in fact tortured by Nazis by being hung on a hook that is still on display today. As Sebald explains in his essay “Against the Irreversible: On Jean Améry” (in German “Mit den Augen des Nachtvogels”, literally: “With the Eyes of a Night Bird”—therefore Améry is included in that circle of family semblance that includes Austerlitz, Wittgenstein and Tripp, which are all compared to the inhabitants of the *Nocturna* at the opening of *Austerlitz*), he considers Améry’s writings one of the few authentic testimonials on the experience of the Holocaust. He writes, “[O]nly Améry’s writings give an adequate idea of what it means to have been delivered

²³² Cave, *Thinking with Literature*, p. 71. Cave borrows the term “decoupling” from Jean Marie Schaeffer.

up to death.”²³³ What Sebald's narrator in *Austerlitz* does not cite from Améry's testimony are remarks such as “Whoever has succumbed to torture can no longer feel at home in the world”²³⁴ which is echoed in Austerlitz's own desolate displacement, even as an indirect victim of the Holocaust who did not experience its violence on his own skin. However, the juxtaposition of Améry's story in the novel with the narrator's own childhood memories and memories of his touristic visits to the Breendonk fort destabilizes any claim to realistic representation of a victim's suffering. As Presner notes, “Sebald mixes past and present, fact and fiction, autobiography and literature, and photography and narrative to create a space of *terra infirma*, which destabilizes both the reliability of memory and spectatorship.”²³⁵ Améry himself writes of his experience:

I am certain that with the very first blow that descends on him he loses something we will perhaps temporarily call “trust in the world.” Trust in the world includes all sorts of things: the irrational and logically unjustifiable belief in absolute causality perhaps, or the likewise blind belief in the validity of the inductive inference. But more important as an element of trust in the world, and in our context what is solely relevant, is the certainty that by reason of written or unwritten social contracts the other person will spare me—more precisely stated, that he will respect my physical, and with it also my metaphysical, being. The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of my self.²³⁶

This passage evokes Wittgenstein's philosophy, which is not an accident since Améry had noted in another text that he had struggled with Wittgenstein his whole life.²³⁷ The longer passage cited above echoes the “Lecture on Ethics” at

233 *NHD*, p. 164; (the essay on Améry is not included in the original German *Luftkrieg und Literatur*); “[A]llein Amérys Schriften [geben] einen zureichenden Begriff von dem, was es heißt, zum Tod freigegeben worden zu sein.” “Mit den Augen des Nachtvogels. Über Jean Améry”, p. 523.

234 Jean Améry, “Torture”, p. 40; “Wer der Folter erlag, kann nicht mehr heimisch werden in der Welt.” “Die Tortur”, p. 85.

235 Presner, “What a Synoptic and Artificial View Reveals”, p. 349.

236 Améry, “Torture”, p. 28; “Doch ich bin sicher, dass [der Inhaftierte] schon mit dem ersten Schlag, der auf ihn niedergeht, etwas einbüßt, was wir vielleicht vorläufig *Weltvertrauen* nennen wollen. Weltvertrauen. Dazu gehört vielerlei: der irrationale und logisch nicht zu rechtfertigende Glaube an unverbrüchliche Kausalität etwa oder die gleichfalls blinde Überzeugung von der Gültigkeit des Induktionsschlusses. Wichtiger aber—und in unserem Zusammenhang allein relevant—ist als Element des Weltvertrauens die Gewissheit, dass der andere auf Grund von geschriebenen oder ungeschriebenen Sozialkontrakten mich schont, genauer gesagt, dass er meinen physischen und damit auch metaphysischen Bestand respektiert. Die Grenzen meines Körpers sind die Grenzen meines Ichs.” “Die Tortur”, pp. 65–6.

237 “Ich selber habe mich ein Leben lang mit [Wittgenstein] herumgeschlagen.” Jean Améry, “Ludwig Wittgenstein im Rückblick. Zum 25. Todestag (29.4.1976)”, p. 991.

Cambridge, in which Wittgenstein describes ethics as an empirically unjustifiable trust in the world,²³⁸ and *Tractarian* musings on the empirical unjustifiability of a faith in causal connections and induction.²³⁹ With the experience of torture, Améry had lost this basic, unjustified and axiomatic trust. In the last sentence: “The boundaries of my body are also the boundaries of my self” (“Die Grenzen meines Körpers sind die Grenzen meines Ichs”), Améry amalgamates the *Tractatus* propositions that “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (“Die Grenze meiner Sprache bedeuten die Grenze meiner Welt”) (5.6), “The subject [...] is a limit of the world” (“Das Subjekt [...] ist eine Grenze der Welt”) (5.632) and the later remark from *Philosophical Investigations* that “The human body is the best picture of the human soul.” (“Der menschliche Körper ist das beste Bild der menschlichen Seele.”²⁴⁰)

Améry especially criticizes Wittgenstein’s idea of language games as allegedly “blocking one’s access to reality”. He loosely refers to the private language argument in *Philosophical Investigations* and understands it as if Wittgenstein is denying the very existence of pain and declaring propositions such as “I am in pain” senseless. In the end, he notes that succumbing to Wittgenstein is losing reality.²⁴¹ One of the passages Améry likely means is for instance § 244, in which Wittgenstein remarks:

238 “Now the same [as for absolute value] applies to the other experience which I have mentioned, the experience of absolute safety. We all know what it means in ordinary life to be safe. [...] To be safe essentially means that it is physically impossible that certain things should happen to me and therefore it is nonsense to say that I am safe whatever happens. Again this is a misuse of the word ‘safe’ as the other example was of a misuse of the word ‘existence’ or ‘wondering.’ Now I want to impress on you that a certain characteristic misuse of our language runs through all ethical and religious expressions. [...] My whole tendency and, I believe, the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language.” Wittgenstein, “Lecture on Ethics”, pp. 47–51.

