

Sub Specie Aeternitatis

An Actualization of Wittgenstein on Ethics and Aesthetics

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ABSTRACT This article will present an interpretation of Wittgenstein's understanding of the relationship between ethics and aesthetics. In extension, it will inform recent discussions regarding a special kind of *nonsensicality*, which forms a central part of ethical and aesthetical expressions. Instead of identity between ethics and aesthetics, we should understand the relationship in terms of *interdependence*. Both attitudes provide a view *sub specie aeternitatis* and thus permit a view of the world as a whole. Employing the vocabulary of Charles Taylor and Harry Frankfurt, it must be remembered that rather than a neutral view from nowhere, such wholeness arises out of strong evaluations that are made against the backdrop of a constitutive framework of intelligibility. At this point, the epistemic gain of actualizing Wittgenstein will reveal itself: it will put us in a position where it is possible to differentiate between ethical and aesthetical forms of identification that Taylor and Frankfurt neglect. However, in order to actualize Wittgenstein's ideas, it is necessary to argue that *Tractatus* should not be understood in a Kantian fashion as suggested by Tilghman for instance.

KEYWORDS Wittgenstein, sub specie aeternitatis, ethics, aesthetics, identification

In his famous sentence, "Ethics and Aesthetics are one and the same,"¹ Wittgenstein emphasizes the intrinsic connection between two fields of study, to which he was particularly devoted. He points to his profound fascination of aesthetical questions: "I may find scientific questions interesting, but they never really grip me. Only conceptual and aesthetical questions do that."² On the other hand, although the reception of his early work was regarded as a foundation for logical positivism,³ Wittgenstein has given ethics as a central theme of the treatise in diary recordings and letters written parallel to the treatise.⁴ In a letter to the editor of *Der Brenner*, Ludwig von Ficker, Wittgenstein notes:

My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one. My book draws limits to the sphere of the ethical from the inside as it were, and I am convinced that this is the ONLY rigorous way of drawing those limits.⁵

Other sources, such as Paul Engelmann, confirm that Wittgenstein emphasized the ethical dimension of his book and considered this its fundamental point.⁶ The notion of *sub specie aeternitatis* is central to understanding his struggle to identify something he could classify as ethically

good. In *Tractatus* he says, “[t]o view the world sub specie aeternitatis is to view it as a whole – a limited whole.”⁷ In a later remark from the *Notebooks* dealing with this subject, Wittgenstein emphasizes the ethical importance: “... the good life is the world seen sub specie aeternitatis.”⁸

In *Tractatus*, ethics and aesthetics – these two apparently central concerns in Wittgenstein’s thought – are brought together in a rather short bracketed remark:

It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words.

Ethics is transcendental. (Ethics and Aesthetics are one and the same.)⁹

Even though Wittgenstein emphasized aesthetics and ethics, it seems that his thoughts on these subjects received comparatively modest attention in subsequent Wittgenstein research. To a certain degree this has to do with the fact that Wittgenstein’s remarks about this subject are exceedingly brief, fragmented and sometimes enigmatic. This also makes any attempt at extracting a theory of aesthetics or ethics from these sporadic remarks rather challenging and perhaps even problematic. Additionally, the assumption of a faultless unified aesthetics or ethics seems problematic and in many ways outdated; so why the inconvenience of engaging in this problematic subject? The motivation for working with these considerations lies in the potential for informing more recent discussions. This is why the aim of this article will be to shed light on his views regarding the unity of ethics and aesthetics and to clarify the role of aesthetics in an ethical orientation.

In the initial presentation I will examine the possibility of talking about ethics and aesthetics within *Tractatus*; and proceed by elucidating the posited oneness of ethics, aesthetics and the common perspective of the whole (sub specie aeternitatis) that this provides us with (I).¹⁰ Rather than emphasizing oneness, I will elaborate on internal differences of perspectives in the second part, which makes clear the relationship between ethics and aesthetics and the ethical role of aesthetics (II). In conclusion, I will spell out the genuine merits and the actuality of Wittgenstein’s account. I will attempt to show that *Wittgenstein’s account does not inscribe itself in the Kantian or Nietzschean discourse, but establishes a middle path between these two views* (III).

