Autobiographical Group Portraits and Ironic Aspect Change in the *Philosophical Investigations*

Sara Fortuna

**Introduction**

My contribution attempts to combine two dimensions of Wittgenstein’s philosophy: On the one hand, the ample reflection on seeing-as and aspect change, which is presented in the second part of the *Philosophical Investigations* (chap. XI), discussing different forms of ambiguous images, and more specifically ambiguous sentences as peculiar verbal *Kippbilder*: Witt, ironic and humorous sentences. On the other hand, there is the original autobiographical gesture the Austrian philosopher performed confronting literary texts and explicitly or indirectly referring to them in his philosophical work: from Nestroy’s theater pieces to Tolstoy’s classical novels, from deeply existential-oriented essays (as Weininger’s *Sex and Character*) to American detective stories (especially Norbert Davis’s hard-boiled novel *The Mouse in the Mountain*).

I will do this in five steps. In the first part, I will introduce the issue of seeing-as and aspect change and consider its intersubjective dimension by presenting a simile from the *Remarks on Philosophy of Psychology*, in which Wittgenstein proposes to see a sentence as a group portrait animated by the gazes of all members. I suggest that this image could help figure out how Wittgenstein used literary quotations as an intersubjective space for a sort of collective autobiography; I will show that the ambivalent textuality of *Witz* and ironic sentences seems to be the main shared characteristic of Wittgenstein’s selection of authors. In the second section, following a remarkable article by David Stern, I will analyze the opening motto of the *PI*, a quotation by the Austrian actor and theater writer Nestroy. If Nestroy seems to be one of the members of the group portrait animating the *PI*, the main reason for this is his ironic language: the *PIs* motto should be interpreted as a *Kippbild*, with a double aspect – historical and autobiographical – which is in dialogic tension with Augustine’s long quotation from his autobiographical book, *Confessions*. I argue that the link between the two texts produces a further
ambiguous image, also in the form of a *Witz*, one which focuses on the progress-regression connection, whose tension is the core of Wittgenstein’s later philosophical practice. Another paradigmatic and even more relevant example is presented in the third part: the personality and work of Weininger, conceived of by Wittgenstein as a *Doppelgänger*. According to the philosopher, the genius of *Sex and Character* and of *On Last Things* mainly depends on the personal engagement of its author in their theoretical and ethical construction, which explains as well young Ludwig’s deep identification. Such an identification enables him to perform an existential aspect change in confronting Weininger’s work. I argue that Wittgenstein considered Weininger’s reflections so important throughout his life because they were the background of Wittgenstein own philosophical evolution: against this model, he proposed his critique as a form of therapeutic regression and deconstruction of the metaphysical building Weininger trapped himself in. The fourth section of the paper will present Wittgenstein’s late-life literary passion for American detective novels, the so-called hard-boiled stories whose magazines Malcolm sent to him from the USA. I will try to show why his favorite novel, the bizarre and sarcastic *The Mouse in the Mountain* by Norbert Davis, was so inspiring for Wittgenstein that he asked Malcolm to get in touch with the author to whom he wished to express his gratitude. The last part addresses the original ›novel therapy‹ the philosopher used with friends, sending them literary texts which he considered apt to solve specific ethical problems. This issue will be analyzed presenting a specific matter – war – on which Wittgenstein radically changed his mind since the times of his voluntary enlistment during the First World War. It is Malcolm, as a bored officer during the Second World War, who becomes the target of Wittgenstein’s novel therapy: addressing his former student’s feeling of boredom towards the war, he suggests reading Tolstoy’s *Hadji Murat*. Indicating the parts of Tolstoy’s war story Wittgenstein might have found most helpful for Malcolm, I argue that the core of Wittgenstein’s reflection confronting this book is once more the possibility to find an aspect change on what modernity considers as progress and to dismiss Weininger’s male-centered values rooted in the experience of war.
1. Aspect-seeing and the *Philosophical Investigations* as a group portrait

In the phenomenon of seeing-as and aspectuality, one has to consider various connected elements that apply to different examples. Since the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, Wittgenstein had been attracted by ambivalent images and sentences; introducing them again in the reflections of his late work, he invented the concepts of *seeing-as* and *aspect change* to refer to mutually exclusive forms of perception and understanding: I cannot see at the same time the multiple aspect of an image (i.e. in the duck-rabbit image). And yet, in the experience of seeing-as is also included the expression, the physiognomic, mimic dimension, whose perception is integrated in the perception of other aspects.\(^1\) A long remark introduces us to this point in a perspicuous way:

> »While any word – one would like to say – may have a different character in different contexts, all the same there is *one* character – a face – that it always has. It looks at us. – For one might actually think that each word was a little face; the written sign might be a face. And one might also imagine that the whole proposition was a kind of group-picture, so that the gaze of the faces all together produced a relationship among them and so the whole made a significant group. But what constitutes the experience of a group’s being significant?«\(^2\)

In proposing this image, Wittgenstein argues that semantic aspect change, related to different contexts, is always combined with a specific physiognomic dimension (a sentence, both oral and written, conceived of as a face). The key factor of the face is the gaze and its intentionality: the audience must be sensitive to it. Wittgenstein’s image also stresses the fact that words are never alone in communication; in the metaphorical image of a sentence as a group-picture, the gazes have a synthetic function, and their mutual encounters seems to produce a specific intertextual form of meaning. We can also interpret this simile in the autobiographical direction I have


mentioned before: it is quite natural to imagine that the ›gazes‹ of the sentence connect the reader with the author, with her look, her face and voice which meet ours (»It looks at us« writes Wittgenstein).