239 E.g. *TLP*, 6.37.

240 *PI*, II, iv, p. 178; *PU*, II, iv, p. 496.

241 “So genial die Idee der Sprachspiele ist, so exzessiv erscheint es mir andererseits, wenn Wittgenstein durch sie uns den Zugang zur Wirklichkeit verlegt. Besonders eine Stelle hat mir da einen recht unheimlichen Eindruck gemacht. Wittgenstein spricht von den Problemen der ‘Privatsprachen’ mit denen wir unsere physischen und psychischen Empfindungen äußern. Wir sagen etwa, wir hätten Schmerzen, weil wir beim Erlernen der Muttersprache erfahren haben, dass eine bestimmte Empfindung, die wir durch Zeichen des Unbehagens äußern, ‘Schmerz’ genannt wird. Spreche ich von meinen Schmerzen, so vergleiche ich also eine eben verspürte Empfindung mit früheren und kann hierbei, da ja nicht frühere und jetzige Empfindungen gleichzeitig auftreten, niemals wissen, ob ich richtig vergleiche. Der Satz ‘Ich habe Schmerzen’ sei darum der Möglichkeit ausgesetzt, dass wir ein anderes Sprachspiel treiben als das, welches geführt wird—und damit sinnlos. Ist es noch nötig, darauf zu verweisen,

How do words *refer* to sensations?—There doesn't seem to be any problem here; don't we talk about sensations every day, and give them names? But how is the connexion between the name and the thing named set up? This question is the same as: how does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations?—of the word “pain” for example. Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour.²⁴²

It is not difficult to understand how someone like Améry, who had experienced torture, would find a Cambridge professor's musings like these maddening (the private language argument goes on in this vein for almost a hundred paragraphs, from §244 until §315).

However, notice that Wittgenstein at no point denies the reality of pain: he suggests that words such as “pain” with time replace “natural” expressions of pain, such as children's cries. He continues in §246,

In what sense are my sensations *private*?—Well, only I can know whether I am really in pain; another person can only surmise it.—In one way this is wrong, and in another nonsense. If we are using the word “to know” as it is normally used (and how else are we to use it?), then other people very often know when I am in pain.²⁴³

Rather than denying the reality of pain, Wittgenstein reminds us of the common-sense fact that we do in fact often know when others are in pain. This means that the kind of privacy we ascribe to our own sensations of pain does not preclude pain's communicability.

dass hier eine logische Haarspalterei betrieben wird, die nachgerade scholastische oder talmudische Dimension annimmt? [...] Wittgenstein war in Teilen seines Werkes ein Philosoph allererster Größenordnung. [...] Er ist aber auch ein gefährlicher Denker. Ihm verfallen, heißt die Wirklichkeit verlieren.” Améry, “Ludwig Wittgenstein im Rückblick”, p. 995.

242 *PU*, §244, “Wie *beziehen* sich Wörter auf Empfindungen?—Darin scheint kein Problem zu liegen; denn reden wir nicht täglich von Empfindungen, und benennen sie? Aber wie wird die Verbindung des Names mit dem Benannten hergestellt? Z.B. des Wortes ‘Schmerz’. Dies ist eine Möglichkeit: Es werden Worte mit dem ursprünglichen, natürlichen, Ausdruck der Empfindung verbunden und an dessen Stelle gesetzt. Ein Kind hat sich verletzt, es schreit; und nun sprechen ihm die Erwachsenen zu und bringen ihm Ausrufe und später Sätze bei. Sie lehren das Kind ein neues Schmerzbehmen.”

243 *PU*, §246, “Inwiefern sind nun meine Empfindungen *privat*?—Nun, nur ich kann wissen, ob ich wirklich Schmerzen habe; der Andere kann es nur vermuten.—Das ist in einer Weise falsch, in einer anderen unsinnig. Wenn wir das Wort ‘wissen’ gebrauchen, wie es normalerweise gebraucht wird (und wie sollen wir es denn gebrauchen!), dann wissen es Andere sehr häufig, wenn ich Schmerzen habe.”

Other remarks in the private language argument come closer to Améry's suspicion of an annihilation of interiority. He writes in §248, "The proposition 'Sensations are private' is comparable to: 'One plays Patience by oneself'" ("Der Satz 'Empfindungen sind privat' ist vergleichbar dem: 'Patience spielt man allein'"), thus alluding to his conception of a language game, which may seem like a frivolous approach to pain and suffering. In §258, Wittgenstein continues,

Let us imagine the following case. I want to keep a diary about the recurrence of a certain sensation. To this end I associate it with the sign "S" and write this sign in a calendar for every day on which I have the sensation.—I will remark first of all that a definition of the sign cannot be formulated.—But still I can give myself a kind of ostensive definition.—How? Can I point to the sensation? Not in the ordinary sense. But I speak, or write the sign down, and at the same time I concentrate my attention on the sensation—and so, as it were, point to it inwardly.—But what is this ceremony for? for that is all it seems to be [...] But "I impress it on myself" can only mean: this process brings it about that I remember the connexion *right* in the future. But in the present case I have no criterion of correctness. One would like to say: whatever is going to seem right to me is right. And that only means that here we can't talk about 'right'.²⁴⁴

This passage is a *reductio ad absurdum* of the view that sensation concepts are akin to labels we attach to special, interior objects. Wittgenstein shows that if sensations were cases of such special, interior objects, we would have no criteria of ascertaining their identity. Because, in order to judge whether the peculiar sensation someone feels is the same as the one he felt the day before—and whether it, too, can be called "S"—one would have to compare the sensation one presently feels with the memory of the sensation from the day before.