The elucidation of this matter will entail going beyond the limits of *Tractatus* and take into consideration additional sources such as the *Notebooks* (1914–1916) and the more long-winded thoughts from ‘Lecture on Aesthetics’, ‘Lecture on Ethics’ and *On Certainty*.¹¹

I. The importance of nonsense

At first sight it may seem somewhat odd to discuss these subjects, especially with the opening remarks of the *Tractatus* in mind. Wittgenstein states that the whole argument of the book could be summed up as follows: “What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.”¹² Since ethical and aesthetical statements are not logically connected to facts in the world they clearly belong to these spheres of silence. So how can Wittgenstein emphasize the ethical impetus of his work? After all, as Russell notes, “Mr Wittgenstein manages to say a good deal about what cannot be said.”¹³ What sense does it make to clarify their relationship when they exceed the limits of propositional language such that *nothing* can be said about them?

There is a tradition for what one could call the *therapeutic* interpretation of what Wittgenstein calls nonsense. There is the *resolute* way of doing this (defended by C. Diamond and J. Conant),¹⁴ which takes nonsense to mean nothing but plain nonsense, but one that engages us – one that shows us the limits of sense and cures us from our need for metaphysics.¹⁵ Also, in P. M. S. Hacker’s far less radical and in many ways different interpretation, we find the idea of nonsense as something with a therapeutic potential.¹⁶ What I am suggesting is also a *therapeutic* reading, but a reading that approaches the issue differently than these authors. I suggest that we understand the issue of nonsense through his late work, especially *On Certainty*. Although there are major differences between Wittgenstein’s early and later thoughts, I think there are good reasons for taking up such an approach. Firstly, there are interesting parallels between the way in which he addresses the *scaffolding of our thoughts* in *On Certainty* and the idea of the *scaffolding of the world* found in *Tractatus* 6.124. In *On Certainty*, this scaffolding is the non-propositional basis of thought, which – construed as propositions – is deemed to be nonsensical. Such scaffolding does not have a contrast and is falsifiable.¹⁷ Also, as G. E. Moore explained, we cannot imagine it not being true, wherefore it can be said to have “no sense.”¹⁸ In this regard, Tractarian sentences elucidate the conditions of sense, describe the *scaffolding of the world* and must therefore remain nonsensical. Writing, thinking or understanding propositions about this basic level of being must always already presuppose the *scaffolding*, the fundamental framework of the world, within which observations regarding entities can intelligibly be stated, which it aims to explain.

It is on such grounds that Wittgenstein maintains that ethics and aesthetics have been misunderstood throughout the history of western

philosophical thought.¹⁹ The pictorial form of language depicts and presents the structure of the world in its form, representing the configuration of things by being connected to the thing through “feelers.”²⁰ This is exactly what ethical and aesthetical value statements lack; the absence of referents in the world makes them stand outside the realm of what I might call propositionality.²¹ They cannot generate truth or falsehood, since truth or falsehood would only emerge between the world and its picture.²² So for Wittgenstein, the philosophical misapprehension of ethics and aesthetics derives from such a *referentiality-mistake*. The construction of meaning through referentiality is not applicable to these realms, since they lie outside of the space of referential language.

This begs a somewhat provocative question: why then engage in dealing ethical and aesthetical stands, which Wittgenstein clearly does? Here, I think the key term is again nonsense. Nonsense is, as we have seen, not necessarily a pejorative term. As Wittgenstein says in *Culture and Value*, “... don’t for heaven’s sake, be afraid of talking nonsense! But you must pay attention to your nonsense.”²³ Curiously, for Wittgenstein, men have attempted an intentional transgression of linguistic boundaries to reflect on the meaning of life and values. This is an “... absolutely hopeless ...” attempt, “... running against the walls of our cage ...”²⁴ This attempt is a document of a tendency in the human mind: “My whole tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to turn against the boundaries of language.”²⁵ It is a manifestation of a tendency, which Wittgenstein “... personally cannot help respecting ...”²⁶ as an essential part of being human. Even though ethical and aesthetical value cannot be expressed, it “shows itself” through language, exceeding propositional sentences.²⁷ So this does not mean that the attempt to express what cannot be said must be abandoned.²⁸ The showing of ethical and aesthetical value depends on this and on the way we attempt the transgression.²⁹ In this optic, nonsensicality is not a deficit, but the ‘very essence’ of ethical and aesthetical expressions. Despite logical problems with the intellectual justification of such attempts, they seek out something valuable, which may show itself.³⁰ This sheds light on why Wittgenstein stated that what shows itself is the most important question for philosophy³¹ and on the concluding remarks of *Tractatus*, where Wittgenstein declares that “...anyone who understands me eventually recognizes [the propositions of the *Tractatus*] as nonsense.”³²