It is useful to note that in choosing the word »aspect« to describe the experience of seeing-as and aspect change, Wittgenstein seems to be aware that the etymological root of the word »aspect«, its Latin equivalent »aspectus«, has many related semantic traits, including the physical appearance of a person and especially her face with its expressive potential – which Augustine’s quotation in the PI’s incipit presents as »the natural language of all people«. Moreover, the semantic structure of the word »aspectus« entails the complementarity between objective and subjective dimensions – what linguists define as the enantiosemetic character of the word in the form of the diathesis of active-passive: *aspectus* is on the one hand the gaze, the act of seeing, and, on the other hand, the appearance of the object seen.³

By comparing a sentence with a group portrait, where the gazes are both directed at the other group members and at the readers, Wittgenstein implicitly evocates both the complementarity of subjective and objective elements and the bi-directionality of the gazes creating an intersubjective space which includes the readers. The paradigmatic space of this image is aesthetics, as the final question might confirm: »the experience of a group’s being significant« corresponds to the hermeneutic attitude typical of seeing-as, an essential practice of understanding the complex structure of the artistic work.⁴

Perceiving the intersubjective dimension in texts within a frame of physiognomic elements proves to be a necessary condition to get a perspicuous overview of language use: »A main source of our failure to understand is that we do not command a clear view of the use of our words. – Our grammar is lacking in this sort of perspicuity. A perspicuous representation produces just that understanding which consists in seeing connections.« Hence the importance of finding and inventing intermediate cases.⁵

³ For a comparison between Wittgenstein’s use of aspect and the meaning of »aspetto« by Dante and Vico in which we find a similar, more complex enantiosemetic structure, see Sara Fortuna, Wittgensteins Philosophie des Kippbilds. Aspektwechsel, Ethik, Sprache, Wien/Berlin 2012, 39–41.

⁴ In the first remarks of his work on philosophy of psychology, Wittgenstein writes that we need concepts such as seeing-as and aspect change when we are confronted with artistic works; see Wittgenstein, Bemerkungen über die Philosophie der Psychologie/Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology, Vol. 1, 1.

The image of a sentence as a group portrait could be one such intermediate case (like *Kippbilder* in general, given the multiplicity of perspectives they embody). Highlighting the physiognomic, intentional and intersubjective texture of language could help to overcome the lack of perspicuity, which depends on the main use of language in modern societies in which the functioning of language must be unambiguous, i.e., aspect-blind.

In the following section, I will apply the group portrait image to the authors of the first two quotations of the *PI*. I argue that the readers are invited to consider a peculiar group portrait, focusing on the intersubjective link connecting them. Wittgenstein invites us to see his work as a sort of collective autobiographical portrait in which he puts together different voices⁶ and faces and wants us to discover the connections that his games with quotations can activate. Against the myth of objectivity typical of scientific progress, Wittgenstein’s game would then consist in a radical and unconventional recovery of the intersubjective autobiographical relations – one which implies abandoning neutral attitudes in favor of the emergence of an intrinsically affective collective self.

2. Nestroy’s motto as a witty *Kippbild*

The opening motto of the *Philosophical Investigations* is a quotation from Austrian author Nestroy’s play *Der Schützling*: »Überhaupt hat der Fortschritt das an sich, dass er viel grösser ausschaut, als er wirklich ist.«⁷ In his article *Nestroy, Augustine and the Opening of the Philosophical Investigations*, David Stern argues that in order to understand the motto’s meaning, one must see it as a *Kippbild*, one of the multistable images Wittgenstein had devoted his attention to since the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*.⁸ In the case of Nestroy’s motto, both intertextual and external context are essential to interpret its ambi-

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guity correctly. Stern calls to mind Cavell’s claim that Wittgenstein’s work begins with the words of someone else and explores the meaning of this philosophical move which introduces at the beginning the two ‘external’ voices – that of Nestroy in the motto and that of Augustine in the long quotations from the Confessions that open the work. Stern considers two different hermeneutic approaches in Wittgenstein’s critical literature, which he calls the immanent and the genetic approach. Whereas for the immanent approach, every element external to the text must be neglected in the interpretation of the work, the genetic one claims that it is necessary to take into account a broad range of elements referring to the philosopher’s biography. Taking seriously the motto seems to imply for Stern to find a way between the two paradigms: looking for autobiographical clues about Wittgenstein’s appreciation of Nestroy’s work is seen as a condition to have access to the multiplicity of hidden meanings in the quotation. Analyzing five different translations of Nestroy’s quotations (from Malcolm, Baker and Hacker, Barker, Spiegelberg and von Wright) and the problems connected with each one, Stern proposes a further version which aims at reproducing the peculiar mood of the sentence in Nestroy’s pièce. The version »Anyway, the thing about progress is that it looks much greater than it really is« has, according to Stern, a more appropriate conversational character, with »anyway« capturing some semantic nuances of »überhaupt.«

The fact that Wittgenstein was able to quote the sentence by heart in a letter surely indicates the intimacy he felt with the »Viennese Shakespeare,« as the brilliant theater writer and actor Nestroy was called – an intimacy which also had a linguistic dimension, as Nestroy used a humorous regional German with which the philosopher was well acquainted. For Stern, adopting the genetic approach implies including this historical and biographical dimension in Wittgenstein’s gesture and understanding that he was inviting the readers to make sense of his motto in very diverse directions, because, as already mentioned, for Stern, understanding the motto means to interpret it as an ambiguous image. Approaching Nestroy’s motto in this way presupposes grasping the different contexts, which allow it to change aspect. Witze and jokes are successful when the interpreter is able to feel the semantic ambiguity imagining the different situations each meaning underlies. The motto about progress was the Witze of a famous satirist and as »the motto’s ambiguities might

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9 Ibid., 428.
10 Ibid., 426.
have appealed to Wittgenstein«¹¹ he wanted the readers to share his experience, also grasping the autobiographical aspects of it. In the case of Nestroy's play, Stern highlights the fact that the hero Gottfried Herb shows biographical affinities with Wittgenstein and his family: initially a primary school teacher, he subsequently made a fortune in the iron and steel technology as Ludwig's father did.¹² Financial success is then connected with the dimension of progress. In fact, in the passage which immediately precedes the sentence of the motto, Herb refers to progress as a newly discovered land with »a flourishing colonial system on the coast, the interior still wilderness, steppe, prairie.«¹³ The land that is not yet explored by the colonialist is his next object of desire in an endless process of appropriation. In this broader perspective, the subjective dimension and its narcissistic illusions remains relevant; in fact, as Herb stresses in the play, the matrix of all process is a sort of optical illusion in which the progress appears much bigger than it really is. The song that follows in Nestroy's pièce focuses even more on the subjective aspect of this illusion: »So, progress examined more closely, / Hasn't made the world much happier« (»Drum der Fortschritt hat beym Licht betracht't, / Die Welt nicht glücklicher gemacht't«).¹⁴