That Wittgenstein doubts that this yields sufficient recognition criteria was established in §56, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, where he remarks that trying to remember a color by comparing it to its memory-image (*Erinnerungsbild*) is no more reliable than comparing it to a color sample (*Muster*):

244 *PU*, §258, "Stellen wir uns diesen Fall vor. Ich will über das Wiederkehren einer gewissen Empfindung ein Tagebuch führen. Dazu assoziiere ich sie mit dem Zeichen 'E' und schreibe in einem Kalender zu jedem Tag, an dem ich die Empfindung habe, dieses Zeichen.—Ich will zuerst bemerken, daß sich eine Definition des Zeichens nicht aussprechen läßt.—Aber ich kann sie doch mir selbst als eine Art hinweisende Definition geben!—Wie? kann ich auf die Empfindung zeigen?—Nicht im gewöhnlichen Sinne. Aber ich spreche, oder schreibe das Zeichen, und dabei konzentriere ich meine Aufmerksamkeit auf die Empfindung—zeige gleichsam im Innern auf sie.—Aber wozu diese Zeremonie? denn nur eine solche scheint es zu sein! [...] 'Ich präge sie mir ein' kann doch nur heißen: dieser Vorgang bewirkt, daß ich mich in Zukunft *richtig* an die Verbindung erinnere. Aber in diesem Falle habe ich ja kein Kriterium für die Richtigkeit. Man möchte hier sagen: richtig ist, was immer mir als richtig erscheinen wird. Und das heißt nur, dass hier von 'richtig' nicht geredet werden kann."

both may have grown darker with age. In the context of the private language argument, §265, he likens the senselessness of comparing a sensation with a remembered sensation to comparing several copies of the same morning newspaper, in order to verify whether it is reporting the truth. However, what is rendered absurd is not, as Améry believes, the meaning of pain concepts in general, but the Cartesian philosophical view, “a picture that held us captive”, of hypostasized, introspectively available mental states.

This is made explicit in §293, discussed in the first chapter of the present work, where Wittgenstein attacks the view of pain as a special, interior object, like a beetle. As a reminder: if we compared pain to an interior thing, one called a “beetle”, whose meaning depended on each person’s acquaintance with their private exemplar, then, Wittgenstein claims, the referent of “beetle” becomes wholly irrelevant to the language game played. As argued in the first chapter, Wittgenstein does *not* consider pain to be like a thing inside the body, but as clearly communicable and legible from the body itself, as he notes: “If I see someone writhing in pain with evident cause I do not think: all the same, his feelings are hidden from me”,²⁴⁵ therefore explicitly denying skepticism on the existence of pain and other ‘interior’ sensations that Améry later accuses him of. The point of the private language argument is to deny the dichotomizing opposition between interior states and outward expression. On Wittgenstein’s view, pain-behavior is an intrinsic component of the concept of pain for the human life-form, and not an accidental and ‘merely’ cultural byproduct.

In fact, Améry’s own claim that the actual first-personally experienced phenomenological quality of pain is *not* communicable via language alone is compatible with Wittgenstein’s beetle example. Améry writes, “If somebody wanted to impart his physical pain, he would be forced to inflict it and therefore become a torturer himself.”²⁴⁶ It is an illusion to think that it is ever possible to feel the pain of another, without actually experiencing it. And, as Améry ironically remarks, the only way to impart what torture feels like is to actually torture someone. However, this does not stop Améry from writing extensively on his experience, and, as Sebald remarks, to truly impart to the readers “what it means to have been delivered up to death”. Améry does not *want* to be the torturer who takes revenge on his readers for the suffering he had experienced. He only wants to be understood and acknowledged in his experience. It is a mistake to think that to make one’s pain, suffering and humiliation understood is to impart

²⁴⁵ *PI*, II, p. 225.

²⁴⁶ Jean Améry, “Torture”, p. 33; “Wer seinen Körperschmerz mit-teilen wollte, wäre darauf gestellt, ihn zuzufügen und damit selbst zum Folterknecht zu werden.” “Die Tortur”, p. 74.

precisely the same phenomenological quality of first-personally experienced sensations of, for instance, shoulders popping from their sockets like in Améry's case. And this is precisely what Wittgenstein's beetle example shows: it is an illusion to think that to understand the pain of another, we must peer into his box and see the beetle inside it—i. e. we must somehow gain first-hand access to his exotic first-personal experience. This is impossible, but the impossibility is not one that limits empathy or somehow “blocks” the access to reality, as Améry (mis)understood Wittgenstein. Empathy and understanding *do not require* first-personal experience of the other's pain. The shared life form of being human and having *some* sort of experience with pain is normally sufficient in order to grieve *with* the person for what he or she had experienced, as opposed to peering *into* their ‘interiority’ as if it were a box. This is shown in the scene in which the narrator of *Austerlitz* encounters the hook on which Améry was tortured in Breendonk:

As I stared at the smooth, grey floor of this pit, which seemed to me to be sinking further and further down [...] a picture of our laundry room at home in W. rose from the abyss, and with it, suggested perhaps by the iron hook hanging on a cord from a ceiling, the image of the butcher's shop I always had to pass on my way to school, where at noon Benedikt was often to be seen in a rubber apron washing down the tiles with a thick hose. No one can explain exactly what happens within us when the doors behind which our childhood terrors lurk are flung open.²⁴⁷

The narrator *does not even pretend* to know what it is like to be tortured. But the sight of the hook reminds him of an experience of uncanniness from childhood. He continues later on,

It was not that as the nausea rose in me I guessed at the kind of third-degree interrogations which were being conducted here around the time I was born, since it was only a few years later that I read Jean Améry's description of the dreadful physical closeness between torturers and their victims, and of the tortures he himself suffered in Breendonk when he was hoisted aloft by his hands, tied behind his back, so that with a crack and a splintering sound which, as he says, he had not yet forgotten when he came to write his account,

247 *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 31–2; “Indem ich in diese Grube hinabstarrte, auf ihren, wie es mir schien, immer weiter versinkenden Grund [...] hob sich aus der Untiefe das Bild unseres Waschhauses in W. empor und zugleich, hervorgerufen von dem eisernen Haken, der an einem Strick von der Decke hing, das der Metzgerei, an der ich immer vorbei musste auf dem Weg in die Schule und wo man am Mittag oft den Benedikt sah in einem Gummischurz, wie er den Kacheln abspritzte mit einem dicken Schlauch. Genau kann niemand erklären, was in uns geschieht, wenn die Türe aufgerissen wird, hinter der die Schrecken der Kindheit verborgen sind.” *Austerlitz*, p. 41.

his arms dislocated from the sockets in his shoulder joints, and he was left dangling as they were wrenched up behind him and twisted together above his head [...]²⁴⁸

Sebald's understanding and profound empathy with Améry is possible because the latter's writings circumscribe what torture was like. They *intransitively* provide insight into his experience; of course they do not *impart* that very experience. Wittgenstein's philosophical writings can be said to expand the sense of reality of another's pain by emancipating the reader from a hypostasizing and limiting philosophical conception that language always functions according to a label-object schema, in which pain is some hidden interior object of scrutiny.

Wittgenstein attributed a misunderstanding of symbolism to "modernists" in general, as the following remark made in 1930 to his Cambridge student Drury reveals:

People who call themselves modernists are the most deceived of all. I will tell you what modernism is like: in *The Brothers Karamazov* the old father says that the monks in the nearby monastery believe that the devils have hooks to pull people down into Hell; 'Now' says the old father, 'I can't believe in those hooks'. That is the same sort of mistake modernists make when they misunderstand the nature of symbolism.²⁴⁹

He is referring to the following passage from Dostoevsky's novel, in which Fyodor Karamazov says,

Surely, it's impossible, I think that the devils will forget to drag me down to their place with their hooks when I die. And then I think: hooks? Where can they get them? What are they made of? Iron? Where do they forge them? Have they got some kind of factory down there? You know in the monastery the monks probably believe there is a ceiling in hell, for instance. Now me, I am ready to believe in hell, only there shouldn't be any ceiling; [...] Does it really make any difference—with a ceiling or without a ceiling? But that's what the damned question is all about! Because if there's no ceiling, then there are no hooks. [...]²⁵⁰

248 Austerlitz (Bell), pp. 32–3; "Es war nicht so, dass mit der Übelkeit eine Ahnung in mir aufstieg von der Art der sogenannten verschärften Verhöre, die um die Zeit meiner Geburt an diesem Ort durchgeführt wurden, denn erst ein paar Jahre später las ich bei Jean Améry von der furchtbaren Körpernähe zwischen den Peinigern und den Gepeinigten, von der von ihm in Breendock ausgestandenen Folter, in welcher man ihn, an seinen auf den Rücken gefesselten Händen, in die Höhe gezogen hätte, so dass ihm mit einem, wie er sagt, bis zu dieser Stunde des Aufschreibens nicht vergessenen Krachen und Splittern die Kugeln aus den Pfannen der Schultergelenken sprangen und er mit ausgerenkten, von hinten in die Höhe gerissenen und über den Kopf verdreht geschlossenen Armen in der Leere hing", Austerlitz, pp. 41–2.

249 Maurice O'Connor Drury, "Conversations with Wittgenstein", p. 784.

250 BK, p. 24.

It is not precisely clear to which “modernists” Wittgenstein is referring. However, as expounded above, Wittgenstein was critical of the idea that language is an elaborate system of labels. This criticism is *prima facie* something he shares with Ferdinand de Saussure and his legacy of structuralism (and later post-structuralism). However, the conclusion that scholars have drawn following Saussure is that—if language *cannot* be defined as a system of signifiers referring to the signified in a simple, 1:1 manner, then it is entirely indeterminate—as if those were the only two options to conceptualize language. By contrast, in §304 of *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein appeals to “make a radical break with the idea that language always functions in *one way*”.²⁵¹ As an alternative, he conceives of language as a practice involving myriads of different manners of engaging with the world. One of these ways is figurative, which is how the idea of iron hooks in hell can be understood, and not as referring to actual material signified hooks, produced in some absurd infernal otherworldly factories.²⁵²