Interdependence, not identity

Having established aesthetics and ethics as parts of our constitutive frameworks that allow us to understand the world, we must now clarify the internal relationship between them. At first sight, Wittgenstein seems to maintain the identity of these nonsensical expressions, which sounds rather implausible, since it assumes a perfect unity of different realms and the homogeneity of both fields by themselves. Approaching the phenomena of modern art through claims of unity between the Good and the Beautiful – an enduring theme in the history of western Philosophy – would seem hopelessly old-fashioned. I think there is a solid basis in Wittgenstein to do away with this strong notion of oneness or identity and to understand it in terms of *interdependence*.

The fact that Wittgenstein's ambiguous dictum has often been interpreted as stating an ontological identity leads us back to two factors. One is the imprecise translation of Wittgenstein's dictum *Ethik und Ästhetik sind Eins* to *Ethics and Aesthetics are one and the same*.³³ Another is that Wittgenstein never specifies what he means by the predicate noun *one*. In his later *Lecture on Ethics*,³⁴ he highlights some particular differences between ethics and aesthetics. Although he somewhat traditionally states that ethics is the "...enquiry into the meaning of life, or onto what makes life worth living, or onto the right way of living,"³⁵ Wittgenstein defines his conception of ethics in a wider sense – a sense which includes "... what I believe to be the most essential part of what is generally called Aesthetics."³⁶ Considering these passages, it seems clear that the dictum, far from claiming a complete identity of both realms, only signifies some kind of unity and *interdependence*. Most importantly, the interdependence means that the two realms only can be considered individually in their complex unity.³⁷

The world as a whole – sub specie aeternitatis

After emphasizing mutual dependence, it is in its place to say more about the ways in which ethical and aesthetical perspectives provide us with a view of the world as a whole. Light may be cast on this issue by examining the treatment of this subject in the *Notebooks*. In a central passage, Wittgenstein clarifies the connection using the expression *sub specie aeternitatis* as taken from Spinoza's ethics.

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 connection 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 that they have the whole world as background. Is this it perhaps – in this view the object is seen together with space and time instead of in space and time?

Each thing modifies the whole logical world, the whole of logical space, so to speak.

(The thought forces itself upon one): The thing seen *sub specie aeternitatis* is the thing seen together with the whole of logical space.³⁸

So, what is common to both attitudes is that they provide a view *sub specie aeternitatis*³⁹ or from the standpoint of eternity, which allows viewing the world as a whole. To see an entity *sub specie aeternitatis* is to see it as a whole, together with the “logical space” that enables it to be seen. While the usual, empirical perspective of humans – due to a subjective position in the midst of things (within the world) – never attains an overview, the view *sub specie aeternitatis* provides the *outside* position needed for aesthetical and ethical orientation: this is its substance.

For Wittgenstein, ethical and aesthetical value ‘shows itself’ in this perspective. This in turn exceeds propositional language in that it takes a view of life as a whole. From this perspective we experience the non-immanent value that is blocked, while moving in the midst of things. From this perspective we experience value that is not immanent in the world, since the facts and propositions that represent them all function at the same level.⁴⁰ This perspective permits us to see the world as a contingent, but acceptable whole: it lets the viewer see with a “happy eye,” because “... the beautiful is what makes happy.”⁴¹ The experience of value arises from such wholeness, from the perceived harmony between the individual and the world.⁴² This experience of unity “is what ‘being happy’ means.”⁴³ Such an experience, in which the world is *directly* given to us as a whole is what Wittgenstein calls *mystical*, which is confined to that part of reality that is not describable, but makes itself manifest.⁴⁴

Seeing from the viewpoint of eternity is not to perceive the object in terms of causality, or in orientation toward a certain end. With this move Wittgenstein separates the questions of human value from scientific questions.⁴⁵ The experience of ethical value cannot arise from scientific observation (in perceiving the world causally, focusing and measuring a particular aspect, attributing a function to the perceived object) but emerges from the gaze *sub specie aeternitatis*. This means that the distancing gesture of an ethical/aesthetical perspective, the perception of things *sub specie aeternitatis*, makes the attribution of value possible.⁴⁶