We can find Wittgenstein's agreement with this statement expressed in multiple ways in the course of his intellectual development, often reminding us that the crisis of the contemporary world is linked with the myth of progress. But, as a motto of a philosophical book, the meaning of the sentence must also include philosophy – both in general and in the specific declination Wittgenstein gave to it in the *PI*. Stern, following Malcolm, interprets the motto, among others, as an expression of modesty: Wittgenstein, who was never fully convinced of the value of his philosophical activity, would have been warning the readers not to overestimate the advance in philosophy accomplished in his book.¹⁵ And yet, even if this self-ironical element is very probably present in the motto about progress, it cannot be the only one. The motto must be related as well to Wittgenstein’s attitude towards philosophy conceived of as a progress, and to what his work makes of it. As we know, the progress accomplished by Western philosophy is one of the targets of the *PI*s critique. The

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¹¹ Ibid., 434.
¹² Ibid., 430.
¹³ Ibid.
philosophical view imposed a strong bias on the human form on
life, separating body and mind, material signs and meaning, and
producing a pervasive form of skepticism. The logocentric attitude
ended up being a trap, excluding from human experience dimen-
sions whose exponents philosophers condemned as worthless (i.e.,
the female and Jewish elements in Weininger’s Sex and Character).
In this perspective, according to Wittgenstein, the new original task
of philosophy is to proceed in the opposite direction, one which is
embodied in Augustine’s quotation. In this case, the Witz would be
that the truly authentic philosophical progress is a regression. With
this humorous intention, Wittgenstein gives an ancient philosopher
whom he highly admired the role of opening his work. And to make
things even clearer, he selects a quotation from his Confessions, in
which, in a somewhat mythical autobiographical scenario, the child
Augustine learns to speak. By putting in dialogue the motto and the
quotation from the Confessions, Wittgenstein is joking in the most
serious way: he wants the readers to grasp that the only possible
progress in philosophy corresponds to a regression (and wants them
to grasp it while having fun).

Whereas progress always has the problematic inclination to ove-
estimate itself, it is not so obvious to me if regression according to
Wittgenstein hides in itself a similar illusion: anyway, in proposing
primitive scenarios – first of all Augustine’s one with its naïve image
of ontogenetic language – Wittgenstein seems to adopt several Kipp-
bilder in which the threshold between the two aspects has to do with
the tension between progress and regression. Wittgenstein’s hidden
Witz, which emerges from the connection between the two quota-
tions, presupposes at least two different but related contexts: progress
in history and human appreciation of it on the one side, and on the
other one progress in philosophy and Wittgenstein’s contribution
to it.

One must note that the case of linguistic Kippbilder, of jokes, is not
identical to perceptual (visual) ambiguous images. What is at stake in
the former is not the physiological impossibility to see at the same
time the two aspects of the image, but rather the twofold, ambivalent
context at work. This is made very clear in the example Wittgenstein
proposes in the Remarks on Philosophy of Psychology: »I can no more see
the rabbit and the duck at the same time than I can mean the words
›Weiche, Wotan, weiche!‹ in their two meanings. – But that would
not be right; what is right is that it is not natural for us to pronounce
these words in order to tell Wotan he should depart, and in saying so
to tell him that we prefer our eggs soft-boiled. And yet it would be
possible to imagine such a use of words." In this »scenic« joke two situations give different meanings to the same sentence (one refers to a verse of Wagner’s opera Das Rheingold, the other one is the answer to the question asked by the singer playing Wotan: »Do you like your eggs soft or hard?«). Wittgenstein presents »Weiche, Wotan, weiche« as a linguistic Kippbild, in which the linguistic aspects of the sentence could be understood in »distributing« its different meanings: the first meaning of the sentence is that of Wagner’s opera, whose sentence is pronounced during the rehearsal, the second one is the answer to a trivial question the singer is asked (about the way he wants eggs to be cooked). Something similar happens with the quotations of the PI as Stern explains: »Both the Nestroy motto and the opening paragraphs are like those ambiguous drawings which at first sight could seem quite straightforward, yet on closer examination are open to a number of incompatible interpretations." And yet the »incompatible interpretations« in these cases are not mutually exclusive as in the duck–rabbit aspects and in similar ambiguous images. The Nestroy and Augustine group portrait produces a multiplicity of aspects which can and should be understood together. As the philosopher writes in the Preface of the PI, the readers are given ample space and freedom to complete in autonomy a landscape, and Wittgenstein wished to cooperate with them in drawing a dynamic, open work, never to be accomplished in a conclusive form. And yet in order to better understand the person beyond the work, it might be essential to recognize the partners Wittgenstein included in the dialogic frame of this work.

3. Aspektwechsel reading Weininger’s work

The miscellany Wittgenstein Reads Weininger sketches a complex and accurate frame of the deep relationship Wittgenstein had with Weininger’s works throughout his whole life, not only with the latter’s best-known work Sex and Character, but also with On Last Things and in particular with »Animal Psychology,« a chapter included in

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17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Stern, Nestroy, Augustin and the Opening of the Philosophical Investigations, 437.
that book. The fact that – as I would like to argue – Wittgenstein wanted Weininger to be part of the hidden autobiographical group portrait embedded in the *PI* – together with Nestroy and Augustine who were charged, so to say, to open up the game – seems to be confirmed by the remark about the ten authors who influenced him: »I think I have never invented a line of thinking but that it was always provided for me by someone else & I have done no more than passionately take it up for my work of clarification. That is how Boltzmann, Hertz, Schopenhauer, Frege, Russell, Kraus, Loos, Weininger, Spengler, Sraffa have influenced me.«

In their introduction *Reading Wittgenstein (on) Reading*, Stern and Szabados carefully analyze the quoted author list, observing that it seems to be arranged according to a chronological order: »The fact that Kraus, Loos and Weininger all had an influence on the *Tractatus*, which was composed during the First World War, suggests that their influence should be dated to the war years, or immediately before.« Although Wittgenstein probably first read Weininger’s work as a teenager (and according to a not completely verified anecdote, when he was fourteen, he attended the funeral of the Viennese writer who had committed suicide at 23) a serious philosophical engagement with Weininger’s work interestingly started at the same time in which many modernist writers and artists such as Gertrude Stein, the futurists Papini and Marinetti, Mina Loy and others avant-garde authors read and discussed together Weininger’s work, focusing on his concept of genius.

In his article »Wittgenstein and Weininger. Time, Life, World« Joachim Schulte provides important insights towards understanding the appreciation of modernist authors and artists (and of Wittgenstein, of course). Starting with an analysis of *Sex and Character*’s original subtitle »Eine prinzipielle Untersuchung,« Schulte suggests that choosing the adjective »prinzipiell«, whose meaning in this context

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20 David Stern/Béla Szabados (Hg.), *Wittgenstein Reads Weininger*, Cambridge 2004. Monk’s Wittgenstein biography highlights the central importance of Weininger for the philosopher; the title *The Duty of Genius* is Weiningerian, as the book motto makes explicit: »Logic and ethics are fundamentally the same, they are no more than duty to oneself« (Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein. The Duty of Genius*, London 1990).