This does not mean that language does not *sometimes* brutally refer to material signified. In *Austerlitz*, the narrator is faced with the actual hook on the ceiling of the torture chamber at Breendonk, onto which Jean Améry was handcuffed from the back and pulled up into the air, until his arms popped out of the shoulder sockets.²⁵³ By contrast to the hooks in *The Brothers Karamazov*, this hook certainly has a material referent: it is possible to visit Breendonk, which is now a museum, and see it; its picture can be found in history books.²⁵⁴ Here there can be no talk of a figurative use of language. It is as if the hell Fyodor Karamazov speaks of in Dostoevsky’s novel is materialized in Breendonk, the Nazi concentration camp. The narrator’s description of the former concentration camp, as well as resembling Plato’s cave, also certainly resembles a descent into Hades or Hell, “a world [...] illuminated only by a few dim electric bulbs, and cut

251 PU, § 304, “[...] Das Paradox verschwindet nur dann, wenn wir radikal mit der Idee brechen, die Sprache funktioniere nur auf *eine* Weise.”

252 In *The Brothers Karamazov*, Staretz Zosima’s conception of Hell is distinctly immaterial. He defines it as “the suffering of being no longer able to love” (BK, p. 322), which begins already in earthly life. As Rico Monge points out in “The Centrality of St. Isaac the Syrian’s Ascetical Theology in Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov*”, p. 445, St. Isaac taught that Hell is not a material place, but a “scourge of love”, namely the bitter regret felt by those who are directly exposed to God’s love (like a burning fire) and have failed to return it by loving their fellow creatures. Cf. also fn. 65 of the introduction to the present work.

253 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 42.

254 Cf. James M. Deem, *The Prisoners of Breendonk. Personal Histories from a World War II Concentration Camp*, p. 218. Here Améry’s torture is recounted, but with reference to his former name, Mayer. (He had changed the name after the war—cf. Sebald’s “Verlorenes Land: Jean Améry und Österreich”, p. 132.) The photograph of the hook is by Leon Nolis.

off forever from the light of nature”,²⁵⁵ where “with every forward step the air was growing thinner and the weight above me heavier”,²⁵⁶ Entering the torture chamber one has to descend, for its “floor [is] at least a foot lower than the passage giving access to it, so that it is less like an oubliette and more like a pit”.²⁵⁷ Uwe Schütte compares the narrator’s visit of the torture chamber at Breendonk to a descent to a real underworld, and draws attention to other allusions to spectral appearances and the underworld in the novel, as for instance in the image of the Nazi officials who come to take Austerlitz’s mother to Theresienstadt, and who are described in almost literally the same terms as the messengers from Kafka’s “The Trial”, who come for Josef K., and who approximate *psychopompos*, the mythical figures that escort the dead to the afterlife.²⁵⁸ The unreality of an underworld and of ghostly beings echoes the fictionality of literature that creates shadows, not necessarily with the intent to deceive and incarcerate, like the shadows in Plato’s cave. Rather, works of literature as “shadows of resistance” are cognitive artifacts that are at once apart from the world and at the same time do not merely double it, but by virtue of their fictionality, offer sufficient distance for reflection on what is the case in the world.

To conclude, Sebald’s description of Améry’s torture, the sound and feel of his dislocated shoulders resonate viscerally in the readers’ bodies, like “shadows of reality” of that very same suffering, showing the ghost of the possibility of how it is to feel one’s hands cuffed from behind and hung from a hook on the ceiling, and to hang down from it, with one’s arms slowly giving way to the weight of one’s body. While in this case the hook in the novel does have a material referent, the suffering of fictional characters like Austerlitz does not. But, the novel empathically and narratively encapsulates the kind of personality debilitating trauma of second-generation Holocaust victims and second-generation survivors like Austerlitz that historical facts alone cannot enumerate. Is it not the fictional narrator’s description of the actual hook Améry was tortured on one of those “shadows of hooks” that Fyodor Karamazov concedes to, after his son Alesha “quietly and seriously” answers his tirade above that “No, there are no hooks there”²⁵⁹? If so, it is a cognitive artifact of the hell that Holocaust survivors experienced.

255 *Austerlitz* (Bell), pp. 29–30; “nur vom schwachen Schein weniger Lampen erhellten und für immer vom Licht der Natur getrennten Welt”, *Austerlitz*, p. 38.

256 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 31; “mit jedem Schritt, den ich mache, die Atemluft weniger und das Gewicht über mir grösser wird”, *Austerlitz*, pp. 39–40.

257 *Austerlitz* (Bell), p. 32; “der Boden [liegt] um gut einen Fuß tiefer [...] als der Gang, durch den man ihn betritt, und darum weniger einem Verlies gleicht als einer Grube.” *Austerlitz*, p. 40.

258 Schütte, *W. G. Sebald*, p. 187, p. 195.

259 *BK*, p. 25.