So the ethical/aesthetical perspectives are the bases of any kind of scientific observation, without them there could be no causality, because without the distancing perspective, events would not have a beginning and end, wherefore they could not be perceived meaningfully.⁴⁷ The creation of meaning supposes these points of view, from where the flow of life events appears as a whole. In this manner they are "... a condition of the world ..."⁴⁸ and inherent features of the mind. To grasp this, we have to bear in mind that Wittgenstein derives his notion from Spinozean eternity. For Spinoza, freedom is closely linked to the mind's capacity to look at itself from an eternal perspective, which is the perspective of God: "The mind's highest good is the knowledge of God."⁴⁹ Our mind has necessary knowledge of God, insofar as it knows itself and the body under the form of eternity.⁵⁰ Thus, infinity derives not so much from God, but from a specific activity of the human mind, which is constitutive for human agency. In this specifically human activity of adopting the perspective of eternity, God reveals or shows himself. Correspondingly, the ethical and aesthetical 'shows itself' when taking a view of life as a whole.⁵¹

II. Constitutive frameworks – limited wholeness

One could object that Wittgenstein's concept of sub specie aeternitatis seems to provide us with a neutral view from nowhere: subjects can detach themselves from an egocentric perspective and adopt a viewpoint of the whole. Is this the case? I will answer this objection by elaborating on Wittgenstein's emphasis of perceived wholeness of the world as a *limited* one. The passages in *Tractatus* 6.45 reveal central aspects of wholeness and limitedness:

To view the world sub specie aeterni is to view it as a whole - a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole – it is this that is mystical.

The contemplation of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole.

Let us take a closer look at the issue of wholeness, before elaborating on how it is limited. I think we obtain a clearer picture if we turn to the later Wittgenstein so as to elucidate some of these points. In *On Certainty*, Wittgenstein argues that our *world-picture* is made up of a set of empirical *hinge propositions* that constitute the foundations of our language-games: in this sense it is not verifiable, because it serves the inherited background against which one distinguishes between true and false.⁵² Hinge propositions are the "scaffolding of our thoughts"⁵³ since the whole system of our beliefs depends on our acceptance of them. They

can neither be doubted nor justified and we cannot know their *truth*, since their certainty is presupposed in all judging.⁵⁴ So this background of *hinge propositions* is not a standpoint, but more like a framework within which we adopt standpoints. This framework is not in the world in the same sense as a collection of objects, rather it is constitutive of the world, because coherent experience of the world presupposes it.

Now our sense of *sub specie aeternitatis*, the wholeness of the world and our lives, arises from within this framework. Within this framework, we do not experience the world in a neutral way or as a value-free cognitive process, but always already in an aesthetical and ethical space with certain value orientations. Just as the logical scaffolding of the world is a priori, ethics and aesthetics are conditions of the world.⁵⁵ They endow us with *attitudes toward the world as a whole*. For Wittgenstein, ethics and aesthetics are not spheres of discourse among others (which would be the conventional way of looking at these: as realms). Also, they are not the study of areas, but involve our participation, since the aesthetical or ethical value we attach to certain entities cannot be separated from the place we wish to give them in our lives.⁵⁶ They do not have a particular subject matter – but are attitudes toward the world as a whole “...that penetrate(s) any talk or thought.”⁵⁷

We now begin to see how Wittgenstein’s ideas connect to recent discussions and how an actualization of his thoughts can contribute to these. Ethics and aesthetics belong to the scaffolding of our world, since we always see the world as good/bad, high/low, worthy/unworthy, beautiful/ugly – thus always in a framework that Charles Taylor calls a *framework of strong evaluations* (which can be aesthetic too, as we shall see later).⁵⁸ In other words, this framework contains sets of evaluative attitudes, which are presupposed in human agency. Within this framework a person *identifies* with possible standpoints on his life as a whole, evaluates options as more or less worthy and thereby “constitutes himself,”⁵⁹ as Harry Frankfurt has pointed out. Importantly, such *identifications-with* function as a basis for the possibility of emerging options; to put it strongly: they *have* no reason, but rather *give* reasons.⁶⁰ So basically, if interpreted and actualized in this manner, Wittgenstein’s notion of *sub specie aeternitatis* does not postulate the existence of a neutral view from nowhere, rather the opposite: it simply points out that the view of the whole is simply a function *within* our constitutive frameworks, which arises out of our *identifications-with*. This is one way in which the notion of the *limited* can be understood. It is not when we engage in pure contemplation that wholeness arises, but out of our being able to identify