23 For a precise reconstruction of this collective discussion of Weininger’s *Sex and Character* in Florence around 1910 see Laura Scruifatti, *Mina Loy’s Critical Modernism*, Gainesville 2019, chap. I.
was highly ambivalent, Weininger intended to tease the readers with a sort of *Witz*, which reveals the tone and the gesture of the whole work: »it provokes certain expectations, it frustrates these expectations, but at the same time manages to get across something unexpected. Exaggerating slightly, one might claim that the subtitle says ›This is a prejudiced, a dogmatic, book‹ and simultaneously conveys that the book is going to play with prejudices and dogmas.« This ironic, paradoxical aspect obviously explains both the modernists and Wittgenstein’s attraction for the book and situates Weininger in the same linguistic space as Nestroy’s motto.

However, Weininger’s importance for Wittgenstein’s philosophy is much broader, even pervasive, if one takes into account the rich intertextual evidence brought to light by the scholarly research on this issue; reading Weininger seems to provide essential keys both to the first and the second period of Wittgenstein’s reflection and contributes to explain the peculiar duality of continuity and radical transformation which characterizes Wittgenstein’s philosophy. In this sense, his invitation given in Cambridge to Moore to read *Sex and Character* should be interpreted as a suggestion of a way to better understand him. Moore’s perplexities about the book gave Wittgenstein the chance to explain that he was aware of how difficult it was to grasp the influence the book had on him. He tried to clarify how the book’s importance had to be understood: »I can quite imagine that you don’t admire Weininger very much what, with that beastly translation and the fact that W. must feel very foreign to you. It is true that he is […] great and fantastic. It isn’t necessary or rather not possible to agree with him, but the greatness lies in that with which we disagree. It is his enormous mistake, which is great. I.e. roughly speaking if you just add a »˜« to the whole book it says an important truth.«

What comprises the inversion Wittgenstein had in mind proposing to apply the sign of negation to Weininger’s work? Scholars agree that it cannot concern empirical objects, but rather involves a methodological change. One could also see it as a form of aspect change that Wittgenstein aimed at producing within Weininger’s metaphysical system. As Daniel Steuer argues in his essay *Uncanny Differences. Wittgenstein and Weininger as Doppelgänger*, Wittgenstein

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recognizes in Weininger’s coherent characterology a tradition of thought rooted in German eighteenth-century culture, with Goethe, Kant, Lichtenberg as its most important exponents.\(^{26}\) In Weininger’s system, human behavior is considered in its variability, but this is always expressed in a set of ‘platonic’ prototypes, and although they could never be found in individual characters, in their pure form, those fixed characters nevertheless present the range of possibilities every person has at her disposal. The opposed types of masculinity and femininity, and those complementary traits in the ethical dimension – genius and criminal, self-hatred and self-love – constituted what Steuer calls Weininger’s ‘hyperempirical ideal’. Wittgenstein connected it with a peculiar historically determined idea of a priori, defining it, similarly as in the letter to Moore, as ‘a great – that is, an important – error’; he also claims that without this invention by ‘the theoreticians of the past cultural period’ such a great error ‘would have been lost to the world.’\(^{27}\) On the one hand Weininger – like Spengler – works on ‘an empirical continuum,’ describing specific differences of individuals and collective phenomena in order to do justice to cultures which the Western monologic and arrogant look has been unable to see; on the other hand, Weininger’s solipsistic view and his hyperempirical ideal, deeply grounded in the Platonic tradition and in all the Western tradition he appropriated in his work, was probably for Wittgenstein the extreme and most coherent expression of the philosophical attitude Weininger authentically performed, until his suicide.

I think that Wittgenstein wants readers of the PI to have a clue that Weininger is part of the group portrait he sketches in his ‘album’; in fact, the forms of bewitchment for which Wittgenstein was trying to find a therapy were exemplarily embodied by Weininger’s Denkbewegungen. Against the claustrophobic idea of men as a microcosmos, projecting his characters on everything, Wittgenstein found it most important to show his Doppelgänger the way out of the trap that philosophy was for him. Wittgenstein’s critical detachment from Weininger is implicitly present in the unfolding of the variety of the form of life and, as David Stern suggests in his Weininger and Wittgenstein on ‘Animal Psychology’, a comparative analysis of the two


philosophers’ views on animals and specifically on dogs could be a perfect example of the distance Wittgenstein manages to attain from Weininger’s »animal psychology.« 28 In the metaphysical conception of the latter, human individuals bear peculiar analogies with animal species and have characterological and physiognomonic correspondences with them. In Weininger’s metaphysical dichotomy, which juxtaposes, on the one side, man, genius, self-hatred, morally committed, and, on the other side, woman, criminal, self-love, hedonistic, the dog embodies the character of the second pole. Stern reminds us that this projection of evil aspects on the dog is pathological in Weininger, as it shows the panic-like fear this author declares to feel for this animal, a phobia for which it has been easy to find psychoanalytic interpretations. 29 The presumed phenomenological evidence Weininger presents for his judgment about the dog is not only the consequence of a weird projection from a solipsistic perspective, immune to falsification, but is also, according to Wittgenstein, philosophically wrong, because it follows a top-down methodology, applying to dogs human traits (first of all morality) that they cannot have. To show this is one of the goals of the PI in which Wittgenstein – as Stern argues – introduces the example of the dog also as a response to and a critique of Weininger’s negative conception. 30

What is at stake here is a philosophical vindication of this animal, which had an important place in the history of philosophy (one just has to think of the ancient Greek cynic philosophers). For Wittgenstein, looking at the dog, at its primitive reactions and at the various set of analogies and differences between canine and human behavior, means to go backwards, to abandon the dualistic philosophic view and to start again from the beginning, from the expressive body, from actions, gestures, facial expressions. This regression makes visible again the background in which human linguistic activity is embedded. Wittgenstein’s intention – introduced, as we have seen, by Nestroy’s motto about progress – is to propose (anti-)philosophical therapies against the lack of perspicuity, against the blindness to the rich texture, the filigree patterns of our form of life. He considers this move the only way to overcome the leerlaufen of language, as this loss of meaning is the consequence of the distance which language progressively acquired from the symbolic frame manifested by gestural interactions and the entire physical world around verbal