Conclusion

Ludwig Wittgenstein's appreciation for literature and for Fyodor Dostoevsky's novels is expressed in scattered notes and journal entries throughout his life. Considering the fact that he was intensely reading *The Brothers Karamazov* while finishing his notes for the *Tractatus*, it is not far-fetched to postulate that this novel has influenced the ending of the latter work, emphasizing ethics, aesthetics and the inexpressible. Wittgenstein's rebellion against the Newtonian conception of ethics, according to which it is a systematic and exact science like any other, is also echoed in Dostoevsky's novel, where the petty villain Rakitin represents a scientific view of ethics. Furthermore, Wittgenstein's thesis that ethics and aesthetics are one can be read in the sense that what is inexpressible in ethics—in eudaimonic terms, the notion of a good life, or, in deontological terms, of good willing—can be shown aesthetically.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein's later considerations of human interiority in general, not just what defines good willing but also how intention can be represented, is a major motif in Dostoevsky's novels, as well. Namely, these novels do not express intentionality as an informative content within the text, but they "show" it (one might say: aesthetically) and in a non-Cartesian manner by the way in which the characters' entire perception and engagement with the world are portrayed. The motif of theatricality of bodily expressions of 'inner' intentions and feelings is present throughout, especially in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Wittgenstein's later ideas on perception, such as aspect seeing—that perception is closely interrelated with imagination and background knowledge and that therefore the same material stimulus can yield mutually contradicting perceptions depending on the aspect under which one is viewing it—are demonstrable in Dostoevsky's novels, as well, which show the discrepancies in mindsets and worldviews in a rapidly modernizing nineteenth-century Russia.

Especially Wittgenstein's question whether it is possible to live in eternity as opposed to in time, which he asks in a journal entry discussing Dostoevsky, can be fruitfully discussed in connection with the latter's novels. Dostoevsky portrays the contiguity of the total, polycentric perspective common to sacred art such as icons and hagiographies from late antiquity, and the individual, empirical points of view as expressed in the linear perspective of applied and secular art, but also in modern, highly ideological feuilletons. Written in a time when numerous conflicts in the questions of value arose in Russian society, Dostoevsky's novels dialogically and polyphonically portray multitudes of possible positions, points of view, and intentionalities, both pre-modern and modern. These conflicts and contradictions arise because of breakthroughs in medicine and tech-

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nology, which allow for new ways of interpreting the world outside of religious terms, commodification of life and art caused by the increasing primacy of the dictates of the market, destruction of the natural environment etc. Dostoevsky keeps up with the new, and demonstrates great understanding of both state-of-the-art medical research as well as of the kind of changes new technologies like photography introduce to the experience of everyday life. However, his novels almost always also include the construction of the total perspective characteristic of religious thought, even though it is mediated and presented through the consciousness of finite narrators, and therefore divested of the kind of absolute authority reserved for religion in artworks of previous centuries.

In the highly theatricalized nineteenth century, Hegel's analysis of the theatrical mind as expressing emotions and intentions overtly, without necessarily 'truly' feeling them is especially relevant for Russian society of the time. Because modernization proceeded especially rapidly, and mimicking Western role-models, Russian society displays an especially high degree of theatricality due to the sudden shift to Western style of clothing, legal proceedings, and politically revolutionary ideas. Just like Rameau's nephew, whose behavior Hegel analyses as an example of everyday theatricality, several characters in Dostoevsky's novels display a similar theatrical behavior that needs no stage to act the buffoon, like Fyodor Karamazov, or that seeks to manipulate others, like Kolia Krasotkin. This theatricality demonstrates especially well Wittgenstein's notion of the dependence of 'interiority' on overt public conventions and codes, and especially interesting cases in which the changes in these outer frameworks are so rapid that people's 'inner' lives have not yet caught up with the newly establishing outer norms.

In a novel from the brink of the twenty-first century, W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*, the self is no longer staged and theatricality is no longer the most pertinent category for expressing the relation between the public and the private. Rather, as Jean Baudrillard has diagnosed developments in the late twentieth century, new communication technologies and simultaneous video coverage of public events have replaced theatricality with a dissolution of the private and the public, the self and the other, in the incessant medialization and the resulting hyperreality. However, far from surrendering to the sea of indifferent information, Sebald's novels seek to circumscribe the real, including real suffering. They do not attempt this along nostalgically realistic and illusionistic lines, rather they go about it by means of an oscillation between the linear perspective depicting chronological time and a more primordial atemporality that allows for the fashioning of images of the past and the creation of novels as cognitive artifacts of postmemory. Sebald's works demonstrate that the artificiality of art is not a hin-

drance to an aesthetic demonstration of philosophically relevant questions on the relation between the self and larger social, historical and cultural contexts.

The Wittgenstein-motif in Sebald's novels is far from being merely ornamental. Rather, it suggests an anti-Cartesian refusal of the opposition between human beings and nature, mind and body, the individual and the social, as well as a more practical approach to language, in which meaning is defined by use as opposed to acting as a label for a referent. In Sebald's novels, no opposition is created between facts in the novel and real-life referents. Rather, fictional characters traverse real cities, described in minute detail with actual topographical information, and they coexist beside historical people like Jean Améry and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Furthermore, Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances—that similarities bind people and phenomena like threads, weaving themselves into complex *textile* of resemblances and differences—is both explicitly mentioned in Austerlitz's study of architectural similarities, and it is an aesthetic strategy within *Austerlitz*, in which the main protagonist is juxtaposed with a night-active raccoon and then with Wittgenstein himself. The motif of seeing—central to Wittgenstein's philosophy—is present throughout Sebald's novels and it can be read along the lines of the ethical-aesthetic imperative of empathically rendering suffering visible. For this purpose, both text and images are mobilized, and photographs of actual people and events are cognitive artifacts, used as means for freezing and preserving time, not to merely tautologically replicate their causal referents, but to reveal new and elusive aspects of European history.