with standpoints within this framework. In this sense, Wittgenstein's account of *limited wholeness* is reminiscent of Heidegger's *Being and Time*, which mentions the caring stance that one takes toward one's own life – it both allows for and simultaneously undermines wholeness.⁶¹ It seems clear that a strong sense of wholeness cannot be achieved while being, because there would always be elements lacking in such a conception of wholeness. It is within the limited space of caring about our lives and *identifying-with* that our lives achieve unity and wholeness. Only as an object of care and engagement can life be shaped as a whole. So, the ability to see our lives as a limited whole presupposes the ability to take a caring stance toward life. This means that limited wholeness not only emerges in contemplation, but needs partly to be actively constituted by the subject in question. Of course the notion of limited wholeness also reminds us that it is the limitations put upon us by our identifications and strong evaluations that allow a wholeness to evolve in the first place. As an important consequence, experiencing the boundaries of wholeness and the unity of the subject is *a part of* an ethical orientation and not something that should be overcome.

Languages and forms of identification

If we dig deeper into the issue of identifications, we see that we – based on this interpretation of Wittgenstein's ideas – can make an important clarification in regard to the difference between ethical and aesthetical languages and forms of identification. While Frankfurt is silent about the possible languages of identification, Taylor, in a footnote, contends that these languages need not be exclusively ethical, "... they can also be aesthetic and of other kinds as well."⁶² So where Taylor merely allows for the possibility of aesthetical *or* ethical languages of identification, Wittgenstein's account implies a closely intertwined relationship, where they are present simultaneously. This is why it would be fruitful and coherent for Wittgenstein's account to work out this distinction between ethical and aesthetical identifications.

In rough terms we could say that, in an ethical perspective, we affirm an ethical orientation. We value objects, persons or relations insofar as we somehow manage to wholeheartedly identify with them. We often refer to this in terms of being a part of something bigger than oneself, such that the self disappears (becoming one of the many singularities in the wholeness of the world). In this perspective everything is located at the same level.⁶³ When seeking an orientation and identification in an aesthetical sense, however, (at least in a modern sense of the aesthetic)

we tend to focus on the singular narrative structure of our lives. Most importantly, in an aesthetical sense, when we wholeheartedly identify, we tend to affirm orientations and values when this process of identification fails. By this I do not mean the experience of a simple failure of a specific identification, but when we experience a *boundary of identification*.⁶⁴ What does this mean? Simply, it is about recognizing the impossibility of comprehensive identification of a complete enmeshment into any perspective. When Wittgenstein discusses the ethical role of aesthetics and tells us that art teaches us to see the world in the *right perspective*, then we must take this to mean that it teaches us to wholeheartedly identify with an orientation toward life *and* to affirm the boundary of identification and thereby acknowledge some sort of constitutive negativity. The *right perspective* on the wholeness of a life is being able *both* to see and acknowledge the contingent parts as a necessary whole and the limits of wholeness. The *right perspective* is at least partly about the acknowledgement and affirmation of the lack of a right perspective. So an aesthetical stance does not involve specific artistic contents, but a way of perceiving – not a kind of intellectual comprehension, involving value judgments, but a non-verbal apprehension of the world as a limited whole. So for Wittgenstein this form of aesthetical identification gives us a special sense of wholeness that is essential to the good life. So the good life, or “being in agreement with the world”⁶⁵ as he puts it, is not about recognizing that the world is merely a totality of facts, bereaved of value as Tilghman maintains,⁶⁶ but also the boundaries of such an attitude while engaging in our lives.

In general terms, this means that Wittgenstein does not reduce *the good* to ethical orientations, but emphasizes the aesthetical aspect of defining *the good* (i.e. the narrative unity of life).⁶⁷ To sum up, within the Wittgensteinian framework, although looking from the same *eternal perspective*, the very structures of valuing and evaluating aesthetically and ethically appear to differ. However, this difference does not undermine, but rather supports Wittgenstein’s theory regarding the unity and interdependency of the two realms.