29 Ibid., 175–178.
signs. In this sense, Wittgenstein invites us to make an inversion and to see grammatically complete sentences as a prolongation of elliptic utterances, which are perfectly complete and understandable, as their meaning is part of a hybrid symbolic frame. 31 When we are trapped in the linguistic, grammatical view, we are not able to see this, and we consider elliptic phrases as lacking some elements. But if we invert the perspective, we also notice that the performative dimension of language is much stronger when it is part of a primitive symbolic hybridity. 32

Austin was probably thinking of Wittgenstein’s ‘regressive analysis’ of linguistic activities and his view on elliptical sentences when he observed that one has to conceive of explicit performative verbs as the linguistic refinement of something that originally was mainly expressed with non-linguistic means: the performative verb »I promise,« for example, could have a performative ancestor such as the sentence »I will do it,« in which the commitment was not only expressed verbally, but through the gaze, the general bodily attitude, ritualized gestures or acts which were all essential elements of the performative speech act. The ethically relevant difference between the primitive and the refined explicit performative is the fact that the last one is much more permeable to the loss of meaning: I can say »I promise« mechanically, without really intending what I am saying, without any personal engagement, only because I know that pronouncing these words will have specific consequences in the behavior of the persons to whom I am promising something. 33 These uses are the privileged target of irony, which denounces the semantic loss of performatives. The ironist appears to be a sort of ventriloquist: she refers at the same time to the original sensible linguistic use and to its degeneration and semantic loss; she gives voice to both in many different declinations. That was – as Schulte claims – Weininger’s approach to prejudices and stereotypes: an ambivalent

31 Imagining several primitive languages, Wittgenstein poses many questions. He suggests inverting the common way to see the relationship between the elliptical sentence and the complete one: »But why should I not on the contrary have called the sentence ›Bring me a slab‹ a lengthening of the sentence ›Slab‹?« (Wittgenstein, Philosophische Untersuchungen/Philosophical Investigations, I, § 19).


33 Austin, How to Do Things with Words; using Austin’s distinction between explicit (fully evolved) and implicit (more primitive) performative utterance, Russo Cardona proposes the idea that the main target of irony is the explicit performative utterance, thus identifying the antiperformative character of ironic speech; see Tommaso Russo Cardona, Le peripezie dell’ironia. Sull’arte del rovesciamento discorsivo, Milano 2017, 25.
humorous engagement with something he was both detached from and trapped in without any hope of an adequate way out. The late work of Wittgenstein provides this way out, and does it in including Weininger’s voice in the *PI* as one of his own most powerful temptations, juxtaposing him with other voices and creating a beneficial tension.\(^{34}\)

In the group portrait sketched in the *PI*, we can find many different figures, not only the well-known authors Wittgenstein felt to have been most influenced by. We do not have only philosophers and not only classical writers belonging to the universal literary canon, as the beloved Russian novelists: among the many voices, on the side of the ›therapeutic‹ authors allowing him to get out the mythical bewitchment of language, there is an unknown American detective story writer: Norbert Davis.

### 4. Detective story as philosophical nurture: Norbert Davis’s ironic gaze in *The Mouse in the Mountain*

In the correspondence between Wittgenstein and his US-American friend and former student Malcolm, the so-called hard-boiled stories are much more present than philosophical texts. Over many years, Malcolm sent the issues of an American detective magazine to Wittgenstein, who never missed a chance to tell his friend how important this reading material was for him: »I’m looking forward very much to the mental nourishing you’ve promised to me. If I read your mags, I often wonder how anyone can read ›Mind‹ with all its impotence & bankruptcy when they could read Street & Smyth mags. Well, everyone to his taste.«\(^{35}\) When he received them, he expressed his warm gratitude to Malcolm: »Dear Malcolm, Thanks for the detective mags! They are rich in mental vitamins & calories. It was nice getting them from you and also your Xmas card!«\(^{36}\) The sarcastic comparisons between *Mind* and American detective stories are not made by chance: another remark indicates, sketching a witty geopolitical frame, that the reading of detective stories is essential for Wittgenstein’s philosophical activity: »Dear Norman,

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\(^{35}\) The letter is dated 30.10.45, see Malcolm, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 32f.100; a similar reference to ›Mind‹ is present in another letter (15.3.48), see ibid., 107.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 32f.100.
You’re terrific! Thanks a lot for the mags. [...] The one way in which the ending of the Lent-Lease really hits me is by producing a shortage of detective mags in this country. I can only hope Lord Keynes will make this quite clear in Washington. For I say: if the U.S.A. won’t give us detective mags we can’t give them philosophy, & so America will be the loser in the end. See?« It is interesting to note that the precious nourishment the philosopher enthusiastically wrote about to Malcolm was a genre of popular culture, or rather a sub-genre of it; Wittgenstein cordially disliked the British tradition of the detective story and directed his exclusive preference to the American one, pioneered by authors such as Raymond Chandler, whose investigative heroes’ rough character gained the genre the denomination of ›hard-boiled‹ story. In Wittgenstein’s taste for this popular literary production is also reflected his regressive attitude and his attention to ordinary life observed through the lenses of corrosive irony. One could say that if the ›classical‹ British detective story with its rational attitude and its strict rules is a perfect example of the modern form of life characterized by progress, the American hard-boiled story represents a sharp critique of that social model, sarcastically denouncing its deep crisis and thereby producing an aspect change that is able to break free from the mythical bewitchment about progress. Wittgenstein found a detective novel which with narrative tools did a similar job as his last philosophical research, which he called Untersuchungen probably in reference to detective inquiries. This book was so important for him that he mentions it in two letters to Malcolm. He calls it Rendezvous with Fear, which was the title of the British edition, whereas the American original title, which Wittgenstein never mentioned, was the more charming The Mouse in the Mountain:

»A couple of years ago I read with pleasure a detective story called ›Rendezvous with fear‹ by a man Norbert Davis. I enjoyed it so much that I gave it not only to Smythies but also to Moore to read & both shared my high opinion of it. For I’ve read hundreds of stories that amused me & that I liked reading, I think I’ve only read two perhaps that I’d call good stuff, & Davis’s is one of them. Some weeks ago I found it again by a queer coincidence in a village in Ireland [...]«. Now I’d like to ask at a bookshop