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Index of Names

- Adorno, Theodor 6, 23, 145, 204–206,
228–231, 236, 239, 251
- Améry, Jean 199f., 263–272, 275
- Bakhtin, Mikhail 13f., 16, 18, 94, 106f.,
117f., 127, 173, 241
- Bakhtin, Mikhail 15f., 29, 106–117, 120,
125–127, 132, 135f., 139, 172f., 175,
234, 241, 247–249
- Bakhtin, Nikolai 13, 106, 118
- Barthes, Roland 211, 257f.
- Baudrillard, Jean 5, 28, 198, 274
- Benjamin, Walter 21f., 88, 144f., 204,
206, 226, 234–236, 247, 255f.
- Bourdieu, Pierre 133
- Cavell, Stanley 7f., 87, 116
- Derrida, Jacques 3, 5
- Descartes, René 23–25
- Diderot, Denis 19, 25, 66, 86f., 124, 132,
152, 177–181, 183–185, 188f., 196, 262
- Florensky, Pavel 122–125, 154f., 170f.,
177f.
- Foucault, Michel 5, 89
- Frege, Gottlob 6–9, 31
- Freud, Sigmund 72, 222f.
- Fried, Michael 86f-87.
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 10, 15f.,
19, 188–190, 196, 274
- Kafka, Franz 229, 236–239, 249, 257, 272
- Kant, Immanuel 42, 111, 228
- Newton, Isaac 216–218
- Peter the Great 19, 123
- Plato 5, 162, 178f., 203, 205, 207, 220,
249–251, 256
- Tolstoy, Leo 3, 8, 10–13, 17, 20, 29, 55,
80, 119, 127, 133, 144f., 147
- Tripp, Jan Peter 22, 200f., 207–211, 213f.,
218f., 225, 235, 263

Index of Subjects

- Absolute 10, 15, 35f., 51, 53, 60, 74f., 78, 81, 83, 108, 111, 125, 128, 130, 189, 229, 248, 258, 260f., 264f., 274
- Absorption 25, 65–66, 86, 103, 137, 179, 183
- Aesopian language 119, 177
- Affirmative culture 205, 233, 238
- Angelus Novus* 235f.
- Angelic perspective 236
- Architecture 8, 10, 34, 36, 85f., 122, 146, 219, 222, 225, 233f., 255, 258
- Aspect seeing 2, 15, 39, 41, 79, 105, 129, 162, 168, 273
- Seeing as 15, 39, 129, 135
- Aura 144f., 208
- Austerlitz* 19–23, 27f., 197–207, 213, 216–223, 225, 227, 229, 231, 233–235, 237–239, 241–243, 247–264, 269–272, 274f.
- Beauty/goodness 4, 7, 10, 14f., 35, 118–120, 126, 128–135, 137, 146, 150–152, 165, 168f., 216, 235
- *Kalon* 120, 130, 132, 135, 151, 169
- Beetle in the box 3, 88, 95, 101, 118, 268–269
- Body 3, 23–26, 29, 45, 54, 79–81, 88, 90–92, 96, 100, 107f., 118f., 138, 162f., 174, 181, 194f., 198, 229, 239, 264f., 268, 272, 275
- Embodiment 25, 130, 181, 197
- Bombing of Germany 226, 243
- Byzantium 119, 122, 130, 151
- Calligraphy 14, 132f.
- Cartesianism 3, 17, 23, 25, 91
- Post-Cartesianism 23–25, 79, 80, 89, 90, 118, 163, 231, 249, 262, 273, 275
- City 150, 162, 175, 199, 214f., 219–221, 238, 243–246, 252, 254–257
- Polis 162, 214, 222, 227, 249, 251–254, 257
- Cognitive artifact 27, 200, 215, 227, 229, 243, 247, 257, 261, 263, 272, 274f.
- Cognitive science 3, 24–26, 29
- Commodification 133, 139, 144–146, 274
- Crime and Punishment* 12, 74–78, 153f.
- Cyclops 152, 154
- Cyclopic 155
- Demons* 15, 18, 74, 131, 142f., 150–153, 155–163, 165–168, 174, 185, 193
- Duck-rabbit 16, 39
- Epilepsy 130–132, 150, 152
- Eternity 56, 115, 124f., 173, 175f., 208, 273
- Ethics 6, 9f., 29, 32, 34, 42, 45, 47–56, 59f., 62–64, 66f., 73f., 76, 78f., 81, 94f., 106, 114, 118f., 125, 128, 146f., 150, 153, 157, 169, 173, 196, 206f., 212, 216, 220f., 223, 225f., 228–231, 233, 239, 248f., 258, 260, 263–265, 273
- Eudaimonia 60, 220
- Family resemblances 21, 38, 75, 105, 197, 216, 219, 223–225, 234, 275
- Game 2f., 27, 36, 39f., 54f., 88–91, 93, 133, 141, 150, 186f., 192, 196, 219, 222–225, 232, 239, 241, 253, 258, 260–262, 267f.
- Language games 2f., 93, 196, 224, 265
- Patience 93, 179, 219, 223, 225, 267
- Trauma work 119, 222–223
- Grand Inquisitor 57f., 95, 127
- Hagiography 99, 164, 169–174, 176, 196
- Holocaust 22f., 198–201, 218, 225, 227–229, 231f., 242f., 248, 250, 258, 263f., 272
- Holy fool 130–132, 171, 174–176, 178, 189
- *Iurodivyi* 130, 132, 171, 176
- Hypostasizing 23, 230, 240, 270
- Hysteria 72f., 120f., 131, 198