III. Concluding remarks

This article set out by drawing attention to two aspects. Firstly, that research has only devoted modest attention to Wittgenstein’s conception of aesthetics and ethics. Secondly, attention was brought to bear on the influential view, which holds that the insights derived from his assertion on the oneness of ethics and aesthetics, should be seen as detached

from the framework of *Tractatus*. Both were found to be unsatisfying, and clarification was required in regard to the relationship between ethics and aesthetics and especially the role of aesthetics in the ethical orientation. I have argued that a special kind of *nonsensicality* is not a deficit, but a central part of ethical and aesthetical expressions and that instead of identity we should understand the relationship in terms of *interdependence*, meaning that the two realms only can be considered individually in their complex unity. Both attitudes provide a view sub specie aeternitatis and thus allow for viewing the world as a whole, but a limited whole rather than a neutral view from nowhere. The notion of a limited whole also implies that sub specie aeternitatis is not about a specific standpoint from which wholeness arises, but about *identifying-with* standpoints within our frameworks of intelligibility. It simply arises out of strong evaluations that we make against the backdrop of such a constitutive framework of intelligibility. In other words, the view of the whole is simply a function *within* our constitutive frameworks, which arises out of our *identifications-with*. Within the interdependence of the aesthetical and ethical ways of *identifying-with*, the most important difference turned out to be that in an ethical perspective we affirm an ethical orientation, value (objects, persons, relations) so far as we somehow manage to wholeheartedly identify with it; while in an aesthetical perspective we wholeheartedly seek to identify with an orientation toward life *and* affirm the boundary of identification. Lastly, the ethical role of aesthetics is to push us into the *right* perspective, which is not a real perspective, but the acknowledgment that the wholeness of life, which we seek in various ethical orientations, depends on our being able to *both* acknowledge the contingent parts of our lives as a necessary whole *and* acknowledge and embrace the limits of wholeness: the fact that wholeness will always be lacking. His account does not just come down to the ability of seeing life in its narrative unity, adopting a perspective from which the fundamental openness and contingency of life obtain form and appear as a closed and internally necessary whole. Harmony and well-being also depend on an acknowledgment of the limitations in any sort of identification.

This reading, which emphasizes the aesthetical, goes against influential views, such as Tilghman's that sought to understand the *Tractatus* in a Kantian fashion.⁶⁸ Indeed, if we replace *sub specie aeternitatis* with *disinterestedness* we see strong reminiscences of Kant, who argued that the determining grounds of ethical and aesthetical experiences are the same in that they transcend our natural *interestedness*. In such an optic, one could easily understand Wittgenstein urging us to see the world

from an eternal perspective; similarly, Moore maintains that viewing the world as a limited whole, *sub specie aeternitatis* is a matter of seeing it disinterestedly.⁶⁹ Wittgenstein would then be one of the philosophers that Williams has in mind when he speaks of philosophers who “...repeatedly urge one to view the world *sub specie aeternitatis*.”⁷⁰ Williams has Kantian and utilitarian concepts in mind, which seek to emphasize impartial agency abstracted from the questions of *who* acts. As I have argued in the course of this article, I do not take this to be the case: limited wholeness does not arise from disinterested contemplation, but rather oppositely, from active engagement with our lives, from caring and *identifying-with*.⁷¹ Williams’ account lacks the branch of philosophers who also argued for a view from eternity, but with a wholly different, aesthetical agenda. Could Wittgenstein’s account be closer to them? Nietzsche for example, argues for another *sub specie aeternitatis perspective and wants to move to see our lives only through an aesthetical perspective*. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, he points out that “...only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified.”⁷² This claim becomes stronger in his later work: life is only worth living from an aesthetic perspective, because this perspective grants us a “... rest from ourselves by looking upon, by looking down upon, ourselves and, from an artistic distance, laughing over ourselves or weeping over ourselves.”⁷³ In short, Wittgenstein’s emphasis on the interdependence of ethical and aesthetical orientations is in contrast to the Nietzschean perspective.

Wittgenstein’s account does not inscribe itself in the Kantian or Nietzschean discourse: its genuine merit establishes a middle path between these two views by focusing on the interdependence and internal dynamics of aesthetical and ethical orientations. Also, Wittgenstein’s notion of ethics and aesthetics is broad, and also considers the conditions under which ethical and aesthetical orientations emerge. In an important sense, Wittgenstein’s account remains non-reductive and formal, because he only defines the basic parameters according to which achieving the good presupposes the capability to see the world as a *limited whole*. As he mentions in the *Notebooks*, there is no such a thing as “... the objective mark of the happy, harmonious life,”⁷⁴ meaning that it can only be evaluated from the outside in a third person perspective, since the limited wholeness arises out of our wholehearted and deeply first person engagement with our lives. In a way, this is what the aesthetical attitude *sub specie aeternitatis shows* us.