37 Ibid., 32f.97.
38 Wittgenstein compares a detective story by British writer Dorothy Sayers he found so bad »that it depressed me« to the American magazines which Malcolm sent him: »Then when I opened one of your mags it was like getting out of a stuffy room into the fresh air« (Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein, 109).
if Norbert Davis has written other books, & what kind. (He is an American). It may sound crazy, but when I recently re-read the story, I liked it again so much that I thought I’d really like to write to the author & thank him. If this is nuts don’t be surprised, for so am I."\(^{39}\)

Norbert Davis was not at all famous and, in his Memoir, Malcolm reported he was unable to find any information about him.\(^{40}\) The story of the missed encounter between Wittgenstein and Davis had a tragic epilogue the philosopher probably never knew. In the same period in which Wittgenstein arrived in the USA at the end of July 1949 to visit his friend Malcolm, Norbert Davis committed suicide at the age of forty without leaving any explanation for his act. He killed himself in a weird way, transforming a bathroom into a gas chamber.\(^{41}\) Several years ago, this striking biographical coincidence strengthened my motivation to read Davis’s novel. I did and then wrote a book presenting textual evidence of its relevance for Wittgenstein’s late-life philosophical research.\(^{42}\) There are indeed many reasons that can explain why this author definitely has his place in the PI’s group portrait whose members’ gazes intermingle to create a significant picture.

Here, I can just summarize some of the most important points that make Davis’s novel so inspiring for Wittgenstein. First of all, the book is extraordinarily witty – humor is the pervasive mood of the text.\(^{43}\) Another important element is the focus on differences, surely useful to the philosopher in a period in which, as Ray Monk reminds us in his Wittgenstein biography, his motto was »I’ll teach you differences.« The Mouse in the Mountain tells the story of a group of American tourists in Mexico, visiting by bus an ancient and picturesque village. A pair of detectives joins the tour as well: the short, fat, baby-faced Doan and his gigantic dog Carstairs. Davis passionately and sarcastically portrays the individuality of each figure, men, women and children, hilariously showing that nobody is immune

\(^{39}\) Ibid.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.

\(^{41}\) The best biographical report about Norbert Davis I was able to find is by John L. Apostolou: Norbert Davis. Profile of a Pulp Writer (originally published in: The Armchair Detective 15 [1982], online: https://blackmaskmagazine.com/blog/norbert-davis-profile-of-a-pulp-writer [15.07.2021]).

\(^{42}\) Sara Fortuna, Il giallo di Wittgenstein. Etica e linguaggio tra filosofia e detective story, Milano 2009.

\(^{43}\) This is also Monk’s opinion about Wittgenstein’s favorite detective story: »The answer [about W’s high appreciation, SF] perhaps lies in the humour of the novel, which is in fact its most striking feature« (Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein, 529).
to self-deception, everyone in a different way: the commitment to being sexy and arousing erotic desire in men (Janet Martin, the romantic and cultivated co-protagonist), the presumed right to take vengeance when one is the victim of a fraud (the masculine Amanda Tracy, the murderer), the obsession of making money at any cost (the unprincipled millionaire Patricia Van Osdel), the »double-speech,« challenging the contradiction principle and hilariously parodying the English formal language expressing courtesy (the bus chauffeur Bartholomew). Both female and male types in the novel are so diverse that any attempt to apply to them a fixed characterology dissolves in the dynamics of their conflictual interactions. What Wittgenstein was likely to appreciate as well was Davis’s critique of his country, the USA. He constantly demystified its pretense of being a real democracy and its sense of cultural superiority. See, for example:

»Now, Greg,« Patricia Van Osdel chided. »This is the democratic way, you see. This is the way we do things in America. We don’t have any rigid class distinction.«

»It stinks,« said Greg. »I mean the bus and Mexico and the United States and your democracy. I tell you that quite frankly because it’s true.«

Davis’s ironic look obviously also includes Mexico and especially the ridiculous sense of superiority of the other male co-protagonist, Captain Emilio Perona, who constantly expresses his criticism of US-American arrogance while ignoring the arrogance of his own country and the colonial history connected to it. Against this pessimistic anthropological background, the canine partner of the detective Doan appears to be a splendid vindication of Weininger’s unjust treatment of dogs. Davis introduces him in the story by his typical expressive posture: »Carstairs yawned in an elaborately bored way. Carstairs was a fawn-colored Great Dane. Standing on four legs, his back came up to Doan’s chest. He never did tricks. He considered them beneath him. But had he ever done one that involved standing on his hind feet, his head would have hit a level far above Doan’s. Carstairs was so big he could hardly be called a dog. He was a sort of new species.« Actually it is not his size that makes Carstairs a new species, but the original experiment Davis accomplished by inventing him; Wittgenstein would have said that he is a sort of intermediary member between humans and dogs: he does not have verbal language but fully understands it; he has higher moral

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standards than men, but manifests his ethical superiority with the usual means of dogs (growling, snarling, barking, moaning, groaning, jaws snapping, etc.).

From the point of view of the detective genre, Davis’s novel seems to make fun of its rules rather than applying them. Wittgenstein probably considered this element as a sort of aspect change, in which the usual detective story plot shifts to the background and the reader is confronted with a myriad of manifestations of the human form of life, which the Great Dane Carstairs considers with snobbish contempt. For this reason, one can also say that Davis’s book is in many respects an intermediary member: Davis focuses more on the descriptions of the background and on its hidden affective tonality than on the ‚action‘, and one is reminded of Wittgenstein’s awareness of the difficulty of perceiving the background within human life, as it »is not monochrome, but we might picture it as a very complicated filigree pattern which, to be sure, we can’t copy, but which we can recognize from the general impression it makes.« 46 In his precise and dynamic images, Davis includes in a colorful continuum humans, animals, objects and places, putting in the foreground the primitive reactions each living being shares with all others: »The inhabitants of Los Altos shook the mothballs out of their serapes, mantillas, rebozas and similar bric-a-brac and prepared to look colorful at the drop of a sombrero. They gathered in the marketplace with their pigs and chickens and burros and dogs and children, and slept, argued, bellowed, squealed, cackled or urinated on the age-old pavement according to their various natural urges.« 47

Aggression and violence against others are not judged by moral criteria but presented first as natural impulse, deeply embedded in animal life, as this vivid scenario clearly conveys: »The butcher had been interrupted in the process of carving up a skinny cow with the aid of three cats and one million flies. He opened his mouth to yell, but he didn’t, because García hit him on the top of the head with the revolver and knocked him flat. The cats went in three different directions, and the flies droned up in an angry swarm and the settled back on the beef and the butcher, indiscriminately.« 48

47 Davis, The Mouse in the Mountain, 25.
48 Ibid., 27.
Could Wittgenstein have written to Norbert Davis to thank him, he probably would have told him that *The Mouse in the Mountain* had gained a place in his philosophical works and that “in the darkness of this time,” mentioned in the »Preface« of the *PI*, he counted on him – together with a few friends spread all over the world – to understand his thought.