- Icons 122f., 128, 169f., 174, 273
- Illusion 19, 86f., 122, 124f., 159, 177f., 183, 227, 268f.
- Illusionism 87, 123, 207f., 211
- Image ban 229f.
- Intention 12, 17–19, 68, 79, 85, 95, 118f., 123, 127f., 140, 160, 164, 184f., 191, 195f., 273f.
- Interiority 3, 13, 17, 19–21, 23, 28f., 31, 79, 83, 85, 88, 92, 95, 117, 128, 163f., 177, 191, 196f., 200, 231, 263, 267, 269, 273f.
- Journalism 158, 160, 191
- King 72, 87, 181–183, 251
- Kingship 128
- Linear perspective 122–124, 154, 177, 208, 213, 273f.
- Literary field 128, 133, 144, 150
- Modernism 10, 22, 36, 39, 83, 226, 270
- Modernity 36, 95, 133, 144, 150, 153, 157, 169, 173
- Modernization in Russia 196
- Monasticism 120
- Newtonian physics 52, 216
- Notes from a Dead House* 19, 101–105, 118, 126
- Objectification 107f., 110–112, 115, 137–140, 143, 196
- On the Natural History of Destruction* 22, 214, 226f., 235f., 243, 247
- *Luftkrieg und Literatur* 22f., 214, 236, 264
- Pain 3, 21–23, 42, 79, 88f., 91f., 95, 118, 152, 187, 197, 231, 240, 265–270
- Photography 21, 27, 51, 83, 86, 133, 144f., 197, 205, 211, 214, 257f., 264, 274
- Darkroom 204f., 237
- Photography in Russia 144–145
- Pictures 2, 27, 29, 39, 42, 94, 115, 139, 143, 197, 209, 214, 219, 225, 230, 241f., 257, 261
- Plato's cave 203, 205, 271f.
- Positivism 48
- Postmemory 27, 206, 215, 227, 243, 250, 261, 263, 274
- Press 144f., 150f., 153f., 156f., 217
- Private language argument 42, 79, 82, 88f., 91, 94f., 101, 118, 265–268
- Prozorlivost'* 15, 119, 121f., 134, 171, 176
- Reference 1, 9, 18f., 23, 36, 40, 44, 51, 56–58, 69, 75, 87–89, 91, 114–117, 123, 125, 131, 134, 141, 149, 169, 171, 175, 178, 180f., 185, 196, 204, 210, 223, 226, 228f., 236, 239f., 257, 262f., 271
- Referentiality 230
- Religion 36, 53, 72, 119, 121, 228, 240, 260, 265, 274
- Pathological religiosity 131
- Reverse perspective 122–125, 154, 177
- Revolution 8, 116, 156f., 174, 182–185
- French Revolution 183–185, 196
- Russian Revolution 12
- Russian Orthodoxy 14–15, 29, 66, 97, 119, 120, 122, 123, 125, 128, 130, 132, 150, 169–171, 181, 190
- St. Alexios 175
- Man of God 171, 174
- St. Denis of Paris 181
- Subject 4, 8f., 24f., 28, 32, 36, 49, 51, 60, 79–83, 89f., 94, 104, 107f., 110, 112–114, 117, 134, 147, 163, 172, 182, 188, 198, 225, 240f., 243, 247, 249f., 258, 265
- Subjectivity 3, 79, 83, 88, 90–92, 107, 135, 163, 216, 247, 250
- Sub specie aeternitatis* 10, 32, 36, 50, 87, 106, 115, 122, 125, 128, 131, 146f., 173, 175, 230, 236
- Suffering 69, 76, 78, 91, 96, 98, 126, 139, 144, 179, 188, 196, 199f., 204, 226, 236, 249, 251, 263f., 267f., 271f., 274f.
- Synopsis 37
- Perspicuous presentation 4, 34, 36–38

- Synopsizing 24, 93, 216, 221
- Synoptic 2, 22, 27, 215 f., 226 f., 235, 244, 246 f., 264

Tableau vivant 262

- Theater 19 f., 83–88, 101–103, 111 f., 115, 122–125, 138, 177 f., 180, 182–187, 189 f., 192–196, 198, 262
- Costumes 20
- Stage 19 f., 44, 83, 85, 87, 104, 115, 122 f., 136, 177, 183–186, 190, 226, 238, 274
- Theatricality 19 f., 25, 86, 103, 111, 125, 138, 177, 182, 186, 188–191, 196, 198, 262, 273 f.

- Time 8–13, 15–17, 19 f., 25, 27, 29, 38, 45, 56 f., 60, 64, 69, 73–75, 77, 79, 83, 96, 99–102, 105, 108–110, 113, 119–122, 124–126, 129, 131, 133, 135, 137, 140 f., 143–145, 149 f., 152 f., 155, 161, 163–165, 167, 170 f., 173–177, 180–182, 185, 187, 190 f., 199, 207 f., 211, 216–220, 232 f., 238 f., 244, 251, 254 f., 266 f., 269, 272–275
- Relativity 216
- Time as a river 217
- Trauma 215, 219, 222 f., 231, 250, 262, 272