Notes

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), 6.421.
2. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G.H. Von Wright, H. Nyman, trans. P. Winch (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 79.
3. Peter Ptassek, "Das Leben als Kunstwerk. Wittgenstein und die Praxis: Von der Kontemplation zum Spiel," in *Ethik und Ästhetik: Nachmetaphysische Perspektiven*, ed. Gerhard Gamm and Gerd Kimmele (Tübingen: Discord, 1990), 203–225: 203.
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Briefe an Ludwig von Ficker*, ed. Georg Henrik von Wright (Salzburg, 1969), 35.
5. Georg Henrik von Wright, "The Origin of the Tractatus," in *Wittgenstein* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 83.
6. Paul Engelmann, *Letters from Ludwig Wittgenstein with a Memoir*, trans. L. Furtmuller (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), 97–111.
7. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.45.
8. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914–1916*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961), dated 7/10/1916.
9. *Ibid.*, 6.421.
10. This means that I will oppose the kind of view defended by Diané Collinson that the insights derived from his assertion of the oneness of ethics and aesthetics should be seen detached from the framework of *Tractatus*. Diané Collinson, "Ethics and Aesthetics are One," *British Journal of Aesthetics* vol. 25, no. 3 (Summer 1985): 266–272: 271.
11. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics," *Philosophical Review* vol. 74 (1965): 4.
12. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 7.
13. Bertrand Russell, "Introduction to the Tractatus," xxi.
14. Cora Diamond, "Ethics, Imagination and the Method of Wittgenstein's Tractatus," in *The New Wittgenstein*, ed. Alice Crary and Rupert Read (London: Routledge, 2000), 149–173. James Conant, "A Prolegomenon to the Reading of the later Wittgenstein," in *The Legacy of Wittgenstein: Pragmatism or Deconstruction*, ed. Ludwig Nagl and Chantal Mouffe (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 93–130.
15. Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, "The Good Sense of Nonsense: a Reading of Wittgenstein's Tractatus as non self-repudiating," *Philosophy* vol. 82 (2007): 147–177: 149.
16. P.M.S. Hacker, "Was he trying to whistle it?" in *The New Wittgenstein*, ed. Alice Crary and Rupert Read (London: Routledge, 2000), 353–388.
17. Andrew Lugg, "Wittgenstein's Tractatus: True Thoughts and Nonsensical Propositions," *Philosophical Investigations* vol. 26, no. 4 (October 2003): 332–347: 341.

18. G.E. Moore, "Moore's Wittgenstein Lectures in 1930–1933," in *Philosophical Occasions: 1912–1951*, ed. J. C. Klagge and A. Nordman (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1993), 46–114: 109.

19. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Aesthetics," in *Lectures, Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed. C. Barrett (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 1–41.

20. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 2.173; 2.1515.

21. *Ibid.*, 6.42; 6.54.

22. *Ibid.*, 2.17.

23. Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, 56.

24. Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics," 12.

25. Wittgenstein, "Lecture on Ethics," 12.

26. *Ibid.*, 12.

27. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.522.

28. Allan Janik and Stephen Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna* (New York: Touchstone, 1973), 195.

29. Kathrin Stengel, "Wittgenstein's Aesthetic Ethics and Ethical Aesthetics," *Poetics Today* vol. 25, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 609–625: 612.

30. See Wittgenstein's remark to Waismann, in Friedrich Waismann, *Ludwig Wittgenstein und der Wiener Kreis*, ed. B. F. McGuinness (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967), 115.

31. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Cambridge Letters* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 124.

32. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.54

33. This has often been the subject of criticism. See Cyril Barrett, "Ethics and Aesthetics are One?" in *Proceedings of the 8th International Wittgenstein Symposium 1983*, Part 1, ed. Rudolf Haller (Wien: Hölder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1983), 17–22.

34. Ludwig Wittgenstein, "A Lecture on Ethics," *Philosophical Review*, vol. 74 (1965): 4.

35. *Ibid.*, 5.