5. Narrative therapies against mythical bewitchment: Tolstoy’s *Hadji Murat* and the war

Wittgenstein’s approach to literature never contains a critical intention, but rather is inspired by an ethical attitude which does not engage only Wittgenstein and his authors, but is also directed at the readers who are asked to solve textual riddles, establishing connections and activating seeing-as and aspect change to grasp jokes and paradoxes. Another use Wittgenstein often makes of literature is therapeutic and has similar characteristics: he suggests to friends to read a story in order to resolve personal problems. Even in these cases, ample room is left to personal interpretations. The reader is supposed to confront the text actively and to understand why, according to Wittgenstein, he could find the solution for his problem in it. Reaching the goal also meant to understand how this worked for Wittgenstein as he would have considered it arrogant to propose any therapy that had not proved to be useful for himself first.

I will present a case of novel-therapy to help overcome the difficulty of experiencing war, of facing it, of seeing it correctly when one is engaged in it. I want to preface it by talking about the way Wittgenstein experienced it as a voluntarily enlisted officer in the First World War. Monk’s biographical reconstruction and all the scholarly works about this issue agree that Wittgenstein confronts the war through the lenses of Weininger’s theoretical and ethical framework as an opportunity to live authentically while facing death. Wittgenstein’s approach to war also seems to include the possibility of identifying in a common duty as a German person, and he spoke about a German and an English race. His patriotism, however, was not nationalistic in the sense that he believed in the superiority of the Germans; on the contrary, he was convinced that England would quickly win the war. As Luigi Perissinotto observed, in all of Wittgenstein’s writings concerning the war, the concrete enemies against whom he fought are never present. Wittgenstein is mainly occupied with himself and his duty. He never perceived the enemy
and was just deeply disappointed by his fellow soldiers who did not share his ideal of a high duty to be accomplished in war and – he claims in his letters – hated him because he voluntarily enlisted.\(^49\) Perissinotto argues that Wittgenstein’s view, which interpreted the war as conflict between only two fronts, the German and the English, could be explained by the opposition between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, which also makes clear why he was convinced that England would win the war: the scientific, technological, pragmatic mentality embodied by English civilization was already the winner and set the best conditions to prevail in war as well.\(^50\) I think that reflecting retrospectively about his way of experiencing the war, Wittgenstein might have perceived his blind spot and the bias of a specific ideology with political implications as something which manipulated him and diverted his attention from important aspects of war as a complex form of life. Against Weininger’s fatalistic ethics, his idea of the immutability of character and his trust in the irreversibility of time, Wittgenstein arrived to believe the opposite: given a similar situation, in a successive period, a person can radically change his behavior.\(^51\) Considering the case of war, he possibly accepted the fact that helping others not to make the same mistakes he did might give himself a new ethical chance. That he did not miss this chance seemed to be witnessed by Malcolm, who in his *Memoir* reported a dramatic confrontation between him and Wittgenstein:

»One time when we were walking along the river we saw a news-vendor’s sign which announced that the German government accused the British government of instigating a recent attempt to assassinate Hitler with a bomb. That was in the autumn of 1939. Wittgenstein said of the German claim: «It would not surprise me at all if it were true». I retorted that I could not believe that the top people in the British government would do such a thing. I meant that the British were too civilized and decent to attempt anything so underhand; and I added that such


\(^{50}\) Perissinotto, Il momento migliore in cui lavorare, ora, è mentre pelo le patate, 117–118.

\(^{51}\) »It is not unheard of that someone’s character may be influenced by the external world (Weininger). For that only means, as we know from experience, that people change with circumstances.« (Wittgenstein, Culture and Value, 95e.) Steuer connected this aspect with »the dissolution of tragedy« in Wittgenstein’s detaching from Weininger (see Steuer, Uncanny Differences, 154).
an act was incompatible with the British »national character«. My remark made Wittgenstein extremely angry. He considered it to be a great stupidity and also an indication that I was not learning anything from the philosophical training he was trying to give me.52

I believe that Wittgenstein’s vehement reaction has much to do with his own experience with nationalism and war. It is interesting to note that, although his late philosophy never touched on these issues directly, he was convinced that the main goal of his philosophical teaching was to allow persons to think correctly about these disturbing albeit essential matters. In coming back to that incident, several years after, Wittgenstein reminded Malcolm of his remark »about »national character« that shocked me by its primitiveness.« 53 And he continues: »I then thought: what is the use of studying philosophy if all that it does for you is to enable you to talk with some plausibility about some abstruse questions of logic, etc., & if it does not improve your thinking about the important questions of everyday life, if it does not make you more conscious than… any journalist in the use of DANGEROUS phrases such people use for their own ends.« 54 In his explication, Wittgenstein claims that the expression »national character« is dangerous because it is mostly used in political propaganda. He became aware that it can never be »innocent«; when Malcolm employs it in a naïve way, this means that he has been manipulated by an ideology which he has not analyzed enough. Another paradigmatic example of Wittgenstein helping Malcolm in his ethical troubles concerns war. Malcolm, an officer on a military boat during the Second World War, wrote to Wittgenstein complaining that he found war boring and got the following answer and advice:

»I want to say something about the war being a ›boredom‹. If a boy said that school was an intensive boredom one might answer him that, if he only could get himself to learn what can really be learned there, he would not find it so boring. Now forgive me for saying that I can’t help believing that an enormous lot can be learned about human beings in this war – if you can keep your eyes open. And the better you are at thinking the more you’ll get out of what you see. For thinking is digesting. If I’m writing in a preaching tone I’m just an ass! But the fact remains that if you’re bored a lot it means that your mental digestion isn’t not what it

52 Malcolm, Ludwig Wittgenstein, 30.
53 Ibid., 93.
54 Ibid.
should be. I think a good remedy for this is something opening your eyes wider. Sometimes a book helps a little, e.g. T’s ›Hadshi Murat‹ wouldn’t be bad.\textsuperscript{55} Hadji Murat is not among Tolstoy’s best-known novels. And yet the Russian writer worked hard on the novel devoted to the eponymous Chechen warrior, producing notes for thousands of pages for a book which does not reach two hundred. Wittgenstein probably read the novel before the beginning of the First World War.\textsuperscript{56} However, one can suppose that Tolstoy’s firm condemnation of war present in the book had a slower and later influence on him, as the young Wittgenstein was still affected by some aspects of the myth of war and expected to become a better person by engaging himself in heroic war actions. Malcolm seems not to share young Wittgenstein’s mythical bewitchment about war, but boredom seems to his former professor a problematic ethical posture as well. What did he want Malcolm to find in Tolstoy’s book in order to correct it? In their correspondence, there is no mention about Malcolm’s reading and commentary, so we do not know anything about his reaction to Tolstoy’s book and are left alone to confront it and figure out what it was.