36. *Ibid.*, 4.

37. Kathrin Stengel, 612.

38. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 7.10.16.

39. The question of temporality is essential, but falls outside of the scope of this article. Alluding to a Spinozian understanding of eternity – eternity means "not infinite temporal duration, but non-temporality." This is not to say that such a perspective is outside the temporal. It is a perception not outside time, not *in time* but *with time*: "If by eternity is understood not eternal temporal duration, but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present." Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.4311.

40. "If there is any value that has value, it must lie outside the whole sphere

of what happens and what is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental." Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.41.

41. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 20.10.16 and 21.10.16.

42. Julian Friedland, "Wittgenstein and the Metaphysics of Ethical Value," *ethic@*, vol. 5, no. 1 (Florianópolis, June 2006): 91–102.

43. *Ibid.*, 92.

44. Jay Shir, "Wittgenstein's Aesthetics and the Theory of Literature," *British Journal of Aesthetics* vol. 18, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 3–11: 3.

45. B. R. Tilghman, *Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetics: The View from Eternity* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 44.

46. Diané Collison, 266–272.

47. Stengel, 619.

48. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 77.

49. Baruch de Spinoza, "Ethics," in *The Collected Writings of Spinoza*, trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), vol. 1, part IV, prop. 28.

50. *Ibid.*, vol. 30.

51. For one we logically know of this necessary feature of our mind. But Wittgenstein also argues that it also manifests itself, or shows itself in the quite everyday experience of wonder, more precisely in wondering about the world's existence.

52. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright, trans. D. Paul and G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), §94.

53. *Ibid.*, §211.

54. *Ibid.*, §308, 494.

55. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 77. Here Wittgenstein only addresses ethics, but if we keep in mind his tireless remarks on the oneness of ethics and aesthetics, it is safe to maintain that this must also be the case for aesthetics.

56. Hartley Slater makes a similar point about aesthetical value, but I think it also can be applied to ethics. Hartley Slater, "Wittgenstein's Aesthetics," *British Journal of Aesthetics* vol. 23, no. 1 (winter 1983): 34.

57. Cora Diamond, 153.

58. Charles Taylor, *Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Also: *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

59. Harry G. Frankfurt, "The Importance of What We Care About," in *The Importance of What We Care About: Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 170.

60. This is a central idea of Frankfurt about the ways of love. Harry Frankfurt, *Reasons for Love* (Princeton and London: Princeton University Press, 2004).

61. "Der Sorge, welche die Ganzheit des Strukturganzen des Daseins bildet, widerspricht offenbar ihrem ontologischen Sinn nach ein mögliches Ganzsein

dieses Seienden." Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1963), 236.

62. Charles Taylor, "What is human agency," in *Philosophical Papers 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 24n.

63. For Wittgenstein this includes not only man but also things and animals. "Whoever realizes this will not want to produce a pre-eminent place for his own body or for the human body." Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 2.9.16.

64. Christoph Menke, "Das Leben als Kunstwerk gestalten? Zur Dialektik der postmodernen Ästhetisierung," *Initial* vol. 4 (1991): 383–395.

65. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 75.

66. B. R. Tilghman, *Wittgenstein, Ethics and Aesthetics: The View from Eternity* (London: Macmillan, 1991), 60.

67. Seel and Shusterman have both emphasized the ethical importance of aesthetic considerations. "[A]esthetic considerations are or should be crucial and ultimately perhaps paramount in determining how we choose to lead or shape our lives and how we assess what a good life is." Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 237. Also: Martin Seel, *Versuch über die Form des Glücks* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1999).

68. B. R. Tilghman.

69. A.W. Moore, "Beauty in the Transcendental Idealism of Kant and Wittgenstein," *British Journal of Aesthetics* vol. 27, no. 2 (spring 1987): 132.

70. Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against*, with J. J. C. Smart (Cambridge University Press, 1973), 118.

71. In a somewhat similar manner Harry Blocker has argued that "we are not aesthetically 'detached', but are often more highly involved in works of art than in real life." In Cyril Barrett, "Symposium: Wittgenstein and the Problems of Objectivity in Aesthetics," *British Journal of Aesthetics* vol. 7, no. 2 (April 1967): 174.

72. Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* (New York: Dover, 1995), 17.

73. Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), book II, prop. 107.

74. Wittgenstein, *Notebooks*, 78–79.