For those reasons what I am proposing here is just the product of speculation, but I think that three points in the story are good candidates for the therapeutic effect Wittgenstein expected for his former student. The first one concerns the Chechen leader, his noble nature and heroic and desperate resistance. As an officer far from war, employed on a boat, in a secure position, Malcolm could regain a mythical perspective about war by enjoying the epic deeds of the great Chechen warrior, similar to the ancient ones in Homer’s \textit{Iliad}. War as a modern, ›progressive‹ form of life has lost those features not only because of the technological, highly destructive potentials of the Second World War, but also and above all from an ethical point of view. Concerning this point Wittgenstein might have been sensitive to the dialectics of progress-regression. War in primitive society seems to be driven by passions and not by rationality: the Greek and Trojan princes bravely fought in the first line, to their last breath, whereas the Russian noble society presented by Tolstoy’s sharp gaze preserved itself and sent the peasants to die in the war camps. The second relevant point consists in Tolstoy’s political condemnation of

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 95.
the Russian ethical abyss embodied by Tsar Nicholas. Presenting the tsar’s disastrous and contradictory tactical decision-making during the war, Tolstoy comments: »The blatant, unceasing flattery of those around him had so far detached him from reality that he was no longer aware of his own inconsistency and ceased to relate his words and action to reality, logic or plain common sense, fully convinced that all his decisions, however senseless, unjust and inconsistent they were in fact, became sensible, just and consistent simply by virtue of having been made by him.«\textsuperscript{57} Later on, the writer offers a concrete example of the tsar’s attitude when asked to decide a penalty for a minor crime committed by a Polish student:

»Warrants the death penalty. But in Russia, thank God, there is no capital punishment. And it is not for me to introduce it. Let him run the gauntlet twelve times through one thousand men. […] Nicholas knew that twelve thousand lashes meant not only certain, painful death, it was also a piece of excessive cruelty, since five thousand lashes would suffice to kill even the strongest man. But he liked to be implacably cruel – as he liked to reflect that there was no capital punishment in Russia.«\textsuperscript{58}

The blatant lies of Nicholas I, who pretends to be both dictatorially inflexible and democratic are made possible by the cynical and flattering support of his court. After describing the death of a peasant in battle, Tolstoy introduces one of the members of Russian high society: »Prince Mikhail Vorontsov, brought up in England as son of the Russian ambassador, was a man of rare European education for a high Russian official of that time; he was ambitious, gentle and kindly towards his subordinates, and a subtle courtier in dealing with his superiors. He had no conception of life without authority and submission.«\textsuperscript{59} The reference to the European manner implicitly entails Tolstoy’s identification of corruptive progress with western values, an identification which Wittgenstein shared.

The last point of the novel Wittgenstein might have brought to Malcolm’s attention concerns the female position towards war as a male form of life. This element is expressed in the novel by a young woman, Marya Dmitrievna. She is a cook in a war camp, and when Murat spends some days there, she develops a genuine admiration for him, and they become friends. When Murat is killed after a long

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 377.
and desperate resistance, the men who captured him cut off his head and bring it from camp to camp as a sign of victory. As they arrive at Marya’s camp and show the Chechen leader’s head, the woman is deeply hurt and expresses her feelings: »You are just a lot of butchers. You make me sick. Butchers, that’s what you are.« said Butler, not knowing what to say. »That’s war.« »War!« cried Marya Dmitrievna, »What’s war? You are butchers, and that’s all there is to it. A dead body should be decently buried, and they make mock of it. Butchers, that’s what you are!«

Marya Dmitrievna’s words manifest a primitive form of religiosity Wittgenstein strongly appreciated: another literary text he proposed for another novel-therapy was a novella by Swiss author Gottfried Keller, Das verlorene Lachen, in which a couple of simple women, mother and daughter, exhibit a natural religiosity in which gestures and behavior are much more important than words. Maria’s anger addresses a serious infraction to a spontaneous pietas towards a dead body, one which imposes humans to give it to the earth as to a mother in whose womb it can rest.

Could Wittgenstein’s acknowledgment of the literary truth of Tolstoy’s portrait of a woman be taken as another indirect inversion of Weininger’s conception of woman in Sex and Character and of his misogynistic endorsements? This question is difficult to answer, and would deserve another contribution exploring further connections. Here, one could say that, in the constellation of progress-regression sketched in Wittgenstein’s philosophical project, Tolstoy’s and Keller’s female ethical models provide an alternative mythology to Weininger’s negative view on women. The emerging twofold image of woman could help to practice a peculiar form of seeing-as within the mythological texture of language. Becoming able to reconstruct collective myths, concerning male and female figures, and recognizing ourselves in several aspects of the image could be,

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60 Ibid., 455.
61 It could be worth exploring the influence that Bachofen’s theory of matriarchy and its appropriation by the Munich circle of the Kosmiker had on Weininger and indirectly on Wittgenstein.
according to Wittgenstein, a good aspectual exercise to acquire enough distance to our mythical identifications: aspect change entails at the threshold a precious moment of void.

– Prof. Dr. Sara Fortuna teaches philosophy of language and aesthetics at the Guglielmo Marconi University of Rome. Together with Prof. Dr. Tommaso Valentini and Prof. Dr. Andrea Gentile she's co-founder and co-director of Areté. International Journal of Philosophy, Human & Social Sciences (arete.unimarconi.it). Her research interests include plurilingualism, political antagonism and democratic educational systems, origin of language, feminist philosophies, Vico, and Wittgenstein.